

Jews and British Sport: Integration, Ethnicity and Anti-Semitism, c1880-c1960

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Abstract:

Between the 1890s and the 1960s, sport had a distinctive and varied impact on the social, cultural, political and economic life of the British Jewish community. During this period, Anglo-Jewry developed a clear sporting tradition, in both a direct and indirect sense, and their participation in the world of British sport had a significant impact on processes and discourses surrounding integration, ethnicity and anti-Semitism.

Through a broad analysis of archival materials, newspaper sources and oral history, this thesis seeks to examine the influence that sport exerted on the Jewish community – paying particular attention to the ways in which physical recreation affected the internal dynamics of the community and influenced Jewish relations and interactions with the wider non-Jewish population. As will be shown, whilst sport is a useful lens through which to view socio-cultural development within Anglo-Jewish history, evidence suggests that physical recreation also had a notable and noticeable direct impact on Jewish life within Britain.

Although Jewish sport history is an expanding field in an international context, it has been largely ignored within British academic research. Within the historiography of Anglo-Jewry, little attention has been paid to the socio-cultural impact of sporting participation. Similarly, within research concerning British sport history, race and immigration are themes that have been generally overlooked.

As well as redressing important historiographical gaps, this thesis will also help expand our knowledge of the process behind minority integration and will further demonstrate the wider social importance, and the extensive and varied applications, of the historical study of sport. This thesis demonstrates that sport has been a key area for the creation, maintenance and erosion of Anglo-Jewish identity and has been an arena for the development, reinforcement and undermining of Jewish stereotypes. Sport, effectively, assumed a central role in Jewish life throughout this time period and was a pivotal factor in many social, cultural and political changes affecting the Jewish community of Britain.

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List of Abbreviations:

Abbreviation:	Full Title:
<i>AAA</i>	Amateur Athletic Association
<i>AJY</i>	Association of Jewish Youth
<i>BMA</i>	British Maccabi Association
<i>BUF</i>	British Union of Fascists
<i>BUSC</i>	Birmingham University, Special Collections
<i>JAA</i>	Jewish Athletic Association
<i>JFS</i>	Jews' Free School, London
<i>JLB</i>	Jewish Lads' Brigade
<i>LRO</i>	Liverpool Record Office
<i>LCC</i>	London County Council
<i>LFWBC</i>	London Federation of Working Boys' Clubs
<i>LMA</i>	London Metropolitan Archives
<i>MCA</i>	Manchester City Archives
<i>MJM</i>	Manchester Jewish Museum
<i>NA</i>	National Archives
<i>SJAC</i>	Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, Glasgow
<i>TWAS</i>	Tyne and Wear Archive Services
<i>UCCL</i>	University College, London, Library
<i>UoSSC</i>	University of Southampton, Special Collections

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Introduction

In 2006, a 68-page booklet entitled *Living and Giving: The Jewish Contribution to Life in the UK* was published as part of the celebrations of the 350th anniversary of Jewish readmission to the United Kingdom.¹ The publication, which included essays from a variety of well-known Anglo-Jewish professionals and intellectuals, sought to document Jewish involvement in British life and culture since 1656. The outwardly and openly celebratory booklet argued that ‘hardly an economic, social or cultural area remains untouched by the Jewish contribution’. As well as outlining Jewish ‘achievement’ in British law, medicine and science, ‘traditional’ avenues of Jewish participation in British life, the booklet also included a chapter on one area of British society and culture not normally or readily associated with the Jewish community – sport and physical recreation.²

The author himself noted the traditional and popular belief, within both Jewish and non-Jewish society, that members of the British Jewish community had not generally been active within British sport. In his very first line, author, journalist and subsequently editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, Stephen Pollard, noted that ‘two words which Jews themselves tend not to associate with Judaism are “sports champion”’. Despite this statement, however,

¹ Jews were expelled from Britain by Edward I in 1290 due to various economic and popular anti-Semitic charges against the small Jewish community. They were eventually re-admitted by Oliver Cromwell in 1656, seemingly for religious reasons and economic and trade benefits. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1964), Chapter 4: ‘The Expulsion, 1272-1290’; David Katz, *The Jews in the History of England: 1485-1850* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 106-136.

² Zaki Cooper, ‘Introduction’ in Zaki Cooper (Ed), *Living and Giving: The Jewish Contribution to Life in the UK, 1656-2006* (London, 2006), p. 11.

in a brief three-page summary, Pollard demonstrated that Jews had been involved in sport in various guises as participants, spectators and businessmen since the late eighteenth century. Whilst openly admitting that his contribution to the booklet was ‘far from comprehensive’, Pollard argued that ‘almost every sport has had successful Jewish participants’ with Jews having both a ‘huge impact behind the scenes’ and ‘an enormous contribution on the field’.³

Despite its brevity and tenuous discussion of certain ‘Jewish’ sporting personalities, Pollard’s section on sport highlighted something that was widely known but not necessarily widely stated – namely, that Jews had been active in sport over much of the period since the late eighteenth century.⁴ But whilst Jews may have made a ‘contribution’ to British sport, how has sport affected the British-Jewish population? What impact did sporting participation and interest have on the social, cultural, political and economic history of Anglo-Jewry? In what ways, and to what extent, did direct and indirect involvement in sport influence and shape Jewish life in modern Britain?

These three questions form the focus of this thesis. By analysing and investigating Jewish participation in British sport between the age of Eastern European immigration in the late nineteenth century through to the 1960s - a time when immigrants from the ‘New Commonwealth’ established themselves as the most visible minority grouping in Britain -

³ Stephen Pollard, ‘Sport’, in Cooper, *Living and Giving*, pp. 61-63.

⁴ As well as discussing well-known Jewish sportsmen and women such as the eighteenth and nineteenth century pugilist, Daniel Mendoza, Wimbledon Ladies’ Doubles champion Angela Buxton and sprinter, Harold Abrahams, Pollard considered various sporting personalities such as Fred Trueman, Alec Stewart, Stirling Moss and David Beckham with quite debateable ‘Jewish’ lineage.

this dissertation will place Jewish involvement in sport in its wider social, cultural, economic and political context. Interactions between British Jews and British physical recreation will be discussed and examined in order to ascertain sport's bearing on processes and discourses surrounding Jewish integration, religion, ethnicity and exclusion.

In one sense, sport provides a lens through which wider developments within Anglo-Jewish history, and academic research surrounding the British Jewish community, can be viewed and examined. But it is much more than just a simple prism through which to observe Anglo-Jewish history. Sport has also had a direct and prominent impact on many different aspects and phases of Anglo-Jewish life since the late 1880s and took on a much wider significance beyond simple leisure and 'play'. The central contention of this thesis is that an analysis of Anglo-Jewish interest and involvement in sport and physical recreation can help in the development of a much clearer, more vivid and more comprehensive history of modern Anglo-Jewry.

At first glance, the contention that sport played a significant role in British-Jewish life, and that British Jews demonstrated a keen interest in physical recreation, seems debatable. The traditionally held view across Western society is that Jews are a people of the book, more interested in intellectual training and development than participation in any kind of sporting contest. As American sports historian, Peter Levine, has noted, a 'picture' existed in the popular Western mindset of a Jewish community dominated and symbolised by 'devout Orthodox Jewish men with long beards, yarmulkes and prayer shawls who spoke only in Yiddish and Hebrew, valued the intellect over the physical and devoted their lives to God

and the Talmud'.⁵ Such perceptions draw upon and reflect traditional anti-Semitic views of Jews as being physically weak. As Gilman has highlighted, the belief is common across much of modern history that Jews had 'a weak constitution' and 'were innately unable to undertake physical labour'.⁶ In a wider sense, it is true that Judaism itself values the cultivation of the mind over the body. As one American scholar of religious history has noted, whilst ancient Judaism may have respected physical strength, physical recreation has not generally been regarded highly in terms of Jewish religious and cultural values, customs and law for over two millennia.⁷

Within British culture, the stereotypical view of Jews has often been based on their supposedly weak, exotic and cowardly physical and mental characteristics; with ideas and notions of athleticism and sporting prowess absent.⁸ As both Edgar Rosenberg and Bryan Cheyette have noted, this depiction has long been prominent within British popular culture.⁹ It can, for instance, be seen in Shakespeare's Shylock or Dickens' Fagin, whose moral and physical weakness and ugliness is a prominent theme throughout the storyline of *Oliver Twist*.¹⁰ Even in the twentieth century, stereotypes of Jews have focused on ideas of Jewish physical and mental weakness, coupled with a belief in Jewish disinterest and ineptitude in sport. One Mass-Observation survey from 1939, for instance, concluded that

⁵ Peter Levine, *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience* (Oxford, 1992), p. 5.

⁶ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London, 1991), pp. 40-52.

⁷ Jeffrey Gurock, *Judaism's Encounter with American Sports* (Indianapolis, 2005), pp. 15-19.

⁸ See, for instance, Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society: 1876-1939* (London, 1979), Chapter 3: 'The Health and Morals of the Nation'.

⁹ Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (Stanford, 1960); Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of the 'Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹⁰ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, (London, 1837). Fagin, who is often referred to simply as 'the Jew', is described at various times during the text as 'shrivelled', 'repulsive' and like a 'loathsome reptile'.

‘many Gentiles based their dislike of Jews upon a misconception that: “Jews are no good at games or manual labour of any kind, are eager to evade military service and are in the last resort cowards”’.¹¹

This thesis will challenge these traditionally held stereotypes. It will show that many Jews were indeed ‘sporting’ in their interests and actions and that Anglo-Jewry has produced a number of strong, skilled and highly successful sportsmen and women. It will become clear that, from the late nineteenth century onwards, an interest in a variety of sports was cultivated amongst the youngest of the Jewish community. Likewise, the thesis will also demonstrate that a number of nationally and internationally successful and renowned English-Jewish athletes came to prominence during the twentieth century. Jews also became ‘sporting’ in an indirect sense, as Anglo-Jewish interest in watching sport also underwent a significant increase.

Importantly, whilst the thesis overall (and specific parts of my discussion and analysis) may go some way to undermining these general misconceptions surrounding the Jewish community, this is not my sole aim. This thesis is much more directly concerned with addressing and examining the wider impact of sport on processes of social, cultural, economic and political change within British Jewry. Sport affected the lives of British Jews in a number of ways. Whilst sport was consciously utilised to challenge stereotypes and

¹¹ Quoted in Sally Smith, ‘Sex, Leisure and Jewish Youth Clubs in Interwar London’, *Jewish Culture and History*, 9, 1, 2007, p. 13. For a wider analysis of race and racism in the Mass Observation movement, see Tony Kushner, *We Europeans: Mass Observation, ‘Race’ and British Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 2004).

anti-Semitism, and change and alter external relations with wider non-Jewish society, it also helped transform the internal dynamics of the Jewish community. In essence, the thesis is as much concerned with examining the way sport made Jews think about themselves, as to how sport made non-Jews view the Jewish community.

Looking briefly at sport's relationship to Anglo-Jewry in the pre-1890 period, we can clearly see these processes at work. Jewish involvement in British sport prior to the twentieth century, which has received some academic attention, demonstrates clearly the considerable social, cultural and economic impact that sport had on sections of the British-Jewish population. In the period from the late eighteenth century through to the late Victorian era, sport played an important role in, and influenced patterns of, Jewish integration, ethnicity and also anti-Semitism – the three key themes of my analysis.

Jewish involvement in prize-fighting during the Georgian period, for instance, seemingly had both a direct effect on the Jewish community and reflected wider socio-cultural trends within Anglo-Jewry at that time. The 'Golden Age' of British pugilism during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was effectively dominated by Jewish boxers and historians have claimed that this had significant consequences for the wider Jewish community. Endelman, for example, has linked the success of Jewish boxers such as Daniel Mendoza, Barney Aaron and 'Dutch' Sam to trends of working-class and pauper 'acculturation' - claiming involvement in the sport reflected wider Jewish absorption of the

‘habits and tastes’ of non-Jewish peers.¹² It has also been suggested that Jewish success in the sport altered anti-Semitic and stereotypical perceptions of Anglo-Jewry and ‘did much to assuage traditional antipathies’.¹³ Counter to this, however, Ungar has claimed that, despite their success and fame in the sport, Jewish boxers like Daniel Mendoza faced considerable popular hostility which ‘perpetuated anti-Semitic discourses’ surrounding the contemporary Jewish community.¹⁴ Several historians of the ‘Whig’ school of Jewish historiographical thought have claimed that boxing success both facilitated and symbolised Jewish social mobility and acceptance by the English establishment.¹⁵

Ideas of sport catalysing and demonstrating Jewish acculturation and social mobility can also be seen by looking at horse-racing. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, English Jewish families such as the Rothschilds, Sassoons and Cassels all began associations with a sport closely linked to the British aristocracy and to royalty.¹⁶ Endelman has claimed that this was symbolic of the ‘gradual embourgeoisement of native Jewry in the late Victorian period’ which also saw prosperous English Jews taking part in the ‘social affairs’ and

¹² Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England: 1714-1830* (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 219.

¹³ Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture* (Baltimore, 1999), p. 230.

¹⁴ Ruti Ungar, ‘On Shylocks, Toms and Buck: Images of Minority Boxers in late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century Britain’, in Michael Berkowitz and Ruti Ungar (Eds), *Fighting Back? Jewish and Black Boxers in Britain* (London, 2007), p. 29. Similarly, the American sports historian Randy Roberts has claimed that Mendoza’s often strained relationship with the ‘British boxing fancy’ reflected an innate anti-Semitism and belief within British society that Jews were outsiders and ‘aliens’. Randy Roberts, ‘Eighteenth Century Boxing’, *Journal of Sport History*, 4, 3, 1977, pp. 254-256.

¹⁵ Rubinstein has claimed that Jewish involvement in Georgian boxing was ‘an important medium of upward social mobility for the downtrodden and also an excellent vehicle for gaining popular recognition and acceptance by these groups’. William Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain* (London, 1996), pp. 70-71. Cecil Roth sees the success of Mendoza, Elias and others as an indicator of a wider Jewish move away from ‘traditional trades’ and occupations and claims that Jewish boxing success ‘familiarised countless persons throughout the country with the actuality of the Jew and convinced them that he could excel in other capacities than as pedlar and old-clothes man’. Roth, *A History of the Jews*, p. 244.

¹⁶ Involvement in horse-racing facilitated the entry of numerous English Jews into the private circle of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII.

‘cultural and recreational activities’ of English ‘respectable society’.¹⁷ Jewish involvement in the sport as owners, trainers and jockeys has also been highlighted as evidence of the ‘openness’ of British sport and high-society to ‘outsiders’. Huggins has noted that the ‘acceptance’ of the Rothschilds into the racing elites during the nineteenth century demonstrated the inclusive nature of the sport and showed that interest in ‘the turf’ could act as an important ‘aid’ for ‘social success’ for people from all minority backgrounds.¹⁸

Evidently, this research demonstrates that sport took on a wider significance for Anglo-Jewry in the pre-1890 period. An examination of Jewish participation in British sport during this time frame clearly shows that physical recreation and sport can shed light on internal debates, trends and discourses within Anglo-Jewry. It is also apparent that an examination of participation in sport can also help to foster a deeper understanding of how the Jewish community interacted with the majority population and help demonstrate the ways in which Jews were accepted and rejected by their non-Jewish peers. Additionally, this research also illustrates how sport was seen as a vehicle for social and class mobility.

Given sport’s clear ability to illuminate and inform on Anglo-Jewish history, it is surprising that relatively little has been written on sport and Anglo-Jewry in a more modern context.

Within historiography concerned with the British-Jewish community, for instance, sport

¹⁷ Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History* (Bloomington, IN, 1990), pp. 74-75. The Rothschilds were also keen hunters, an activity which was particularly encouraged by Nathaniel Rothschild (1812-1870) as it had ‘aristocratic’ and ‘royal’ connections. Davis has noted that the family’s decision to locate themselves in the Vale of Aylesbury during the mid nineteenth century was primarily designed to enable the family to combine their passion for hunting with an active business life in London. Richard Davis, *The English Rothschilds* (London, 1983), pp. 92-93.

¹⁸ Mike Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society, 1790-1914: A Social and Economic History* (London, 2000), pp. 62, 67.

does not figure prominently and is only addressed fleetingly and sporadically in many larger analyses of Anglo-Jewish history since the late nineteenth century. In Rubinstein's substantial volume on the history of Anglo-Jewry since medieval times, entitled *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain*, sport is addressed on only four out of over 500 pages, with the majority of his discussion addressing Daniel Mendoza.¹⁹ Likewise, in his comprehensive examination of the history of British anti-Semitism, *Trials of the Diaspora*, Julius touches on sport only twice – something which infers, falsely (as this thesis will demonstrate), that physical recreation was not a prominent arena for Jewish exclusion and discrimination.²⁰

The general omission of sport from the historiography of Anglo-Jewry is perhaps even more surprising considering the view that 'a remarkable feature' of the field 'is the strength of its attention to social history'.²¹ Up until the so-called 'New School' emerged in the 1970s, historical research into the British Jewish community had largely been characterised by a 'Whiggish' interpretation which often focused on elite dimensions of Jewish involvement in British life. From this point onwards, however, much greater attention has been paid to the everyday experience of the Jewish population, to Jewish relations, both

¹⁹ Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*. Similarly, Todd Endelman only scarcely discusses Jewish involvement in sport since the late nineteenth century in his two most recent major works on British-Jewry. See, for instance, Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, pp. 174-175; Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain: 1656 to 2000* (London, 2002), p. 175.

²⁰ Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 378-379.

²¹ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 10.

positive and negative, with wider society and on the political, economic, cultural and social history of the rank-and-file of the community.²²

Whilst it is true that physical recreation remains a significant gap in this historiography, it is not to say that historians of Anglo-Jewry are not aware of sport's importance to their subject matter. In the preface to the third edition of his seminal volume on *The Jewish Immigrant in England: 1870-1914*, Lloyd Gartner noted that despite the publication of many 'detailed studies' on Anglo-Jewish life since the late Victorian Era, the 'cultural life' of the immigrants had largely been overlooked. He pinpointed sport as a notable omission from this body of literature despite the fact that 'sports were significant for [Jewish] youth, not only as a recreation but as a step towards British identity'.²³

Whilst sport has been largely ignored by academics concerned with British Jewish history, it is also true that Jews, and more broader ideas of race and immigration, have not featured prominently within the field of British sport history. Since its genesis out of the boom in social history in the 1960s and 1970s, the serious, academic study of Britain's sporting past has developed into an important sub-field within scholarly research into British history.²⁴

²² Much has been written on the historiographical trends within scholarship concerned with the history of Anglo-Jewry and the transition from the 'Whig' school of writing, characterised by the often overly positive history of amateur scholars such as Cecil Roth, to the 'New School' established in the 1970s and 1980s by professional academics such as Bill Williams, Colin Holmes and Todd Endelman. The latter have generally focused much more on the everyday social and cultural history of the community, anti-Semitism and other aspects of the non-elite dimension. See, for instance, Endelman, *The Jews*, 'Introduction', pp. 1-15; Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, pp. 28-32; Mitchell B Hart, 'The Unbearable Lightness of Britain: Anglo Jewish Historiography and the Problem of 'Success'', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, July 2007, pp. 145-165; Todd Endelman, 'English Jewish History', *Modern Judaism*, 11, 1981, pp. 91-109.

²³ Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914* (London, 2001), p. xx.

²⁴ It is important to make the distinction between amateur and academic sport history here. The writing of the amateur history of sport has a long history in Britain, especially when concerned with the history of cricket –

Over the past four decades, British sport historians have worked to demonstrate the relative centrality of sporting and leisure experiences to a wider understanding of Britain's social, economic, cultural and political past. As Johnes has noted, 'these historians have shown that sport was an active rather than passive agent in [British] social and cultural life'.²⁵

The result of this is that sport can no longer be dismissed as a marginal phenomenon within British society. Indeed, anyone wishing to gain an accurate insight into modern British history cannot ignore the individual and collective sporting past of the nation. As one leading British political historian has recently commented, 'sport is immensely important to any serious attempt to reconstruct a nation's collective life in any period since the mid-to-late nineteenth century'.²⁶

Despite this recognition, and the field's effective contribution to a number of important themes and discourses within modern British history (class, gender and identity, particularly local and national identity, all feature prominently in works of sport history), one key aspect of the country's recent past has largely escaped the attention of the growing band of British sport historians – race and immigration.²⁷ Although the field has helped to

which has long been the focus for chroniclers of British sporting history. Serious historical study of British sport by professional, academic historians is, by contrast, a relatively recent phenomenon. Early pioneering works in the field include Peter McIntosh, *Physical Education in England since 1800* (London, 1968), Richard Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations and English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), James Walvin, *The People's Game* (London, 1975) and Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society: 1863-1915* (Brighton, 1980).

²⁵ Martin Johnes, 'British Sports History: The Present and the Future', *Journal of Sports History*, 35, 2008, p. 401.

²⁶ Peter Hennessey, quoted in *Ibid.* p. 402.

²⁷ For over two decades, many leading academics interested in British sport history have openly conceded that more attention needs to be shown to race and immigration. For instance, in 1988, Jones argued that 'we need to know more' about the 'particular role of... ethnic minorities in sport' and highlighted the dearth of material

establish sport's wider significance in British history, the study of immigrant and ethnic minority involvement in British sport, and the sporting effect on discourses and processes affecting racial and ethnic history and identity, has almost been completely overlooked.²⁸ Take, for instance, the critically-acclaimed 'standard text' within the discipline, Richard Holt's *Sport and the British*.²⁹ Despite his authoritative command of Britain's modern sporting past, and the book's clear demonstration of sport's importance to elements of wider British history since before industrialisation, Holt only fleetingly and indirectly touches on the sporting experiences of Britain's immigrant and racial minority population. Other than brief discussions on minority involvement in boxing, golfing anti-Semitism and the links between racism and modern football hooliganism, notions of race, immigration and ethnic identity only feature marginally in Holt's discourse.³⁰

linked to immigration and sport. Stephen Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class: Organised Labour and Sport in Interwar Britain* (Manchester, 1988), p. 198. As recently as 2008, in his authoritative account of the history of British football, Taylor criticised the fact that 'race' had 'not made anything like the mark on British sports history as on the historical mainstream'. Matthew Taylor, *The Association Game: A History of British Football* (London, 2008), pp. 8-9.

²⁸ Race and immigration have received more attention from scholars concerned with British sports sociology. Ernest Cashmore's pioneering *Black Sportsmen* (London, 1982), for instance, looked at the reasons for black involvement in sport and investigated personal experiences of racism by various black sportsmen. Cashmore also concluded that sport was an important avenue for social mobility for black youths. Patrick Ismond's *Black and Asian Athletes in British Sport and Society: A Sporting Chance?* (Basingstoke, 2003), which utilised interviews with prominent British minority sportsmen and women, claimed that sport was an arena in which racial stereotypes could be challenged. A great deal of sociological research concerned with race and sport has focused on football. See, for instance, Sanjeev Johal and Jas Bains, *Corner Flags and Corner Shops* (London, 1999); Les Back, Tim Crabbe and John Solomos, *The Changing Face of Football: Racism, Identity and Multiculture in the English Game* (Oxford, 2001) and Daniel Burdsey, *British Asians and Football: Culture, Identity, Exclusion* (London, 2007). Despite this research, however, historical aspects of the relationship between race, immigration and sport are largely overlooked, and the Jewish sporting experience is almost completely absent.

²⁹ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British* (Oxford, 1989). Holt's work has sold over 14,000 copies, easily the most academically and popularly successful publication from within the field.

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 275, 302-303, 351.

There are some notable exceptions to the general rule that the ‘historical area of race and racism in British sport’ has been ‘surprisingly understudied’.³¹ On those occasions where the links between race/ethnicity and British sport history have been effectively analysed, an indication of the long history of British sporting inclusion and exclusion of immigrants can be seen. For instance, Polley’s acclaimed *Moving the Goalposts* includes a chapter on ‘Sport and Ethnicity’ that focuses almost wholly on the experiences of black athletes in post-War British sport. In the chapter, Polley looks briefly at the role that sport played in ethnic ‘assimilation’, ‘accommodation’ and ‘discrimination’.³² Likewise, Collins’ essay on immigration and racial discrimination in British rugby league demonstrates that this largely working-class, northern-English sport, with an ‘ideology based ostensibly on meritocracy and opportunity for all’, was an inclusive environment for players from ethnic minorities yet still exhibited signs of ‘racial stereotyping and estrangement from local minority communities’.³³ Williams’ *Cricket and Race*, published in 2001, demonstrated the significant involvement of immigrants and minorities in British cricket and highlighted the role of the sport as an arena for ethnic inclusion and exclusion.³⁴

³¹ Mike Cronin, ‘Playing Games? The Serious Business of Sports History’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38, 3, 2003, p. 499. It is worth noting that there has been a significant academic focus on sport’s relationship to Irish identity, which has touched on the Irish immigrant experience within Britain. See, for instance, Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884* (Dublin, 1999).

³² Martin Polley, *Moving the Goalposts: A History of Sport and Society since 1945* (London, 1998), Chapter 6: ‘Sport and Ethnicity’.

³³ Tony Collins, ‘Racial Minorities in a Marginalised Sport: Race, Discrimination and Integration in Rugby League’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 17, 1, 1998, pp. 152, 166. This essay was published in a special edition of the journal focusing on sport and nationalism, race, identity and ethnicity, edited by Mike Cronin – an expert on Irish sport - and David Mayall, an expert on gypsies. The journal as a whole said little about the historical relationship between sport and race, being largely sociological in focus, and contained very little discussion on Britain.

³⁴ Jack Williams, *Cricket and Race* (Oxford, 2001). On immigrant involvement in cricket, see also Jeff Hill, ‘“Connie” – Local Hero, National Icon: Sport, Race and Politics in the Legend of Learie Constantine’, *Sports Historian*, 22, 1, 2002.

As British sport historians have generally overlooked issues of race and immigration, and because scholars of Anglo-Jewry have only fairly recently taken a deeper interest in Jewish social and cultural history, it is unsurprising that the history of Jewish involvement in British sport has not been examined in any great detail. Despite this, there is a small amount of scholarly research on the relationship between sport and modern Anglo-Jewry which offers tantalising glimpses into a subject with a potentially broad significance for the wider historical analysis of Jewish and British sporting life. Tananbaum's examination of the relationship between sport and the Jewish youth movement, for instance, demonstrates the important role that physical recreation played in the acculturation of Jewish immigrant children.³⁵ Likewise, Collins' broad introduction and overview of Jewish sporting involvement between 1900 and 1939 shows how sport affected immigrant integration, the development and transformation of ethnic and religious identity and how sport served as an arena for Jewish exclusion.³⁶ Berkowitz' and Ungar's volume on Jewish and black boxing demonstrated the value of boxing as a means of integration, while exposing links between Jewish boxing and discourses of popular anti-Semitism and Jewish 'criminality'.³⁷ As

³⁵ Susan Tananbaum, "Ironing out the Ghetto Bend" Sports and the Making of British Jews', *Journal of Sport History*, 31, 1, 2004, pp. 55-75.

³⁶ Tony Collins, 'Jews, Anti-Semitism and Sports in Britain, 1900-1939' in Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuvani (Eds), *Emancipation Through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe* (London, 2006), pp. 142-156. Collins' article emerged from a conference paper given at the University of Munich in 2002. A paper and article by John Efron, entitled 'When is a Yid not a Jew? The Strange Case of Supporter Identity at Tottenham Hotspur', was also given at the Conference and published in the same book, looking at the development of the notion of the London club as a 'Jewish' supported and characterised team. John Efron, "When is a Yid not a Jew? The Strange Case of Supporter Identity at Tottenham Hotspur" in Brenner and Reuvani, *Emancipation Through Muscles*, pp. 235-257.

³⁷ Berkowitz and Ungar, *Fighting Back?*

Collins noted, the fact that Jewish involvement in sport since the late nineteenth century has largely been ‘ignored... is to be regretted’ as

the uniqueness of the Jewish sporting experience in Britain... gives the subject a relevance that can provide broader insights and signposts for the study of the interaction between sports and national, local and racial identities, as well as uncovering a vital and important aspect of the social history of Jewish life.³⁸

Despite this, it remains true that there has been minimal scholarly attention to the modern Anglo-Jewish experience of sport. This is in stark comparison to the situation outside of Britain, where several academics have recently begun to pay more serious attention to the role of sport and physical recreation within the social, cultural and political history of various Jewish communities.³⁹ In the United States, where a trend for ‘celebrations and compilations of Jewish sporting achievement’ stretches back to the 1930s, a relatively comprehensive academic historiography on Jewish sport has begun to develop since the 1990s.⁴⁰ The pioneering work in this respect was carried out by Peter Levine, a well-known American sports historian. His acclaimed *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field* demonstrated the importance of physical recreation to American Jewish life and the significant involvement of American Jewry in various elite sports. Levine’s key concept revolved around the idea of

³⁸ Collins, ‘Jews’, pp. 153-154.

³⁹ The impetus for this research largely comes from within the field of sport history, rather than historians of Jewish populations turning their attention towards the Jewish sporting experience.

⁴⁰ Works such as Stanley Frank, *The Jew in Sport* (New York, 1936) and Harold Ribalow, *The Jew in American Sport* (New York, 1948) are typical early examples of this mainly amateur trend within America for celebratory chronicles of American Jewish sporting achievement. The most-well known publication of this kind, however, is the oft-quoted Bernard Postal, Jesse Silver and Roy Silver (Eds), *Encyclopaedia of Jews in Sport* (New York, 1965). A more modern example of a ‘celebratory tome’ of Jewish sporting achievement is Robert Slater, *Great Jews in Sports* (New York, 1983). There are also a number of American Jewish Sports Halls of Fame in existence, whilst the American Jewish Historical Society has established an on-line sports archive.

sport as a ‘middle-ground’, acting as a social, cultural and economic arena in which Jewish immigrant integration could occur and where ideas and concepts of American-Jewish identity could be formed, shaped and re-interpreted.⁴¹

Since the early 1990s, a number of other American academics have looked at sport more seriously as an aspect of Jewish social and cultural history. The essays contained within Steven Riess’ *Sports and the American Jew*, published in 1998, investigated the role of sport as an aid to the assimilation and integration of Jewish immigrants. The volume also addressed aspects of gender, class and anti-Semitism prevalent within the American Jewish sporting experience in modern times.⁴² Borish’s essay on female Jewish involvement in sport, for instance, shows how ‘sport yields valuable information about how gender, ethnicity, religion and social class have shaped the opportunities and constraints of Jewish American women’.⁴³ Likewise, Gems’ survey of the Chicago Hebrew Institute during the early twentieth century demonstrated the value of physical recreation for philanthropists and communal leaders interested in aiding the ‘Americanisation’ of Eastern European immigrant Jews.⁴⁴

More recently, attention has been paid to the impact of sport on the preservation and maintenance of Jewish religious identity. Jeffrey Gurock’s *Judaism’s Encounter with American Sports*, for instance, highlighted the considerable focus on sporting participation

⁴¹ Levine, *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field*.

⁴² Steven Riess (Ed), *Sports and the American Jew* (New York, 1998).

⁴³ Linda Borish, ‘Jewish American Women, Jewish Organisations and Sports, 1880-1940’ in *Ibid.* pp. 105-131.

⁴⁴ Gerald Gems, ‘The Rise of Sport at a Jewish Settlement House: The Chicago Hebrew Institute, 1908-1921’ in *Ibid.* pp. 146-160.

within Jewish debates and conflicts over religious observance. He asserts that sport was a powerful catalyst for the growing religious apostasy within twentieth century American Jewry and that physical recreation was increasingly seen by religious leaders as a significant contributing factor in the secularisation of the community. Gurock, himself an authority on Jewish religious history, has claimed that the growing academic trend for serious historical investigations of American Jewish sport has ably demonstrated that sport can act 'as a lens through which the... group's life in America can be understood'.⁴⁵

Jewish sporting history has also received considerable attention outside of America. Within Israeli scholarship, for instance, a focus on Jewish sport history has been evident since the 1970s, but has undergone a noticeable growth in the last two decades.⁴⁶ There is an increasingly large body of academic research, published both in English and Hebrew, based on examining the history of sport and physical recreation within both the Israeli nation-state and the British Mandate of Palestine. This growing body of work demonstrates the centrality of notions of sportsmanship and athleticism in the formation of Israeli national identity, as well as showing the socio-cultural value of sporting interest and participation in the pre and post 1948 period.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Gurock, *Judaism's Encounter*.

⁴⁶ The Wingate Institute for Physical Education and Sports was created in 1957 in Netanya, Israel and has been the base for a number of seminars, publications and academics interested in both Israeli sport history and the broader study of Jewish sporting history. One of the earliest, and most well-known, international seminars based on Jewish sport history was held in 1973 on the topic of 'Physical Education and Sports in Jewish History and Culture' with papers based around the Jewish sporting relationship with ancient Greek culture, Jews and sport in the Middle Ages and Jewish involvement in the modern Olympic Games. See Uriel Simri (Ed), *Physical Education and Sport in Jewish History and Culture* (Netanya, 1973). Subsequent seminars were held in 1977 and 1981, covering a broad range of issues and topics within the history of Jewish sport. See Uriel Simri (Ed), *Physical Education and Sport in the Jewish History and Culture* (Netanya, 1981).

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Haggai Harif and Yair Galily, 'Sport and Politics in Palestine, 1918-1948: Football as a Mirror Reflecting the Relations between Jews and Britons', *Soccer and Society*, 4, 1, 2003; Haim Kaufman,

Elsewhere, a number of internationally-focused edited volumes and special journal issues related directly to the subject have appeared since the late 1990s. The 1999 special issue of the *Journal of Sport History*, entitled ‘One Hundred Years of ‘Muscular Judaism’: Sport in Jewish History and Culture’ included essays on aspects of Jewish sport history in a diverse range of countries including Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and Canada.⁴⁸ In 2008, the distinguished ‘Studies in Contemporary Jewry’ annual series published a volume on the theme of ‘Jews and the Sporting Life’ which contained essays examining sports impact on Zionism, identity formation, integration and racial prejudice in America, Europe and Israel.⁴⁹ Significantly, the book’s editor remarked in his preface that whilst there may be a willingness amongst academics to dismiss Jewish sport history as insignificant, ‘sport has occupied, and continues to occupy, an important place in the modern world’.⁵⁰

International academic conferences based on the theme of Jewish sport history held in the last decade have also resulted in the publication of two significant edited volumes on the subject.⁵¹ Brenner and Reuvani’s *Emancipation Through Muscles*, for instance, focused on

‘Jewish Sports in the Diaspora, Yishuv and Israel: Between Nationalism and Politics’, *Israel Studies*, 10, 2, 2005; Haim Kaufman and Michael Bar-Eli, ‘Processes That Shaped Sport in Israel during the Twentieth Century’, *Sports History Review*, 36, 2005; Anat Helman, ‘Sport on the Sabbath: Controversy in 1920s and 1930s Jewish Palestine’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25, 1, 2008. For an indication of the body of research on Jewish-Israeli sport history published in Hebrew, see Kaufman, ‘Jewish Sports’, pp. 164-167.

⁴⁸ See George Eisen (Ed), ‘One Hundred Years of ‘Muscular Judaism’: Sport in Jewish History and Culture’, *Journal of Sport History*, 26, 2, 1999, pp. 225-397.

⁴⁹ Ezra Mendelsohn (Ed), *Jews and the Sporting Life* (Oxford, 2008).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. vii-viii.

⁵¹ Additionally, in October 2010, the annual Klutznick Symposium, hosted by the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilisation, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, hosted a conference on the theme of ‘Jews in the Gym: Judaism, Sports, and Athletics’ with papers on Jewish sport on film, female Jewish involvement in sport, and Jewish sport in Central Europe.

European Jewish sport, showing that physical recreation had played a significant role in the ‘construction, dissemination and perpetuation of Jewish identity in twentieth century Europe’.⁵² The essays within Kugelmass’ *Jews, Sport and the Rites of Citizenship* have a broad geographical focus, including chapters based on Jewish involvement in American, Israeli, Polish, Libyan and Moroccan sport. The articles touched on ideas and notions of anti-Semitism, integration, religious apostasy and Zionism evident within sporting history and as a result of Jewish sporting participation.⁵³

Evidently, whilst the British Jewish sporting experience may be significantly under-researched, it is clear that Jewish sport history in an international context is a rapidly growing academic field. Significantly, much of this historiography has resisted parochialism and scholars interested in Jewish sport have generally not been interested in creating a narrow chronicle of Jewish sporting ‘successes’. Rather, this growing body of scholarship has sought to establish sport’s wider impact on Jewish social, cultural, political and economic history. Through their analysis of Jewish involvement and interest in sport in its European, American, Israeli and Australasian contexts, greater light is gradually being shed on physical recreation’s significance to wider processes and debates concerning integration, identity formation and erosion, gender, nationalism, religion and anti-Semitism.

This thesis, therefore, will not only begin to fill the historiographical gap surrounding British-Jewish participation and interest in sport, it will also contribute to a growing

⁵² Michael Brenner, ‘Introduction: Why Jews and Sports’ in Brenner and Reuvani, *Emancipation Through Muscles*, p. 2.

⁵³ Jack Kugelmass (Ed), *Jews, Sport and the Rites of Citizenship* (Chicago, 2007)

international trend for using sport as a lens through which Jewish life can be viewed and our understanding of modern Jewish history deepened. It goes without saying that the aim of this thesis is not to provide a celebratory listing or compilation of British Jewish sporting achievement.⁵⁴ Rather, it is much more deeply concerned with ascertaining the impact of sport on processes and debates internal to Anglo-Jewry and analysing how physical recreation formed and shaped relations – both positive and negative – with the wider non-Jewish community. In short, it is focused on the effect that sport had on British Jews, rather than the impact that Jews had on British sport.

This thesis will begin the examination of the role that sport played in modern Anglo-Jewish life. In order to achieve this, it focuses on a large body of pre-existing primary source material which has not been previously examined from a sporting perspective. Most important in this respect are archives associated with the history of the Jewish community of Britain – many of which contain large and under-researched holdings directly and indirectly related to sport. For instance, the Anglo-Jewish Archives held at the University of Southampton have proved a major focus of the research underpinning this dissertation – reflecting both the centrality of the archive to Anglo-Jewish history more generally, but also the large body of documents contained within the collection related to the community's sporting past. In addition to this, collections focusing on various Jewish sporting individuals (such as the Harold Abrahams archive at the University of Birmingham) and organisations (including the Grove House Jewish Lads' Club and

⁵⁴ A number of encyclopaedias of Jewish sporting achievement, including prominent British Jewish sportspeople and administrators, exist for this purpose. See for instance, Joseph Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends* (Washington, 2005).

Manchester JLB papers in the Archives and Local Studies section at Manchester Central Library, or the Maccabi GB collection at the London Metropolitan Archives, for instance) have also broadened the periodic, geographic and thematic scope of the thesis.

Alongside utilising a wealth of archival materials directly related to Anglo-Jewry's sporting past, newspapers have also formed a significant part of the primary source documentation that has been examined. Many Jewish publications (*Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World*) have often had a considerable focus on the community's sporting life and give an insight into the nature of the national community's involvement and interactions with the British sporting world. National daily newspapers, such as *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror*, have also been examined on those occasions when Jewish sportsmen or women made national news (Harold Abrahams' attitudes towards the 1936 Olympic boycott, for instance). Sport journals, such as *Golf Illustrated* and *Boxing*, have been consulted to analyse Jewish involvement in specific sporting pastimes. In addition, newspapers, such as those published by organisations such as the British Union of Fascists' *Action* and *Blackshirt*, proved pivotal in ascertaining the nature of anti-Semitic attitudes towards the 'sporting' Jew.

Alongside archival sources and newspapers, oral interviews contained within the various collections of papers of individuals and organisations, and those held at the Manchester Jewish Museum, have also been examined to help analyse the significance of sport to individual Jews in their own lives and in their interactions with both the Jewish and non-Jewish populations. Overall, this thesis is the first attempt to directly analyse this large

body of primary source material from a sporting perspective and for what it can tell us about Anglo-Jewry's sporting past.

The reason for choosing to deal with the period from the 1890s through to the 1960s is two fold. Firstly, the time span examined in the thesis covers one of the most important periods in the modern history of Anglo-Jewry. The starting point of the dissertation is the 1890s, a time when Jewish immigration to Britain from Eastern Europe was growing both in terms of numbers and in its wider impact on the Jewish and non-Jewish communities within Britain. During the next seventy years, British-Jewish life underwent significant changes as these and subsequent immigrants (such as Central European refugee Jews in the 1930s), together with their children and grandchildren, adapted to the wider social, cultural, political and economic environment. Important general transformations of the ways that Jews viewed themselves, and were perceived by non-Jews, occurred in this time period, which also saw significant social and geographic mobility within Anglo-Jewry. The thesis ends in the 1960s, a decade when Anglo-Jewry's integration, assimilation and secularisation, as well as its decreasing size, was becoming ever more apparent. This was also an era when the Jewish community's status as the most significant minority in Britain (apart from the Irish) ceased due to immigration from the 'New Commonwealth'.⁵⁵

Whilst the period covered by the thesis is important in terms of the *social* history of Anglo-Jewry, it is also significant in terms of Jewish *sporting* history. This is because the time

⁵⁵ Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* (London, 2010), pp. 37-44. On the growing awareness of the integration and secularisation of the community, see Sonia Lipman and Vivian Lipman (Eds), *Jewish Life in Britain: 1962-1977* (London, 1981).

frame from the 1890s through to the 1960s also covers the contemporary peak of Jewish involvement and interest in British sport. Before the 1890s, as previously demonstrated, there was some involvement from Anglo-Jewry in sports at the high and low ends of the social and sporting spectrums. Between this decade and the 1960s, however, Jews – mainly those descending from the large Russo-Jewish immigrant population - were much more deeply involved and visible in an assortment of different sporting milieus. As well as participating in a variety of physical recreations at both an elite and amateur level, British Jews were also extremely involved with sport in an indirect sense also – as businessmen, administrators and, significantly, sports spectators. By the late 1960s, direct Jewish involvement in sport, their participation and visibility in elite sport and the effect that sport had on Jewish society, culture and economics becomes less visible.⁵⁶

This thesis is primarily concerned with analysing and assessing the links between the social and sporting history of Anglo-Jewry during this significant historical period. It is focused

⁵⁶ Certainly, by the late 1960s and 1970s, Jewish participation in British sport was much more evident through indirect means, or for pure leisure purposes, rather than in an elite or competitive sporting respect. This is particularly evident in professional boxing. By the late 1950s, Jewish boxers had virtually disappeared from the national and international scene, yet remained prominent as trainers, managers and promoters well into the 1980s. See Stan Shipley, 'Boxing' in Tony Mason (Ed), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 102-104. In football, the first Jewish club directors and chairmen began to appear during the 1950s, beginning a long trend for British Jewish involvement in the business side of the 'beautiful game'. Harry Zussman, who had earned his fortune as a shoe manufacturer, became Leyton Orient Chairman in 1947, beginning a long Jewish association with the administration of the London club. Likewise, Leeds United had a string of Jewish directors and chairmen during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, including Albert Morris, Manny Cussins, the furniture magnate, and Leslie Silver. Both Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal have had considerable Jewish representation on their boards since the late 1980s. *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 May 1972, 26 May 1972, 17 May 1991. Jews have also been prominent in the national and international administration of table-tennis and athletics. See: Jim Riordan, 'The Hon. Ivor Montagu (1904-1984): Founding Father of Table-Tennis', *Sport in History*, 28, 3, 2008, pp. 512-531; Wray Vamplew, 'Gold, Sir Arthur Abraham (1917–2002)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2009); *Observer*, 28 May 2002. In America, Levine has shown that the post-World War Two period has seen a rapid decline in Jewish participation in collegiate or professional sport and a rise in 'recreational sport' i.e. sport for leisure, amongst the Jewish community. Levine, *Ellis Island*, p. 237.

on ascertaining how Jewish participation in British physical recreation, in both a direct and indirect sense, related to, reflected and affected important aspects of the social history of the community. The main body of the thesis, which is split into three thematic chapters, examines how sport impacted on some of the major aspects of Anglo-Jewish history and historiography – namely, Jewish integration, ethnicity and exclusion. Each individual chapter contains a short introduction, where the relevant historiographical debate, and its links to sport, is outlined. This introductory section is followed by three related case studies, where Jewish sporting participation is analysed comprehensively to ascertain sport's wider social, cultural, political and/or economic significance to that aspect of Anglo-Jewish history. The thesis concludes with a broad discussion of sport's importance to Jewish life during the period from the 1890s to the 1960s. Overall, the thesis will show that Jewish participation in British sport, rather than being a marginal phenomenon with little wider significance, had a notable and noticeable influence on wider processes of assimilation, the formation and erosion of identity and on discrimination.

In the first of the thematic sections, Chapter 2, I will analyse the relationship between sport and integration. This chapter is mainly concerned with examining how physical recreation became intertwined with notions and processes of the 'Anglicisation' of Eastern European Jewish migrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As well as demonstrating that physical recreation was seen by the Jewish elites as a way of facilitating the 'Anglicisation' of immigrant children, it will also show how they used competitive sport to undermine wider notions of immigrant Jewish social and cultural 'aloofness'. The case study of Harold Abrahams, the famous English-Jewish sprinter, will reveal that

sporting achievement acted as a catalyst in processes of integration and acculturation. As will be demonstrated, participation and interest in sport aided immigrant acculturation and helped in the formation of ‘hybridised’ formations of English-Jewish characters, mentalities and physiques.

Chapter 3 examines the intricate relationship between direct and indirect sporting participation in the formation and erosion of communal, religious and ethnic identity. The central concept of this discussion is based around the notion of sport exacerbating a ‘drift’, a general term which refers to a diminishing concern for religious observance, decreasing engagement with Jewish identity and culture and declining respect and concern for familial and communal authority – all of which was believed to be occurring amongst Anglo-Jewry from the early twentieth century onwards. It will reveal how sport impacted negatively on adherence to the Jewish Sabbath and how Jewish participation and interest in professional boxing came to catalyse and symbolise the growing detachment of second and third generation Jewish immigrants from the culture, religion, authority and expectations of their parents and grandparents. This chapter will also demonstrate how attempts by Zionist sporting organisations to ‘re-engage’ Jews with their identity and heritage failed, mainly due to the popularity of sporting over ‘cultural’ activities. Effectively, it will show that sport was a powerful factor in decreasing the ‘Jewishness’ of immigrant children and grandchildren and in lessening concern for aspects of Jewish religion, community and ethnicity.

The final thematic chapter will analyse the relationship between sport and anti-Semitism. It will illustrate how physical recreation acted both as an arena for discrimination and racism to develop and an environment in which a response to anti-Semitism could be formulated and delivered. Through an investigation of the ‘sporting’ anti-Semitism of British Union of Fascist propaganda during the 1930s, we will see how sport became intertwined with long-standing ideological and stereotypical notions of Jewish difference – mainly in an attempt to use Jewish sporting ‘otherness’ as a means of highlighting the ‘Britishness’ of right-wing ideology and political organisations. A case study of discrimination against Jews in the world of golf will show how social anti-Semitism directed towards the growing Jewish ‘middle-classes’ extended into this often socially ‘exclusive’ British sport. Finally, this chapter will highlight that sport has acted as an arena in which Jews could pro-actively respond, in a generally ‘assertive’ fashion, to the exclusion and stereotyping of Jews. In this sense, sport reflects trends amongst the wider Jewish working-class for a more self-assured attitude towards Jewish self-defence. In many ways, as this chapter will show, sport strengthened, demonstrated and undermined anti-Semitic notions and expressions of Jewish difference and stereotyping.

Importantly, whilst the thesis is organised thematically, there remains an element of chronology in the manner in which it is structured – progressing through the period from the late Victorian era to the 1960s. The first chapter on sport and integration, for instance, deals generally with the period from the ‘influx’ of Russo-Jewish immigrants in the late Victorian era through to 1939. This is a time which saw considerable levels of Jewish immigration into Britain and an accompanying growth in debates and discourses

surrounding ‘Anglicisation’. The second chapter, looking at physical recreation and ethnicity, has as its main focus the interwar period and the years immediately following the Second World War – time frames when communal awareness and discussion of the erosion of Jewish ethnicity were prominent. The final chapter on anti-Semitism, however, covers the whole period from the 1890s through to the 1960s. This reflects the fact that whilst the nature of discrimination against Jews may have changed over time, anti-Semitism - both inside and outside of the world of sport - has been present throughout much of modern Anglo-Jewish history.

Overall, the thesis will show that sport has had a significant impact on Anglo-Jewish life from the late nineteenth century through to the 1960s. It will illustrate the fact that Jewish involvement in sport is inextricably linked to Jewish integration, the development and erosion of religious and ethnic identity, as well as anti-Semitism. In one sense, sport can provide a useful lens through which to view and analyse these wider processes, yet it is clear that participation and interest in physical recreation also had a discernible, direct effect on the history of the Anglo-Jewish community. Sport and physical recreation, contrary to many stereotypical and ‘traditional’ views, came to adopt a relatively central position in both the individual and collective Anglo-Jewish psyche and culture. Sport also played a pivotal role in the development and formation of British-Jewish identity, acting as an important factor in the way British Jews viewed themselves and the way Jews were perceived by the wider Gentile community.

The thesis argues that in order to gain the most accurate picture of Jewish life in Britain since the Eastern European immigrant influx, and of the modern history of British sport, significant attention needs to be given to the Jewish sporting experience. Sport cannot be ignored by social historians of Anglo-Jewry, for Jewish involvement in physical recreation had a significant impact on the social, cultural, economic and political history of the community in many direct and indirect ways. Similarly, historians of British sport can also find much in the Jewish experience of British physical recreation to suggest that immigrant participation and contribution to British sport was much more significant than previously believed. It is also true that peculiarly 'British' notions of sportsmanship and athleticism also had a noticeable influence on the Jewish community, demonstrating both the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the sporting arena for outsiders.

Sport, ‘Anglicisation’ and Integration

Unsurprisingly, for a minority community which was expelled during medieval times, Anglo-Jewish society, culture and history has been shaped and characterised by immigration. Since Jewish re-admission in 1656, Britain has seen successive waves of Jewish immigration from many parts of the world – influxes that, in various ways and to differing extents, transformed Anglo-Jewry. Immediately after re-admission, a small number of Sephardic Jewish merchants and traders hailing primarily from Iberia and the Netherlands came to Britain. Lipman has estimated that between 1700 and 1815, this Sephardic community was joined in Britain by a significant number (around 14-16,000) of Ashkenazi Jews originating from Central Europe. This figure may have reached 18,000 by 1830.¹

More recently, the most significant Jewish immigration to Britain was from Central and Eastern Europe. Although small numbers of Russian and Eastern European Jews settled during the 1860s and 1870s, the vast bulk of this immigration occurred between 1880 and 1914, in response to repression and economic hardship in Tsarist Russia.² Estimates vary, but it is thought that approximately 120-150,000 Jews permanently settled in Britain during this time, a figure which dwarfed the existing Jewish community, but paled in comparison

¹ VD Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England: 1850-1950* (London, 1954), pp. 2-5. See also, concerning the growth of the Sephardic community, Roth, *A History of the Jews*, Chapter 6.

² John Garrard, *The English and Immigration: A Comparative Study of the Jewish Influx 1880-1910* (London, 1971), p. 23.

to the millions of Jewish refugees who made their way to the USA.³ In the twentieth century, German-Jewish refugees from Nazism came to Britain in significant numbers during the 1930s. Although many re-emigrated to America and to Palestine after the cessation of hostilities, historians have estimated that around 50,000-70,000 arrived in Britain in the decade leading up to war.⁴

Supporters of the traditional British-Jewish ‘Whig’ historiographical view would claim that these Jewish immigrants found their integration and assimilation into British society relatively unproblematic. For those writing in the ‘Whig’ vein of British-Jewish history, Britain was an open, accepting and tolerant new home for these new arrivals.⁵ Jewish historians writing in the ‘New School’ since the 1980s, however, reject much of the overly-positive interpretation of Jewish history authored by ‘Whig’ scholars, including assertions made by the latter about the trouble-free integration of new immigrant groups. By working to correct what is seen as an overly positive ‘reading of Anglo-Jewish history’, many historians of the ‘New School’ have sought to redress the view that the reception of immigrants was largely positive and that immigrant integration was relatively straightforward.⁶

³ Lipman, *Social History*, pp. 88-89, 102-103.

⁴ Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe: 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979), p. 7; For the higher figure, see Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 11.

⁵ Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, p. 28.

⁶ Endelman, *The Jews*, ‘Introduction’.

One key area of focus for the ‘New School’ has been the immigration to Britain of Russian and Eastern European Jews during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁷ Through examinations of their reception and integration, recent scholarship has highlighted the significant role that popular and political anti-Semitism played in shaping Anglo-Jewish communal responses to immigration and processes of immigrant integration. In contrast to ‘Whig’ historiographical notions of tolerance and liberalism, ‘New School’ academics have shown that, in the face of growing Gentile anxiety over the ‘influx’ of ‘alien’ Jews, members of the established community sought ways of promoting and hastening immigrant acculturation in order to protect their own position.⁸

There are examples from other periods of British-Jewish history where conscious campaigns were mounted by ‘established’ Jews to accelerate immigrant acculturation. Communal and lay leaders, mainly for their own motivations and to prevent Gentile condemnation and popular anti-Semitism, employed the resources of communal philanthropy in an attempt to alter immigrant behaviour and characteristics. For example, Endelman has shown in his work on the Jewish population of Georgian England that contemporary Ashkenazi elites utilised their influence to try to speed up the assimilation of working-class and pauper immigrants. He has noted that communal and lay leaders ‘began to view the problem of the Jewish poor as a social issue that required a more communal

⁷ Gartner claimed that this was ‘the most actively investigated period in the historiography of the Jews in Britain’. Lloyd Gartner, ‘A Quarter Century of Anglo-Jewish Historiography’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 48, 2, 1986, p. 114..

⁸ Hart, ‘The Unbearable Lightness of Britain’, p. 158.

response’ as ‘leaders feared that lower class disreputability would strengthen popular hostility, thereby threatening their own advancement’.⁹

In terms of ‘Anglicisation’, a phrase used to describe immigrant assimilation and integration, the most comprehensive research concerns the Eastern European Jewish ‘influx’. From the late nineteenth century through to the effective cessation of Russo-Jewish immigration in 1914, Sephardic and Ashkenazi communal and religious elites deliberately tried to hasten immigrant integration through philanthropic and communal socio-cultural initiatives. Within the literature concerned with this part of Anglo-Jewish history, there are a number of contrasting historiographical viewpoints. Gartner, for instance, has argued that the Jewish leadership in Britain were simply hastening a process of ‘Westernisation’ which would have been the inevitable conclusion of immigrant movement from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ society.¹⁰ Marxist historians of Anglo-Jewry have viewed ‘Anglicisation’ in terms of social control, seeing philanthropic and ‘socialisation’ initiatives aimed at encouraging immigrant acculturation as rooted in ideas and practices of class control.¹¹

Other historians take a more balanced overview of ‘Anglicisation’. Feldman, for instance, contests that ‘neither ‘Westernisation’ nor ‘social control’ adequately ‘conveys the contested and fractured process of Anglicisation’. He asserts that neither discourse

⁹ Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 196-198, 201-202, 229-231.

¹⁰ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, pp. 166, 241-242, 268.

¹¹ See, for instance, Bill Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle-Class Manchester and the Jews, 1870-1900’ in Alan Kidd and Kenneth Roberts (Eds), *City, Class and Culture* (Manchester, 1985), p. 92; Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block 1887-1920* (London, 1980), p. 54.

addresses the complexities and intricacies evident in both the motivations of the Anglo-Jewish elites and the reception of assimilatory ideas and tendencies amongst the immigrants themselves. In Feldman's opinion, 'too narrow a view' has been taken on what 'propelled Anglo-Jewish social policy' during the age of Eastern European Jewish immigration.¹²

A variety of perspectives have emerged on the motivations of the established Jewish community and the reception of ideas surrounding 'Anglicisation' within immigrant society. Yet there is consensus that processes of 'Anglicisation' relied primarily on the conscious efforts of Jewish elites utilising communal organisations and initiatives to promote a hybridized formation of 'Jewish-Englishness' amongst the immigrant population. There now exists a broad literature on the period of Russo-Jewish immigration to Britain, and much work has been carried out on 'Anglicising' initiatives in communal philanthropy, charity, education and within the youth club environment.¹³ However, little has been written about one of, arguably, the most significant avenues in which notions of Englishness were imparted to the immigrant groups – sport and physical recreation.

By looking across the Atlantic, it is easy to recognise the significance of sport to similar American-Jewish programs designed to aid integration amongst new immigrant groups. In research conducted on the history of sport within the American-Jewish community,

¹² David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914* (London, 1994), p. 112; David Feldman, 'Englishmen, Jews and Immigrants in London, 1865-1914: Modernization, Social Control and the Paths to Englishness' in Ronald Dotterer, et al (Eds), *Jewish Settlement and Community in the Modern Western World*, (London, 1991), p. 110.

¹³ See, for instance: Feldman, 'Englishmen'; Benjamin Lammers, "'The Citizens of the Future": Educating the Children of the Jewish East End, c.1885-1939', *Twentieth Century British History*, 19, 4, 2008; Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1880-1920* (Oxford, 1988), Chapter 5: 'Club Life'.

scholars have demonstrated that physical recreation played a pivotal role in the ‘Americanisation’ of Russo-Jewish immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Levine, for instance, has shown that German-Jewish communal elites, determined to minimise the impact of immigration on their own place in American society, used ‘organised sport and physical recreation’ to ‘mitigate the shock of assimilation while furthering the enterprise’.¹⁴ Gurock has similarly demonstrated that, whilst opinion amongst spiritual leaders over the ‘Jewishness’ and religious suitability of sport may have been divided, a consensus existed that ‘athleticism’ and ‘physicality’ were key American traits that could be imbued in the new arrivals by programmes of organised and supervised sport.¹⁵

In Britain, some research on the role of physical leisure on processes of ‘Anglicisation’ has been conducted, yet the direct attention given to sport has often been relatively small. Tananbaum has shown that sport was one tool used by Jewish elites, through the medium of Jewish youth clubs, to aid processes of ‘Anglicisation’. She highlights that organised games instilled ideas of Englishness, respectability, rational recreation and moral and cultural improvement into ‘foreign’ Jewish children.¹⁶ Likewise Smith has claimed that Jewish clubs ‘sought to inculcate English ways into the immigrants, principally through the medium of sport and exercise’, whereas Collins has noted that ‘sports and ideals of

¹⁴ Levine, *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field*, pp. 13, 271.

¹⁵ Gurock, *Judaism’s Encounter*, Chapter 3 ‘The Challenge and Opportunity of a New World of American Sports’.

¹⁶ Tananbaum, ‘Ironing Out’.

‘sportsmanship’ – the most English of value systems – were seen as vital components of this crusade to Anglicise the newcomers’.¹⁷

Despite the ‘vital’ role seemingly played by sport in the acculturation of Russian-Jewish immigrants in Britain, research on the relationship between physical recreation and ‘Anglicisation’ is limited to these works and brief analyses within wider writing on Anglo-Jewish society.¹⁸ This chapter will redress this balance by looking closely at the role that sport assumed within British Jewry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As well as demonstrating the centrality of notions of sportsmanship and athleticism to British-Jewish initiatives designed to hasten ‘Anglicisation’, significant attention will also be given to assessing the role attached to competitive sport, both against non-Jews and fellow co-religionists. It will be demonstrated that sport could facilitate integration to a level where attachment to Jewishness, and a person’s Jewish immigrant background, became secondary. By embracing British notions of athleticism, sportsmanship and fair play, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, whether through the medium of Jewish youth organisations, competitive sport or on an individual basis, were physically and psychologically ‘Anglicised’.

Through an investigation of sport within the Jewish youth movement in the period between the late nineteenth century and the First World War, we shall see how central physical

¹⁷ Smith, ‘Sex’, p. 6; Collins, ‘Jews’, p. 143.

¹⁸ For instance, in Black’s survey of the social interactions of British Jewry, sport is addressed only fleetingly, despite an entire chapter being devoted to ‘Club Life: Moulding Youth and Shaping Character’. Black, *The Social Politics*.

recreation became in attempts to continue processes of ‘Anglicisation’ commenced during elementary education. Founded as a vehicle for aiding the acculturation of Jewish immigrant children, the organisations within the youth movement at this time soon turned to sport, and public-school notions of ‘athleticism’, as a means of hastening the physical and psychological transformation of ‘alien’ children into young English boys and girls. The established English-Jewish community embraced sport, which was believed to encapsulate key notions of Englishness, as a vehicle for imparting central aspects of indigenous culture and identity. By becoming more interested in physical recreation, and participating in sport on a frequent basis, it was argued that Jewish immigrant children would naturally become more like their non-Jewish peers – thus assuaging contemporary Gentile anxieties over the wider effects of the Jewish ‘influx’.

Competitive sport against non-Jews was also valued as a means of altering non-Jewish perceptions of the new arrivals. Meeting non-Jews on the football pitch or in the boxing ring was believed to be a way of alleviating concerns surrounding both the apparent isolation and aloofness of the immigrant community and accusations surrounding Jewish physicality – both of which were believed to be barriers to the integration and acceptance of the new immigrant community. Likewise, the established community, clearly aware of the ‘value’ of sporting provision for ‘Anglicisation’ efforts, were also keen that competitive sporting opportunities should not be limited by observance of the Jewish Sabbath. By working to provide equal provision for sporting opportunities, organisations such as the Jewish Athletic Association sought to minimise the sporting impact of religious observance amongst the immigrant community. This would complement, protect and expand upon the

new sporting instinct promulgated within the environment of the Jewish youth movement and thus continue processes of sporting ‘Anglicisation’.

Whilst larger schemes aimed at utilising sport for ‘Anglicisation’ are important to analyse, the last section of the chapter will deal with the role sport played in an individual Jew’s integration and acculturation – namely, the renowned English-Jewish sprinter, Harold Abrahams. By analysing the life and career of the British-born Jewish athlete, it will become clear that notions suggesting Abrahams’ sporting, social and educational exclusion due to his Jewishness are flawed. Indeed, sport played a facilitative role in Abrahams’ acceptance into exclusive sporting and social environments not open to other immigrant Jews and contributed, later in his life, to his almost complete assimilation and ‘Anglicisation’. For Abrahams, English sporting culture eventually assumed a more prominent position than his Jewish immigrant background, evidencing the key role that participation in athletics played in his own integration into wider society.

Key to this chapter is the contention that sport and physical recreation played a prominent role in the ‘Anglicisation’ of Jewish immigrants hailing from Eastern Europe. By becoming interested in sport, and by subscribing to notions of sportsmanship, fair-play and teamwork, the youngest section of the immigrant population, in mind, body and spirit, moved closer to the culture and identity of the indigenous population. Through a variety of sporting channels and opportunities, ‘alien’ Jews, hailing from a culture and environment without a comparable sporting tradition, became more English in their appearance, thought and actions.

‘Anglicisation’ Through Sport: The Example of the Jewish Youth Movement, 1895-1914

In the period from the early 1880s through to the commencement of the First World War, the existing English-Jewish community was joined in Britain by a sizeable population of Jewish immigrants hailing from Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire. In response to being ‘swamped’ by a largely working-class, Yiddish-speaking group of Jews, and following an accompanying rise in political and popular anxiety over the effects of the immigration, Anglo-Jewish elites and communal organisations sought ways to catalyse their foreign co-religionist’s assimilation and integration into English society. When the focus eventually switched to the foreign and British-born children of the migrants, efforts were expended to help ‘Anglicise’ them in speech, manner, dress and mores. However, a considerable emphasis was also placed on using sport and the ‘public-school’ ideology surrounding physical recreation to promote amongst the ‘alien’ children key notions of Englishness and aspects of indigenous cultural, social and sporting identity.¹⁹

The main vehicle for this aspect of the ‘Anglicisation’ process was the Jewish youth movement. This comprised of the Jewish Lads’ Brigade, formed in 1895, and more importantly in terms of sport, various Jewish working lads’ and girls’ clubs, founded in the period from the late 1880s through to 1914. These organisations, created with the aid,

¹⁹ Tananbaum, ‘Ironing Out’, pp. 53-69. Tananbaum gives an interesting overview of some aspects of the role that sport played in the Jewish youth movement from the late nineteenth century through to the 1930s and 1940s, although physical recreation forms only one part of a discussion which also touches on ideas of gender, religion and social control.

financial assistance and leadership of ‘Anglicised’ English-Jews and religious and communal leaders, catered for young Jewish boys and girls in their leisure time, outside of school or work. They effectively provided recreation within a supervised, managed environment. Within this milieu, especially within the various lads’ clubs, sport soon came to dominate. Whilst an increasing emphasis was placed by club leaders and managers on the benefits of promoting sporting participation, sporting ideology and rhetoric was ‘principally’ used to transform and shape the ‘alien’ children into ‘sporting’ young Englishmen of the Jewish religion.²⁰

Whilst contemporary non-Jewish youth organisations also displayed a similar interest in the use of sport in moulding and shaping the adolescent physique and psychology, Jewish clubs faced added pressures due to the perceived wider need to catalyse the ‘Anglicisation’ process.²¹ Whilst Jewish organisations were aware of wider social and cultural concerns, sport was promoted within the Jewish youth movement primarily for reasons dictated by the English-Jewish elites. Communal and religious leaders believed that sport could provide ‘rational recreation’ for young Jews prone to loafing and idleness, improve the physique of ‘weak’ immigrant children and imbue English ideals of fair play, pluck, manliness and team spirit. Many also feared that the lack of interest in games exhibited by the ‘alien’ children emphasised their foreignness in a society which attached cultural and social value to sporting pastimes. Sport, in effect, could act as a social panacea, addressing many of the objectives of the ‘Anglicisation’ process by directly and indirectly catalysing

²⁰ Smith, ‘Sex’, p. 6.

²¹ See, for instance, John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (London, 1977).

the assimilation, integration and acceptance of foreign Jewish children into mainstream society.²²

After analysing the context in which both the wider ‘Anglicisation’ drive developed and the Jewish youth movement was founded, the reasons why sport assumed such a position of prominence from the period from the turn of the twentieth century through to the First World War will also be examined. The influence of Jewish public-school alumni within the Jewish youth movement helped to promote the idea that participation and interest in sport could help in various ways to change the physical and psychological constitution of the ‘alien’ Jewish children and aid their ‘Anglicisation’. Above any other aspect of their work, Jewish youth club leaders and managers earnestly believed that sport and physical recreation offered peculiar benefits to immigrant children and could catalyse the dual processes of assimilation and integration.²³

Sport within the Jewish youth movement came to be regarded as much more than just a simple leisure activity. Whilst it was viewed as a socio-cultural weapon against the moral and physical degeneration seemingly facing the wider English population, it was also utilised by the Jewish elites for their specific aims of aiding the assimilation and acculturation of the Jewish immigrant community. Through sport, physically weak and mentally ‘foreign’ children would be exposed to public-school notions of ‘athleticism’ and social deference and would be transformed into sporting Englishmen. Via the medium of

²² Sidney Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work in Britain: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1975), pp. 46-48.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 48.

English physical pastimes such as football, cricket, boxing and athletics, the young Jews from an alien land and an alien culture would be assimilated and ‘Anglicised’.

Immigration and the ‘Anglicisation’ Campaign

Between 1880 and 1914, up to three million Jews emigrated westwards from the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe to avoid severe economic hardship and growing popular and political persecution. Whilst the vast majority made their way to America, a small number, estimated to be between 120-150,000, settled in Britain, choosing to reside mainly in London (mostly within the East End), Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Birmingham.²⁴ This largely working-class, Yiddish speaking immigrant community joined in Britain an ‘Anglicised’, English-Jewish population. According to Endelman, this established English-Jewish community was ‘overwhelmingly English in manners, speech, dress, deportment and habit of thoughts and taste’.²⁵ These English Jews – hailing mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth century Sephardic and Ashkenazi immigration waves - numbered around 60,000 in 1881. They had enjoyed relatively rapid social mobility, developed a strong communal and religious infrastructure and had worked successfully to see a number of formal and informal barriers to Jewish participation in law, politics and local Government removed or revoked.²⁶

²⁴ Lipman, *Social History*, pp. 88-89, 102-103.

²⁵ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, pp. 73, 94-95.

²⁶ Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, p. 75, 93. Perhaps most importantly, in 1858, the requirement to undertake a Christian oath was removed from Parliamentary rules, allowing Lionel de Rothschild to become the first practising Jewish Member of Parliament.

Whilst this ‘Anglicised’, established community sympathised with the plight of their foreign ‘brethren’, over time relations between the old and new communities became increasingly strained. This was due mainly to the fact that Eastern European Jewish immigration was increasingly viewed in Gentile quarters as a contributory factor to contemporary social and economic problems. In the face of accusations that the Jewish ‘aliens’ were exacerbating overcrowding, destitution, unemployment, rent levels and crime in the inner city, English-Jewish elites become increasingly convinced that their own ‘status and well-being’ would be ‘threatened’ if immigration continued unabated. To this end, a number of ‘repatriation’ and ‘re-emigration’ initiatives were commenced during the mid-1880s.²⁷

Despite these schemes, little could be done to stem the steady flow of migrants arriving during the 1890s and 1900s. Importantly, although immigration was linked to larger social and economic problems by a growing ‘anti-Alien’ lobby, the new arrivals also had a more direct, localised effect on Gentile perceptions. They often proved ‘quite noticeable as an alien feature’ in the limited number of urban areas in which they chose to settle. Kadish has claimed that the popular nineteenth century representation of the ‘well heeled acculturated

²⁷ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 171; Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, p. 73. For instance, from 1884, the Jewish Board of Guardians began inserting notices in Yiddish in Continental European newspapers warning Jewish refugees from coming to Britain ‘because of the depressed state of the labour market.’ As well as this policy of ‘discouragement’, the Board were also responsible for the somewhat controversial repatriation of around 50,000 immigrants back to the Russian Frontier, whilst other organisations such as the Russo-Jewish Committee and the Mansion House Commission also facilitated the ‘re-emigration’ of several thousand refugees to the USA and the colonies. V.D. Lipman, *A Century of Social Service, 1859-1959: The History of the Jewish Board of Guardians* (London, 1959), p. 93; Severin Adam Hochburg, ‘The Repatriation of Eastern European Jews from Great Britain: 1881-1914’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 50, (1988), p. 49; Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, p. 43.

[Jewish] banker or broker' was replaced, almost overnight, with the image of the 'sweatshop worker, talking loudly in Yiddish and practicing exotic religious rituals'.²⁸

Awareness of the 'problem' of immigration quickly grew amongst the Jewish establishment. In August 1891, the *Jewish Chronicle* noted its concern about the potentially negative effect that the 'foreignness' of the immigrants could have on the community as a whole: 'As long as there is a section of Jews in England who proclaim themselves aliens by their mode of life, by their very looks, by every word they utter, so will the entire community be an object of distrust to Englishmen'.²⁹ This article, which was a symbolic shift in direction for the established community, signalled the start of a period in which the focus turned to those immigrants residing in Britain permanently to find ways in which their 'Anglicisation' could be aided. In the early 1890s, a network of charitable and philanthropic organisations focused their efforts on pro-actively aiding the immigrant's smooth integration into the wider community and their assimilation of the basic tenets of the British lifestyle and culture. As Feldman has noted, these groups hoped 'to guide and discipline the immigrants to erase the most unacceptable aspects of their difference' and thus nullify increasing Gentile concerns about the growing 'Alien' population.³⁰

²⁸ Sharman Kadish, *'A Good Jew and a Good Englishman' The Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, 1895-1995* (London, 1995), p. 46.

²⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 August 1891.

³⁰ Feldman, 'Englishmen', p. 99. Free evening classes in English, home visits to aid immigrant women with housework, cooking and shopping, instruction on personal and domestic hygiene and encouraging social interaction between 'old' and 'new' Jews formed the core of a programme focused on 'the task of making the immigrants less foreign'.

As it became clear that efforts at ‘Anglicising’ the adult immigrants looked unlikely to have any lasting effect, attention began to turn to the second-generation immigrant children ‘since they were considered more malleable than their parents, who clung stubbornly, it was believed, to old-world habits and attitudes’.³¹ The realisation amongst the Anglo-Jewish elites that the focus of the ‘Anglicisation’ drive needed to switch to the younger Jewish refugees is best evidenced by an article published in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 3 February 1893. This stated the established community’s increasing belief that ‘in ten or fifteen years, the children of the refugees today will be men and women constituting, in point of numbers, the great bulk of the Jews of England. They will drag down, submerge or disgrace our community if we leave them in their present state of neglect’.

In the ‘first instance’, as Lipman notes, the Jewish authorities came to believe that education would be the most pivotal factor in the ‘Anglicisation’ of foreign and British born Jewish immigrant children. The vast majority, somewhere around 25-35,000 in the mid 1890s, attended ‘Board’ schools ran by Gentile authorities. As Lammers has noted, in these establishments Jewish children studied the same curriculum as their non-Jewish peers and learnt about the indigenous language, lifestyle and customs.³² Similarly, the 8,000 Jewish children attending Jewish ‘day’ schools in 1894, such as the Jews’ Free School in Spitalfields, were exposed to intense ‘Anglicising’ pressures by the Anglo-Jewish middle class school benefactors, administrators and teachers.³³

³¹ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 174.

³² Lammers, ‘The Citizens of the Future’, p. 404.

³³ Gerry Black, *JFS: The History of the Jew’s Free School, London since 1732* (London, 1998), p. 122.

In Jewish educational establishments such as the Manchester Jews' School, efforts were made to improve the cleanliness, manners and deportment of the foreign children, whilst the speaking of Yiddish was often banned to force the quick assimilation of the English language. In some cases, Jewish immigrant children were even forced to adopt 'Anglicised' names in order to rid them of their overly foreign, and alien monikers.³⁴ As Alderman has noted, the English Jewish elites believed that the Jewish and 'Board' schools 'acted as a powerful mechanism' for instructing Jewish immigrant children 'in the ways of English and Anglo-Jewish society'.³⁵

Although a significant part of the immigrant child's 'Anglicisation' would be carried out during their school lives, the Jewish communal elites were keen to make sure that the efforts in the sphere of education were not undone when the children left the classroom behind and moved into the world of work. To this end, the English-Jewish elites founded a number of recreational organisations aimed specifically at catering for young Jews in their leisure time to continue the process of 'Anglicisation' into their adolescence. In 1895, for example, the Jewish Lads' Brigade was created, with an inaugural meeting held in the hall of the Jews' Free School. The founder, a Jewish career officer in the British Army, Colonel Albert Goldsmid (1846-1904), wanted to create a quasi-military youth organisation along the lines of the Church Lads' Brigade, but with the specific aim of helping to turn 'working-class and foreign youth into fit and respectable Englishmen of the Mosaic Persuasion'. By using military-style drills and similar activities, and by exposing Jewish

³⁴ See Rosalyn Livshin, 'The Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews in Manchester, 1890-1930' in David Cesarani (Ed), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (London, 1990).

³⁵ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 140.

immigrant children to ‘Anglicised’ middle-class Jewish leaders and volunteers, Goldsmid hoped the Brigade would act as a ‘mediator’ between Jewish and Gentile life and aid the ‘foreign’ children’s integration. By 1909, the Brigade had grown to 4,000 members with companies across London and all the main Jewish provincial communities.³⁶

Similar intentions regarding the need to continue the ‘Anglicisation’ process also catalysed the creation of a number of Jewish youth clubs across London and Manchester from the late 1880s through to the First World War.³⁷ These organisations were extremely successful at drawing immigrant children through their doors - demonstrated by statistics from the Chief Rabbi’s office in 1914 showing that the twelve boys’ clubs in London alone had a total membership of 2,750, just under half of all 14-18 year old Jewish males then living in the capital.³⁸ This was all, as Feldman has noted, ‘an impressive amount of activity’, given that a large number of Jewish boys entered occupations with long hours that made attendance at these clubs almost impossible.³⁹

All of these clubs were established with the aid, assistance and drive of the English-Jewish elites. It was common for Jewish youth clubs to be founded and supported by families and personalities at the highest echelons of English-Jewish society. The first clubs to open were for Jewish girls, as the community initially felt their protection and guidance was more urgent than their male counterparts who were likely to be at elementary school, religious

³⁶ Kadish, ‘*A Good Jew*’, pp. 11, 27-31; Springhall, *Youth*, p. 42.

³⁷ On the Jewish youth club movement in London more generally, see Black, *Social Politics*, Chapter 5: ‘Club Life: Moulding Youth and Shaping Character’, pp. 133-148.

³⁸ [U]niversity [o]f [S]outhampton [S]pecial [C]ollections AJY220/3/6/5, ‘Schedules of attendance at Jewish institutions’.

³⁹ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 348.

school or work. The Jewish Girl's Club was founded in 1886 on Leman Street, Whitechapel by Lady Magnus and was followed ten years later by the West Central Jewish Girl's Club, founded in Bloomsbury in January 1896 by Lily Montagu.⁴⁰ With the aid of Lady Sassoon, the Butler Street Jewish Girls' Club opened its doors in 1902.⁴¹

The English-Jewish elites also played a pivotal role in the formation of various clubs for Jewish working boys. Take for instance the Brady Street Club for Working Boys, founded in 1896 in an old vicarage in Durward Street, Whitechapel by Lord and Lady Rothschild. Similarly, the West Central Jewish Working Lads' Club, which was established in West London in 1898, was founded with monetary assistance from the Montefiore and Mocatta families.⁴² Significantly, all of the Jewish clubs were run on a day-to-day basis by middle-class, largely public-schooled, English-Jewish workers and volunteers. Many had been actively sought by the club's patrons to serve in these establishments to act as examples of successful integration and social mobility to the young membership. The Victoria Boys' Club, founded on Fordham Street, Whitechapel, in 1901, was one Jewish club which even went as far as establishing formal links with Jewish public-school students by welcoming volunteers from Clifton College in Bristol.⁴³

Whilst this can be seen as part of the wider trend in late Victorian society for privileged public-school and University graduates to 'go down' to deprived areas and establish

⁴⁰ Black, *Social Politics*, pp. 133-140.

⁴¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 December 1902

⁴² Gerry Black, *Living Up West: Jewish Life in London's West End* (London, 1994), p. 221.

⁴³ UoSSC MS116/138/4, Brady Street Club for Working Boys, *First Annual Report: 1896-1897*; [U]niversity [C]ollege, [L]ondon [L]ibrary, West Central Jewish Working Lads' Club, *First Annual Report* (1899); Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 48.

missions and settlements, other similarities can be highlighted between the philanthropic endeavours of Jewish and non-Jewish society.⁴⁴ Within wider society at this time there was also a growing concern over the problem of ‘adolescence’, and Jewish youth organisations shared Gentile anxieties over the need for ‘rational recreation’ to prevent young adults from ‘loafing’ about the streets and becoming rebellious and wayward. In the Jewish youth movement, however, the ‘need’ to provide supervised leisure was inherently connected to ‘Anglicisation’, as there was a significant concern that the ‘danger of unregulated leisure’ amongst Jewish immigrant children would hamper the integration process. As Smith has shown with regards to this period, the Jewish clubs ‘tried to offer boys and girls a friendly alternative to the streets where it was thought that mischief and idleness ruined their characters’, yet the English-Jewish elites were also motivated by a desire to limit instances where disobedient young Jews brought negative attention to themselves and their community.⁴⁵

By providing positive leisure activities and facilities such as reading rooms, libraries, debating societies and lecture groups, the Jewish youth clubs acted as a form of ‘social prophylaxis’ - preventing ‘impressionable’ young Jews, as much as possible, from falling into lives of crime and vice, and from engaging in unsuitable amusements such as smoking, gambling and drinking.⁴⁶ This desire to keep Jews off the streets, and away from the potentially sceptical gaze of Gentile onlookers, was evident in the prescribed motivations of

⁴⁴ On the public-school missions and University settlements see Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 257-259; and Gertrude Himmelfarb, ‘Victorian Philanthropy: The Case of Toynbee Hall’, *American Scholar*, 59, 3, Summer 1990.

⁴⁵ Smith, ‘Sex’, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Black, *Social Politics*, p. 144.

all the Jewish clubs. The first annual report of the Brady Street Club, for instance, claimed it was founded to 'supply' the 'pressing want' for suitable leisure facilities amongst Jewish youths whose 'leisure hours were spent in aimless loafing about the streets, or occasional visits to low places of entertainment'. Similarly, in the Manchester Jewish community, lay and religious leaders' concerns over the need for 'rational recreation' led to the establishment of the Grove House Jewish Lads' Club in 1907 to steer children 'away from militant politics and from pastimes, especially gambling, which might bring the community into disrepute'.⁴⁷

Clearly, as Tananbaum has noted, the 'Jewish sponsored clubs' saw themselves as 'important vehicles for Anglicisation'.⁴⁸ As well as aiding integration of immigrant children through 'rational recreation' and exposing them to the influences of socially mobile English-Jewish managers and volunteers, the clubs also believed they could play a more direct role in helping the assimilation of young Jews through the medium of sport and physical recreation. Whilst positive leisure activities like reading, debating, singing and attending lectures were all significant in their own right, the most considerable emphasis of these clubs' work was placed on providing sport to alter and shape the physical and psychological character of the 'alien' children. Through sport, the 'Anglicisation' process would be catalysed and strengthened and young foreign and British born Jews turned into 'sportsmanlike' Englishmen and women.

⁴⁷ Bill Williams, *Jewish Manchester: An Illustrated History* (Derby, 2008), p. 83.

⁴⁸ Tananbaum, 'Ironing Out', p. 53.

'Ironing out the Ghetto Bend' – Physical Aspects of Sporting 'Anglicisation'

One of the earliest examples concerning the use of sport to aid the 'Anglicisation' of immigrant children can be found in the Jewish day school movement in the 1890s. In 1896, the non-Jewish headmaster of the Stepney Jewish Schools, William Ashe Payne, introduced a weekly programme of sports and gymnastics into his school's curriculum. He felt that planned and supervised physical recreation efficiently and effectively 'rounded out the integration of immigrant youth into English society' by turning 'weakly and pale-faced' immigrant Jews into strong Englishmen. Ashe Payne declared his mission was to 'produce Jews who, while devoted to English sports, would be none the less devoted to their ancestral faith'.⁴⁹

Ashe Payne's introduction of sport and gymnastics into his school's timetable was somewhat revolutionary, for until 1906 sport was not officially recognised as part of elementary education. Until that year, most physical training in schools was limited to repetitive forms of drill.⁵⁰ Whilst his ideas concerning regular sport were evidently original, Ashe Payne's promotion of sport to aid 'Anglicisation' drew considerable communal support as well. A series of articles in the *Jewish Chronicle* in June 1896 praised the 'attention given to the physical development of his pupils' and the efforts put into the Stepney Schools' sporting programme.⁵¹ As Black has noted, within a short space of time, 'his [Ashe Payne's] advocacy of broad programmes in athletic and physical education

⁴⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 June 1896.

⁵⁰ Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 139-142.

⁵¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 June 1896, 19 June 1896.

reverberated throughout Jewish voluntary schools'. The direct result was twofold; firstly, principals and headmasters with 'strong athletic credentials' like Ashe Payne were actively sought by Jewish-run schools in order to fill vacant posts. Secondly, and as a result of these appointments, the vast majority of Jewish schools began to incorporate gymnastics, athletics and, later, cricket and football into their curriculum.⁵²

In a similar way to the Jewish voluntary schools, the Jewish Lads' Brigade also utilised sporting activities, in a supplementary role to normal Brigade programmes, to help aid the physical 'Anglicisation' of immigrants. From its inception, the JLB was focused on altering the physical characteristics of immigrant Jewish children, as demonstrated by Colonel Goldsmid's famous declaration that the Brigade would work to 'iron out the Ghetto bend' within its membership. Similarly, in 1902, assistant Brigade Commandant, Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, noted in the *Jewish Chronicle* that one of the Brigade's main aims was to 'improve the physique and consequently the health of our boys'.⁵³

Whilst the main emphasis of the Brigade was placed firmly on offering armed drill, marching and gym training, traditional sports were also introduced into its schedule from the organisation's very earliest days. For instance, at the London company's joint annual summer camps, held in Deal, Kent from 1896 onwards, sports and games could often take up considerable portions of the daily timetable. The original members' pocket book noted that participation in sports 'were to be encouraged' within the Brigade, whilst the first

⁵² Black, *Social Politics*, p. 113.

⁵³ Kadish, 'A Good Jew', p. 39; *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 January 1902.

annual report stated that ‘the good effects of the drill are supplemented by those of athletic sports’. It went on to highlight that numerous Brigade sports’ clubs were in the process of formation and that swimming and football, under strict supervision of officers, was becoming increasingly popular. Significantly, sport remained a prominent aspect of the Brigade’s work well into the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁴

Whilst sport may have acted as only a supplementary aid to the ‘Anglicisation’ efforts of both the Jewish voluntary schools and the Jewish Lads’ Brigade, within the Jewish youth club movement it came to assume a much more central role. Some historians of Anglo-Jewry have alluded that extensive sporting programmes ensured these clubs’ survival. Lloyd Gartner referred to ‘athletic’ activities being the youth club’s ‘staff of life’; inferring that failure to offer broad sporting and games programmes would cast immense doubt on these organisations’ future prospects.⁵⁵ In the face of evidence from within the clubs, it is difficult to argue with his assertion. In the various club archives available, there are numerous references to sport effectively being the ‘glue’ that held the Jewish clubs together. In the September 1903 edition of the *Stepney Jewish Club Chronicle* it was noted that the sports teams were the main draw for the members and effectively ‘keeping the club

⁵⁴ Kadish, ‘*A Good Jew*’, pp. 27-31; UoSSC MS223, *First Annual Report of the Jewish Lads’ Brigade* (London, 1898), p. 18.

⁵⁵ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, p. 175. A similar dilemma was faced by non-Jewish youth clubs, with the realisation that the average member was drawn to the club mainly for the sporting opportunities available. As was made clear by Russell and Rigby in 1908, both ‘outdoor games and athletics’ and ‘indoor athletic sports’ needed to be a significant facet of any youth organisation, Jewish or Gentile, in order to appear attractive to adolescent boys. They acknowledged, somewhat grudgingly in both tone and sentiment, that there existed a ‘common belief that the main or sole function of a club, the purpose for which it exists, is the provision of recreation and exercise’. Charles Russell and Lilian Rigby, *Working Lads’ Clubs* (London, 1908), p. 115.

from collapsing'.⁵⁶ Similarly, in the West Central Jewish Lads' Club annual reports there are references in club reports of 'the attractions of cricket' playing a significant role in preventing the club from folding during the summer months.⁵⁷

Sport was the central aspect of the Jewish youth club movement's work. Vast amounts of financial resources, time and manpower were dedicated to offering a broad range of individual and team sporting opportunities and facilities in football, cricket, boxing, athletics, swimming and gymnastics. Undoubtedly, one of the initial motivations in providing for such a comprehensive sporting programme was to assist the 'social prophylaxis' function of the clubs. Sports that were supervised, co-ordinated and managed by club officials were seen to be a key means of attracting members to the club and keeping them off the streets, thus preventing them from drawing negative attention to themselves and their community. In 1900, one visitor to the West Central Club wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle* noting his support for the institutions' sporting programme - its 'physical side' as he labelled it - by saying that it would effectively 'counteract the temptations' of street life and unacceptable amusements.⁵⁸

As well as aiding 'Anglicisation' in an indirect manner through offering 'rational recreation', sport was also consciously promoted within the Jewish youth club movement as a means of improving the physique of members. Sport would combat the argument put forward by contemporary commentators that immigration proved a threat to the nation's

⁵⁶ UoSSC AJ220/5, *Stepney Jewish Club Chronicle*, 1, 7, September 1903, p. 4.

⁵⁷ UCLL, West Central Jewish Working Lads' Club, *Fourth Annual Report* (1902), p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 October 1900.

physical health.⁵⁹ Whilst it is wrong to believe that all immigrant Jews exhibited signs of physical weakness (Beatrice Potter, for instance, claimed it was ‘a mistake to suppose that the Jew is physically unfit’), the impression was widespread within both Gentile and Jewish society that the majority of the new arrivals were physically different to the indigenous Englishman and represented a threat to the British physique and health.⁶⁰ In 1901, Russell and Lewis claimed that Jewish immigrants were ‘dirty, poverty stricken and degraded alike in morals and physique by the oppressive conditions of their Ghetto-life in Russia’.⁶¹ Life in the *shtetl* [small towns and villages located within the Pale of Settlement], so some observers remarked, had apparently ravaged the physique and health of the average immigrant Jew.⁶²

To address this problem, the English-Jewish elites supported the broad introduction of sport into the Jewish youth club movement. This would improve the physical fitness of Jewish children to a level comparable to their non-Jewish peers and help to alleviate general concerns surrounding the physical wellbeing of the immigrant population that had been evident since the early 1880s.⁶³ On a visit to one Jewish club in October 1900, Chief Rabbi Herman Adler praised the sporting efforts of the Jewish youth movement and remarked that

⁵⁹ Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. 277 labels this the ‘health-threat argument’ against alien immigration.

⁶⁰ Beatrice Potter, ‘The Jewish Community’ in Charles Booth (Ed), *Life and Labour: Volume 1 – East London* (London, 1889), p. 586. On these perceptions see, for instance, Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, Chapter 3: ‘The Health and Morals of the Nation’; Bernard Harris, ‘Anti-Alienism, Health and Social Reform in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 31, 4, 1977.

⁶¹ Charles Russell and Harry Samuel Lewis, *The Jew in London: A Study of Racial Character and Present-Day Conditions* (London, 1901), p. 5.

⁶² Potter, ‘The Jewish Community’, p. 586.

⁶³ For example, in 1886, the *St James’ Gazette* published a series of articles on ‘Jewish Pauperism’ which were subsequently reprinted in mainstream newspapers such as the *Observer*. One article claimed that ‘the immigrants were immoral, replete with vice, a heavy charge on the rates... and steeped to the lips with every form of moral and physical degradation’. *St James’ Gazette*, 23 February 1886.

whilst ‘Ghetto’ life for many immigrant Jewish children had had the ‘result that their statures had been stunted and their limbs bent... with such gymnastic facilities as he saw around him, they could grow up manly men, manly in shape and form as well as in actions’.⁶⁴ Similarly, in 1906, during a speech to the Stepney Jewish Lads’ Club prize-giving ceremony, Lady Battersea (Constance Rothschild) remarked that whilst she was ‘ignorant of the games themselves’ she was fully aware that sport helped imbue physical ‘qualities which were so admired in the Anglo Saxon race and which had, for a certain time, been somewhat lacking in her own people’. She continued and noted that ‘sedentary’ town in life in Russia and Eastern Europe for many immigrant Jews had meant that ‘the brain had been cultivated at the expense of the other parts of the body’ and that sport was key to redressing this balance.⁶⁵

There was also a clear desire to promote sport among young Jews to assuage growing concerns over the physical ‘degeneration’ connected to contemporary urban life. Amongst British society more generally, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period of growing concern over the physical wellbeing of the nation. Many voiced their concerns over the ‘physical unfitness of the slum denizens’ after military defeats in the Boer War helped promote the idea that the urban, industrial environment was seemingly having a ruinous physical effect on the working-class population. A government inquiry, convened after the failed military campaign in South Africa, led to the publication of the 1904 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. This espoused compulsory

⁶⁴ *Jewish World*, 12 October 1900.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 13 April 1906.

school sport and physical training to rectify physical problems evident in military recruits and within the youngest sections of the general population.⁶⁶

Anglo-Jewry's anxieties over the physical effects of 'slum life' within the Jewish community must be seen within this context. Yet their fears were more motivated by the potential effects of 'physical worsening' on Jewish 'Anglicisation' than by concerns of health, wellbeing and physical efficiency within the wider population. Jewish youth club leaders and supporters worried that Jewish deterioration and physical weakness, due to their immediate surroundings in British cities, would further emphasise their difference and 'foreignness' against a backdrop of increasing non-Jewish concern over fitness and wellbeing. To this end, sport was viewed both as an important bulwark against the potential 'physical degeneration' resulting from Jewish inhabitation of urban, industrial environments and as an aid to raise Jewish children to a physical level comparable to that of their non-Jewish peers. In 1900, the *Jewish World* bemoaned the fact that under 'present economic conditions' many within the immigrant community were 'forced to crowd in the by-ways of the cities' where the 'sunshine of manly sports and pastimes was shut out'. The article went on to applaud the efforts of youth clubs such as the West Central where, 'under

⁶⁶ Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (London, 3 volumes, 1904); Geoffrey Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought: 1899-1914* (Oxford, 1971), Chapter 3 – 'The Ideology of National Efficiency'. In the aftermath of the 1904 report, 'Christian' youth organisations such as the Church Lads' Brigade resolved to introduce a stronger physical element to their work, resulting in a much greater emphasis on sport. More generally, physical recreation came to be regarded as an important tool against 'physical worsening'. Springhall, *Youth*, p. 57; Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London, 1986), pp. 131-140.

proper guidance and training', Jewish lads could play sports and games to 'fit themselves to take their places as citizens, physically and mentally equipped for the battle of life'.⁶⁷

One key way that the Jewish community felt that it could ameliorate the negative physical effect of urban life was by providing sporting facilities and opportunities for physical exercise through the medium of the Jewish youth clubs. As White has noted, the areas into which most of the immigrant Jewish population moved, especially in the East End, were 'starved of sporting facilities'. Public amenities for sport and physical recreation, apart from swimming baths, were often in short supply.⁶⁸ The comprehensive sporting programmes offered by the youth clubs, therefore, would fill this gap and act as an antidote to the physical effects of city life of young immigrant Jews. The founder of the Oxford and St George's Jewish Lads' Club, Basil Henriques (1890-1961), noted that the original motivation behind the formation of his club was to provide a 'refuge from the appallingly overcrowded homes and hideous, monotonous slum streets' and 'give physical recreation to half-starved, poverty-stricken, underdeveloped boys and girls'.⁶⁹

Within the Jewish girls clubs, it was hoped that opportunities for athletic activities could help to improve the 'stunted' physique of the refugee females and assist in their integration into the wider community. Black has noted that 'all [girls] clubs taught the importance of

⁶⁷ *Jewish World*, 7 December 1900.

⁶⁸ White, *Rothschild Buildings*, p. 190.

⁶⁹ UoSSC AJ220/3/4, Basil Henriques, 'Jewish Youth and Youth Clubs Today', address given to the Annual General Meeting of the Association for Jewish Youth, 23 June 1955. On Henriques more generally, see Lionel Lewis Loewe, *Basil Henriques* (London, 1976). On the Oxford and St George's Jewish Lads' Club, see Raphael Loewe, 'The Bernhard Baron Settlement and Oxford and St George's Club' in Aubrey Newman (Ed), *The Jewish East End: 1840-1939* (London, 1981), pp. 143-146.

the healthy body as well as the alert mind and moral character' and that drill, gymnastics and exercise to music were offered almost every evening.⁷⁰ At the 1906 annual meeting of the Butler Street Jewish Girl's Club, the Chairman, Rufus Isaacs KC, applauded the physical exercise programme of the club and noted his belief that 'recreation or education was of little real value unless combined with physical education. Physical training was essential to girls who lived and worked in that part of the world'.⁷¹

Some clubs, however, took the principle of the need to demonstrate Jewish physical parity with non-Jewish children one step further - mainly in order to assess the success of the 'physical' side of their work in their 'Anglicisation' efforts. The Victoria Club, for instance, employed its own doctor to look after members who were ill and to collate information on their physical condition. One examination of 150 club members during 1907 led to the conclusion that 'visitors to the club will be somewhat startled by how favourably Jewish lads of the same size and station...contrast with their Christian brethren'. The equal in terms of 'physique' to non-Jewish children, the average Jewish member of the Victoria Club was adjudged to be 'much cleaner, better dressed, smarter, brighter and comparatively speaking, have an air of general well-being lamentably wanting in the members of some of the Christian clubs in the East End'.⁷² In the eyes of non-Jewish commentators, as evidenced by Russell and Rigby in their volume on *Working Lads' Clubs*, this was definitive proof that the Victoria Club's aims for the 'physical improvement of their members' and for the 'transformation' of foreign Jews into Englishmen was being

⁷⁰ Black, *Social Politics*, p. 140.

⁷¹ *Jewish World*, 1 March 1906

⁷² Russell and Rigby, *Working Lads*, p. 347.

‘realised’. Seemingly, the policy of ‘Anglicisation’ through sport and physical recreation was markedly successful.⁷³

Similar evidence of the achievements of the Jewish youth movement in the drive to raise the physical condition of the immigrant Jewish child was presented in the 1904 Government report into ‘Physical Deterioration’. Evidence from General Sir Frederick Maurice claimed that the ‘Jewish child, although coming from extremely poor quarters and under very unsavoury conditions, is as a rule a stronger and healthier child than the Gentile’.⁷⁴ Inspections of Jewish pupils in schools in Leeds and London led to the conclusion that ‘the headmaster and headmistress and teachers all agreed that they were of good physique [and] that they were of higher intelligence than our children’.⁷⁵ The *Jewish Chronicle* delighted in the report’s findings that the average Jewish boy was ‘physically... very much superior to the average British boys’, especially considering the ‘somewhat lurid accounts of the moral and physical degeneracy of other sections of the people’.⁷⁶ In seeking to explain the apparent disparity between the Jewish and non-Jewish child, the inquiry highlighted a number of factors but also singled out the Jewish youth movement, particularly the Jewish Lads’ Brigade, for special praise. When seen in conjunction with evidence from within the club movement, it is clear that the drive to physically ‘Anglicise’

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, Volume II, *List of Witnesses and Minutes of Evidence*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ Ibid. pp. 147-148.

⁷⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 August 1904.

the alien child, a campaign which relied heavily on sport and physical recreation, had clearly had a notable impact.⁷⁷

Playing the Game in the 'Right' Way – The Psychological Benefits of Sport

Importantly, sport was not just promoted within the Jewish youth movement for the physical benefits that it seemingly conferred on 'alien' Jewish children. In order to undermine the 'threat to the character of England' argument forwarded by certain anti-alienists, physical recreation was also passionately promoted for the assistance it gave to the positive development of young Jews' characters and personalities. Alongside wider arguments concerning the immigrant 'threat' to British health, some commentators also believed that an 'alien invasion' represented a threat to the British temperament. It was believed that 'foreign' Jews - with their strange language, attitudes, routines and lifestyles - would undermine Britishness and change the psychological and moral character of those living in close confines with the alien population.⁷⁸ If young Jews were encouraged to play sport, however, it was claimed that the most obvious and offensive mental characteristics of the immigrant population could be erased. Effectively, whilst organised and supervised games could help 'alien' children look and appear less foreign, sport could also help them to think and act more like Englishmen.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Inter-Departmental Committee, *Volume II*, p. 151.

⁷⁸ For an outline of this debate, see Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, pp. 278-279.

⁷⁹ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 48.

Jewish youth leaders, like those behind sporting and physical initiatives in the English public-school system and within organisations based around notions of ‘Muscular Christianity’, believed strongly in the Latin phrase ‘Mens Sano in Corpore Sano’ (a healthy mind in a healthy body). The idea, prevalent amongst non-Jewish society from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, was that a strong mind and a strong body were interlinked and individually and collectively pivotal for the future well-being and social, cultural and economic welfare of the population. Sport and physical recreation, therefore, was promoted within these organisations to address both of these needs; preparing the young physically to play the game of life successfully, but also equipping them with the mental strength needed to become a full and contributing citizen of Britain and her Empire.⁸⁰

Jewish youth club managers and volunteers, often drawn from the public-schooled middle-classes, transferred the belief in the dual need for physical and psychological strength into their clubs. In that environment this ideology, as with much of the youth movement’s work, became intertwined with the over-arching need to promote the ‘Anglicisation’ and integration of immigrant children. At the same time that sport was encouraged as a means of ‘social prophylaxis’ and as a physical aid to integration, it was also viewed as an important tool in the strengthening of the immigrant Jew’s character and as a means of ‘Anglicising’ the mentality of the ‘alien’ child. Through games and sport, young Jews could be made to think, act and behave in a manner closer to their privileged, privately-educated non-Jewish peers and thus improve their chances of integration and acceptance into English society. Through supervised and organised sport within the youth movement,

⁸⁰ Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 92-93.

Jews would develop the correct 'sporting' attitude and acquire a distinctly English character and mentality.⁸¹

One significant hurdle which had to be overcome in this respect was that the immigrant Jewish population initially seemed to demonstrate little interest or desire in sporting participation. During the earliest period of the youth movement's work, many club leaders and managers were vocal in condemning the apparent lack of interest in sport exhibited by immigrant children. 'Anglicised' managers and workers frequently claimed that Jews born abroad or into immigrant families were conspicuous for their indifference towards physical recreation. In the first annual report of the Brady Street Club, for instance, reference was made to the fact that 'a considerable proportion of the boys have an undoubted aversion to physical exercises in any form' and the report's author deplored the fact that 'a true sportsmanlike spirit...is practically non-existent among East End Jewish lads'.⁸²

The fact that young, immigrant Jews seemingly exhibited little interest in sporting activities concerned youth leaders greatly and they argued that a lack of 'sporting' attitude had severe implications for wider 'Anglicisation' efforts. Those involved with young Jewish immigrants were evidently anxious that the indifference shown towards sport would only serve to emphasise their 'foreignness' in a 'culture which...always placed a premium on athletic achievement' and where sport was so closely linked to notions of English identity

⁸¹ Smith, 'Sex', p. 6.

⁸² UoSSC MS116/138/4, Brady Street, *First Annual Report*.

and culture.⁸³ A 'Board' school headmaster testified to the *1903 Royal Commission on Alien Immigration* that he felt one reason why Jewish boys were 'not comparing favourably' with their non-Jewish peers was that 'through no fault of their own they have not had the same privileges...these children have not had the same advantages in learning cricket, swimming, football and pastimes of that sort'.⁸⁴

Similar fears were evident amongst Jewish youth workers. In 1911, before he embarked upon his own career working with immigrant Jewish children, Basil Henriques noted his belief that 'there was something fundamentally lacking in the children of the foreign born refugees from Russia and Poland'. Henriques went on to observe he felt that immigrant children 'would never become Anglicised to the extent of ordinary British boys and girls because they had not had the opportunity for games as we know them here' and 'had no sporting instincts' like English children. Henriques and his fellow youth club managers felt that, without helping Jewish children to develop an interest in sport comparable to the non-Jewish population, immigrant Jewish children would 'remain temperamentally alien'.⁸⁵

Indifference towards sporting activities was distinctly 'un-English', but was a problem which could be directly addressed through the medium of the youth movement. By encouraging young Jews to participate in the vast sporting programmes offered by the Jewish schools, Jewish Lads' Brigade and the Jewish youth clubs, and by actively seeking

⁸³ Black, *Social Politics*, p. 146.

⁸⁴ *Royal Commission on Alien Immigration*, Volume II: *Minutes of evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration* (London, 1903), p. 690.

⁸⁵ UoSSC MS132/AJ195/5, Rose Henriques, 'Unpublished typescript of a biographical journal of Basil Henriques', p. 161.

managers and volunteers with ‘athletic credentials’, a new ‘sporting instinct’ would be gradually created.⁸⁶ Indeed, in the period up to 1914, participation in club sports grew considerably within the Jewish movement, with interest often outstripping financial and manpower resources available.⁸⁷

Whilst the leaders of the Jewish youth movement clearly intended to help inculcate a general interest in physical recreation amongst the membership, the idea that organised and supervised sport could further aid their psychological ‘Anglicisation’ was also prevalent. Although youth leaders clearly believed that sport could make immigrant Jews similar to the non-Jewish population in terms of both physique and leisure interests, it was also true that they believed strongly in the potential utility of sport to mould their members’ characters. Through organised and supervised play, key notions of ‘Englishness’ could be inculcated into the young Jews and aid their psychological development into sportsmanlike, English Jews.⁸⁸

The idea of utilising sporting participation to alter behavioural patterns and ‘mould’ character was first developed within the English public-school system during the early to mid nineteenth century. In these private educational establishments, sport was increasingly

⁸⁶ When the Oxford and St George’s Jewish Lads’ Club opened in 1914, Basil Henriques noted that ‘it is perhaps the athletic man who is more especially needed to transform the newly arrived foreign Jews into English sportsmen’. UoSSC AJY200/3/6/5 Basil Henriques, *The Oxford and St George’s Jewish Lads’ Club* (London, 1914), p. 14.

⁸⁷ There are numerous references in Jewish club reports to financial and staffing limitations eventually limiting the amount of sport that could be offered to members. The 1906 Hutchison House report, for example, noted that financial assistance was urgently needed if the club was to continue offering its hugely popular outdoor sporting programme into the following year. Money from wealthy donors was eventually acquired. *Jewish World*, 2 February 1906.

⁸⁸ Tananbaum, ‘Ironing Out’, p. 54.

viewed as a weapon against disciplinary problems and as a means of shaping and forming character. As Mangan has noted in his seminal volume on *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, ‘physical exercise’ was viewed by public-school educationalists as a ‘highly effective means of inculcating valuable...educational goals’. Through emphasising notions of ‘physical and moral courage, loyalty and co-operation, the capacity to act fairly and take defeat well, [and] the ability to both command and obey’ on the sports pitch, Mangan argued that ‘a grand breed of men for the service of the British nation’ was produced by the public-schools with sportsmanship and fair play as their main moral characteristics.⁸⁹

Upper and middle-class Jews who ‘went down’ to urban areas to work with their less fortunate brethren carried with them a set of sporting and psychological values formulated in the public-school environment. They, according to Bunt, ‘believed with a great fervour’ that the moral code that they absorbed on the football and cricket pitches of the prestigious schools could be ‘grafted onto the young Jews recently arrived from the Ghettoes of Europe’ in order to aid their ‘Anglicisation’ and assimilation. Their ‘determination to translate barely literate young Russian and Polish Jews into well-washed Anglo-Jewish sportsmen’ led to a significant emphasis being placed on sporting participation, where notions of the public-school formation of ‘Englishness’ could be transferred to young, impressionable members through supervised and managed play. By encouraging participation in football, cricket, boxing etc in the ‘right’ way i.e. with a ‘sporting’ attitude, respect for the opposition, team members, referee and captain, it was believed that a new

⁸⁹ JA Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London, 2000), p. 9, 56.

mental ‘carapace’ would be formed that would protect and facilitate the young immigrants’ integration into English society.⁹⁰

The key sporting ideals believed to be so vitally important in the creation of an ‘English’ mentality would be inculcated through sport in a strictly supervised, managed milieu. It was believed that Jewish boys would naturally absorb the moral and social lessons offered through sport and gain vital psychological benefits. For instance, two key aspects of Englishness that youth club leaders passionately advocated amongst members were ‘fair play’ and ‘sportsmanship’ - seen to be central tenets of middle and upper-class social and national identity. To this end, club leaders often offered advice on the need for a sporting attitude and implored members to demonstrate ‘true sportsmanship’ when on the field of play. One article from the Brady Club magazine, *The Bradian*, in 1903, reminded members that ‘the aim of everyone who plays a game of any kind, such as cricket or football, is to be known as a good player and a good sportsman’. The article, the essence of which was seen in various forms and at various other times within other Jewish youth clubs, continued by offering comprehensive advice on conduct and attitude on the pitch and asked members to ‘play the game’ and thus to ‘derive great pleasure and physical benefits’.⁹¹

When club members appeared to be ‘unsportsmanlike’ in their conduct, they drew the disdain of managers and leaders and were subsequently admonished. In 1904, the *Stepney Jewish Club Chronicle* noted its disappointment over the behaviour of members during

⁹⁰ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, pp. 46-47.

⁹¹ UoSSC MS132/AJ250/4, *The Bradian*, 5, 1903, pp. 4-5.

football matches against other clubs. Reports claimed that ‘rough’ play and poor sportsmanship, on the part of both players and spectators, was both in breach of rules of ‘sporting conduct’ and did ‘not say much for the boys as sportsmen’.⁹² Conversely, however, when members displayed an exemplary attitude during sporting activities, managers were buoyed by the apparent progress being made in changing behavioural patterns. One entry into the logbook of the Victoria Jewish Lads’ Club in July 1901 recorded an unsuccessful cricket match yet positively noted that ‘the fielding was quite good, the bowling ‘ditto’... batting still the weakest point, a lot of the hitting being very fluid. But the most satisfactory feature is the fact that the team seems to be able to play a losing game without getting discouraged’.⁹³

Whilst the demonstration of an individual ‘sporting’ attitude from members was vitally important on the field of play, Jewish club sports also worked to emphasise notions of deference to social superiors and respect for authority. Whereas within the English public-school system, recognising and complying with the will of the referee or the team captain was intrinsically linked to ideas of class and the maintenance of social stability, in the Jewish youth movement this was not the case. As Kadish has noted with regards to the Jewish Lads’ Brigade, English-Jewish youth workers did not have an ‘interest in perpetuating the English class system within the Jewish community’, as they themselves had benefited significantly from social mobility.⁹⁴

⁹² UoSSC MS172/AJ250/4, *Stepney Jewish Club Chronicle*, 1, 14, 1904, p. 4; *Stepney Jewish Club Chronicle*, 1, 11, 1903, p. 5.

⁹³ [L]ondon [M]etropolitan [A]rchives ACC2996/01, Victoria Club Log Book, 7 July 1901.

⁹⁴ Kadish, *A Good Jew*, p. 44.

Instead, the idea of sporting respect for authority was linked to ‘Anglicisation’ and the established community’s hope that Jewish immigrant children would respect their communal elders and display the kind of deferential behaviour expected of obedient English boys and girls. Complying with the will of the referee, umpire or Captain was expected from young Jews during club sport, whilst disobedient and disorderly behaviour was deplored and held to be indicative of a ‘foreign’ mentality. In 1901, for instance, managers at the Victoria Club noted their concern at a ‘disinclination to recognise the Captain’s authority’ during cricket matches and recorded their ‘hope these failings will soon be conspicuous by their absence’. Likewise, one week later, another Victoria Club manager logged ‘Very successful day at cricket... the behaviour of the boys on the field was very good, but there is still a tendency not to accept the Umpire’s decision as final’.⁹⁵

Such was the importance of ideas of deference being promulgated on the sports field, that some clubs, even before sporting sections were fully organised, felt the need to provide strict instructions and rules regarding the principle of ‘authority’ during sporting contests. The Notting Hill Jewish Lads’ Club, founded in 1908, noted in the first issue of its club magazine in April 1911 that whilst ‘it is rather early to talk about any details’ regarding the newly established club cricket team, ‘the new season presents a rather favourable opportunity for the giving of a few hints to players’. Members were advised, firstly, ‘never argue with the Umpire, it will not make him alter his decision and it is unsportsmanlike’, secondly, ‘always go at once to whatever position in the field you are placed’ and finally,

⁹⁵ LMA ACC2996/01, Victoria Club Log Book, 19 May 1901, 26 May 1901.

‘Remember, the Captain’s orders must be obeyed at once’. Evidently, playing the game was not enough for club managers keen to see both a sense of submission and of duty from ‘foreign’ members towards their supposed superiors.⁹⁶

Members often acknowledged the positive effects that the Jewish clubs’ emphasis on sport had had on the development of their characters and as a means of social training. One West Central Jewish Lads’ Club member later recalled that he felt his involvement in club sport had helped him mature mentally, as well as physically. He noted

It [club sport] was really a training for citizenship. It sounds like a little thing, but if you lost a football match, you learned to say ‘Well played’ to your opponents and go on your way. No bitterness, no fighting and no arguments and that is hard for a pugnacious boy to do. However, we were told that was the way it had to be. If you lose, you lose. Someone is going to beat you. Those lessons were priceless.⁹⁷

In the period immediately preceding the First World War, it was noted that sport had played a pivotal role in the acculturation of Jewish immigrant children. In February 1914, after completing fourteen years of service to the Jewish youth of the East End, the Stepney Jewish Lads’ Club produced a booklet outlining what it saw as its major achievement and successes since opening in 1900. The publication made reference to the club’s work in aiding the ‘Anglicisation’ process and claimed that the ‘object of the club is to develop its members morally, mentally and physically in order that, with wise direction, they may be able to make the best use of their powers and improve their position’. In the eyes of the

⁹⁶ UoSSC MS116/121/AJ301/2, *Notting Hill Jewish Lads’ Club Magazine*, 1, 1, April 1911, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Black, *Living Up West*, p. 230.

booklet's authors, there was one aspect of the club's programme which had accounted for Stepney's successes in this respect; sport and physical recreation.⁹⁸

Not only had a plethora of organised and supervised games helped to improve the 'physical condition of the working lad' and alter his 'character and moral welfare', but because sport had been a positive use of his leisure time, the 'foreign' member had become a much more responsible citizen. After proudly listing the sporting activities offered by the club, the booklet noted that 'In all these physical exercises the sturdy characteristics of the British race are inculcated into the lad of foreign extraction which... is resulting in the production of a man capable of rising to almost any position that opportunity offers'.⁹⁹

Clearly then, those leaders and managers involved in the running of the Stepney Jewish Lads' Club, as in similar institutions, believed that sport and physical recreation had had a positive 'Anglicising' effect on foreign, immigrant children. Not only did the Jewish youth movement value sport as a vital means of filling young Jews' leisure time, but it also viewed physical recreation as an aid to the physical and psychological transformation of 'alien' children into sporting young English Jews. Exercise taken and lessons learnt on the football or cricket pitch, in the gymnasium or boxing ring would prepare these children's bodies and minds for the integration process. In theory, this would ensure their future well-being and success in English society.

⁹⁸ Stepney Jewish Lads' Club, *How a Jewish Working Boys' Club is Run: An Account of the Stepney Jewish Lads' Club* (London, 1914), p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 9.

In the minds of the English-Jewish community, sport was one tool available to them in their struggle to assimilate a 'foreign' immigrant population. This would prevent the deterioration of their own favourable position within English society and ensure that a long history of Jewish integration and acceptance would continue. Through sporting activities, administered and supervised by organisations created and funded by Anglo-Jewry, English sporting values would be transferred to the 'foreign' Jews. By utilising ideologies emanating from the English public-school system, 'Anglicised' Jewish youth workers hoped that key aspects of the immigrant children's 'difference' would be gradually erased.

What the case study of the Jewish youth movement's sporting programme also demonstrates, however, is that sport and physical recreation was viewed as much more than just a simple leisure activity. Games such as football and cricket were believed to be inextricably linked to notions of national and cultural identity and there is much evidence to show that the English-Jewish elites understood sport in a much deeper way than just simple 'play'. Physical pastimes and recreations were consciously linked to concerns arising out of the contemporary social and cultural environment and promoted for ends, other than for simple leisure, specific to a particular minority community. In essence, the immense significance attached to sport by the established Jewish community during the 'Anglicisation' process demonstrates both the centrality of physical recreation to a sense of 'Englishness' and to a hybridised formation of English-Jewish identity.

The notion of sport shaping and altering the physical and mental characteristics of an immigrant community is not original to this discussion. Indeed, the Anglo-Jewish use of

sport for ‘Anglicisation’ echoes similar debates within American Jewish sports historiography which viewed sport as an important ‘middle-ground’ existing in the social, cultural and political space between minority Jewish and majority American communities. As Levine has demonstrated, Jewish communal elites in America in the period of Eastern European immigration believed immensely in the usefulness of sport for ‘Americanisation’. Games such as basketball and baseball provided a social and cultural arena in which immigrant Jewish children, under the supervision of middle-class, German-Jews, could form and shape hybrid American-Jewish identities which would facilitate their integration and acceptance into mainstream American society.¹⁰⁰

Much the same can clearly be said about the sporting ‘Anglicisation’ of Jews in the British Jewish youth movement. Yet the case study documented here is also useful for illuminating a great deal concerning the anxieties and socio-cultural values of an established minority community in the face of renewed immigration. Indeed, Tananbaum has alluded to the fact that an investigation of the ‘Anglicising’ initiatives of the Jewish youth movement ‘reveals more about the goals of sponsors, than the behaviour and attitudes of the participants’. Archival evidence concerning the work of Jewish schools and youth organisations will inevitably demonstrate more about the motivations of those running these establishments than the outlook of the average member. It is also true that an analysis of youth club programs within the Jewish community during the turn of the twentieth century ‘offer

¹⁰⁰ Levine, *Ellis Island*, Chapter 1 – ‘The Promise of Sport’.

valuable insights into the anxieties of middle-class Anglicised Jews' who clearly felt threatened by Jewish immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe.¹⁰¹

Importantly though, archival evidence also gives us a clearer picture of the established community's feelings on sporting activities generally and shows how deeply English public-school notions about physical exercise and 'athleticism' seeped into the English-Jewish psyche. Whilst the notion of utilising sport for 'Anglicisation' was clearly of Anglo-Jewish origin, many of their fears surrounding the need for 'rational recreation', anxiety over physical and moral degeneracy and the socio-cultural utility of sport to rectify psychological and physiological health problems were shared by contemporary non-Jewish society. The Jewish youth movement's 'use' of sport, therefore, illuminates a great deal about the Jewish community at this time, but should not be seen within geographical, social or racial isolation.

Competitive Sport and Immigrant Integration

The use of sport for 'Anglicisation' was not just limited to within the environment of the youth club or Jewish Lads' Brigade. Whilst a great deal of importance was clearly attached to sport for the physical and psychological acculturation of immigrant children, it was also the case that competitive sport was believed to be a useful, more indirect, aid to processes of integration and social and cultural acceptance. By promoting the idea of playing sport

¹⁰¹ Tananbaum, 'Ironing Out', p. 63, 68.

against non-Jewish children, the Jewish elites hoped to use sporting contact as a medium for demonstrating to the wider population that Jews did not see themselves as socially, culturally or racially isolated. Likewise, the established community were also keen for the opportunities for competitive sport to be extended to Jews unable to take advantage of competitions and programmes administered by non-Jewish organisations due to observance of the Jewish Sabbath. By creating the infrastructure to ensure, as much as possible, for equal provision for competitive play for Jews, the new sporting culture promulgated in the youth movement could be protected and expanded.¹⁰²

Competition against non-Jews in the sporting arena came to be seen by the Jewish elites as both a weapon against charges of immigrant ‘aloofness’ and as a useful means of improving contact with wider society. By meeting non-Jews on the sports field, in the gymnasium or in the boxing ring, Jewish immigrant children could work to undermine ideas of Jewish isolation and separatism prominent in the period of Eastern European immigration. Through sport, especially in gymnastics and boxing, Jews also had the opportunity to change perceptions of the Jewish immigrant community and demonstrate that they were physically able and suitable for integration into the mainstream population.¹⁰³

Great significance was also placed on preventing Jewish religious considerations from limiting opportunities for competitive sport and thus hindering the sporting aspect of the

¹⁰² Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 129.

¹⁰³ Smith, ‘Sex’, p. 14.

‘Anglicisation’ process. The Jewish Athletic Association, founded in 1899, developed ‘Jewish’ leagues and tournaments to fill the gap created by observance of the Jewish Sabbath on participation in non-Jewish competition. Likewise much effort was also made with regards to Jewish school-children to ensure that their opportunities for sport were not restricted within the ‘Board’ school environment. Whilst Jews may not have been able to play against non-Jews in their own sporting competitions, the Jewish Athletic Association went some way to ensuring that young Jews would not miss out altogether on the social and physical benefits of competitive sport.¹⁰⁴

In both of these instances, competitive sport with other Jews or against non-Jews was seen to be another tool available to the Jewish elites in their quest for immigrant ‘Anglicisation’. Evidence suggests that competitive sport was not promoted simply for leisure purposes, but for the clear social and cultural benefits it could also seemingly bring. The overriding mission was to use sport against other Jews or Gentiles to further demonstrate the ‘Englishness’ of the immigrant children and their suitability and eagerness for integration into the mainstream society. Through competitive play, Jews could challenge some of the main critiques surrounding assimilation, show themselves as suitable material for English society and further the ‘Anglicisation’ programme of the youth movement.

¹⁰⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 May 1913.

Sport Challenging Social and Cultural 'Isolation'

Whilst Gentile anxieties surrounding the 'influx' of immigrant Jews were mainly centred on concerns that 'alien' Jews exacerbated numerous socio-economic issues, some commentators complained that the immigrant's presence was problematic due to their alleged indifference towards integration. Throughout the main period of Jewish immigration to Britain, but especially in the years immediately preceding the 1905 Aliens Act, certain non-Jewish observers lamented the supposed 'isolation' of the newcomers from wider society. It was argued that racially, socially and culturally, the Eastern European and Russian Jews were indifferent towards the majority population and culture and, thus, represented a clear threat to the cohesion of local and national identity and community.

Criticisms of the Jewish immigrant community often focused on what some saw as their apparent inherent 'clannishness' and apathy towards the wider population. In 1887, for example, the *St James' Gazette* published an editorial that claimed that the immigrant newcomers 'never forget that they are Jews and that other people are Gentiles'. It argued that 'long as they [Jews] may live among us, they will never become merged in the mass of the English population'.¹⁰⁵ The right-wing writer Arnold White was similarly convinced that the immigrant Jewish community lacked a desire to integrate or assimilate. In his 1899 book, *The Modern Jew*, White claimed that the Russian and Eastern European Jews were 'a

¹⁰⁵ *St James' Gazette*, 4 April 1887.

community proudly separate, racially distinct and existing preferentially aloof'.¹⁰⁶ In evidence given to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903, the first stages of Government enquiries that led to legislation in 1905, White reiterated his belief that Jewish immigrants 'belong to a race and cling to a community that prefers to remain aloof from the mainstream of our national life'.¹⁰⁷

Such fears were also present in the highest echelons of the Edwardian political establishment. Many Conservative politicians of the time lamented the isolation of the immigrant community and noted their anxiety over the potential impact of its continued 'detachment' from mainstream society. Indeed, the Conservative Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, claimed during the committee stages of the Aliens Bill in 1905 that

a state of things could easily be imagined in which it would not be on [sic] the advantage of the civilisation of the country that there should be an immense body of persons who, however patriotic, able and industrious, however much they threw themselves into national life, remained a people apart.¹⁰⁸

The challenge for the English-Jewish community, who had given themselves the task of 'Anglicising' the immigrants and alleviating Gentile fears such as this, was not only to make the newcomers think and act like Englishmen and women, but to encourage them to interact and physically, socially and culturally integrate into the wider community. Importantly, however, many communal initiatives along these lines were extremely

¹⁰⁶ Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (London, 1899), p. xii.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 133.

misguided. During the early 1890s, for example, 'optimistic attempts' were made to try to disperse and redistribute the immigrant community; the idea being to force 'alien' Jews to integrate more into the non-Jewish population.¹⁰⁹

As with the wider 'Anglicisation' campaign, the English-Jewish elites eventually placed great hope in the immigrant children, believing that their experiences could help to undermine the 'self-imposed alienation from English society' which they thought existed amongst their parents and grandparents.¹¹⁰ Once again, compulsory education would play a pivotal role in this process. In Board schools, Jewish children would mix in an educational and social environment with their non-Jewish peers - interaction and integration which would help lessen their isolation from wider society. Many contemporary observers applauded the efforts of schools in integrating immigrant children into their establishments. In his 1901 book entitled *East London*, the novelist, historian and social investigator Walter Besant (1836-1901) discussed the immigrant Jewish population and claimed 'as for their children, you may look for them in the board school, they have become English, both boys and girls...are English through and through'.¹¹¹ In 1902, one headmaster applauded the fact that in his school 'Jewish boys soon become anglicised and cease to be foreigners'.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Feldman, 'Englishmen', p. 102.

¹¹⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 February 1887.

¹¹¹ Walter Besant, *East London* (London, 1901), p. 191.

¹¹² Quoted in Lipman, *Social History*, p. 106.

Many Jewish philanthropists were keen for social interactions started between Jew and non-Jew in the school environment to continue during adolescence.¹¹³ It was hoped that the numerous youth clubs that they had helped to form would provide an environment for Jewish and Gentile children to mix, to play and to socialise together. Indeed, Lady Rothschild, the founder and patron of the Brady Street Club for Working Boys initially wanted the organisation to be non-denominational in order to attract non-Jews and further minimise the supposed social and cultural isolation of the Jewish immigrants.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately for her and other English-Jewish club patrons, Gentile children generally chose to frequent their own clubs and youth organisations away from ‘Jewish’ areas within the capital. In the Brady Club’s first report it was noted that ‘at the present moment the Jewish element so largely preponderates that the Club may be looked upon as Jewish in all but name’.¹¹⁵

As with much of these clubs’ efforts towards ‘Anglicising’ Jewish immigrant children, a great deal of emphasis was placed on sport and physical recreation. In this case, sport was seen as a means of encouraging ‘association’ and aiding the development of ‘mutual’ good feeling amongst Jewish and non-Jewish children. It was hoped that sporting contact with non-Jewish clubs would help to demonstrate the success of the ‘Anglicisation’ campaign and highlight the desire of young Jews for integration and interaction with the wider

¹¹³ Not all Jewish club leaders and patrons were keen for the ‘mixing’ of races to be promoted. As Bunt has shown, some within the youth movement feared the effect that encouraging interaction between Jew and non-Jew in their clubs could have on the overall cohesion of the Jewish community. A deep fear existed in some quarters over the possible effect of allowing non-Jewish members into clubs would have on levels of intermarriage and conversion. Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 128.

¹¹⁴ The omission of any ‘Jewish’ reference in the club’s title is indicative of the Rothschild’s desire that the organisation should be open to all denominations. Mark Lazarus, *A Club Called Brady* (London, 1996), p. 9.

¹¹⁵ UoSSC MS116/138/4, Brady Street, *First Annual Report* (1897).

community. As Smith has noted, sports like cricket and football ‘provided a medium through which gentile and Jewish children could come together’ and help break down religious, cultural and social barriers between children of different ethnic backgrounds.¹¹⁶

During the earliest years of the club movement, efforts were made to organise regular sporting contests with non-Jewish teams. Both the Brady Street and West Central clubs, for instance, entered into regular contests against non-Jewish club and school teams in sports such as football, cricket, gymnastics and boxing – a fact proudly recorded in their annual reports.¹¹⁷ Despite this, more regular contact with non-Jews in the sporting arena was sought and it was for this reason that several Jewish clubs based in the capital joined the London Federation of Working Boys’ Clubs during the 1900s.¹¹⁸

Gaining membership of the Federation was viewed extremely positively by club leaders as it opened up a number of organised leagues and tournaments for member clubs throughout the year in a wide variety of sports. As well as an important means of improving the quality of the sports teams within the Jewish youth club movement, participation in these events was also a useful way of improving contact between Jewish and non-Jewish children and changing perceptions of the Jewish community. In its 1902 annual report the Brady Street

¹¹⁶ Smith, ‘Sex’, p. 14.

¹¹⁷ Lazarus, *A Club*, p. 27; UCLL, West Central Jewish Working Lads’ Club, *Third Annual Report* (1901).

¹¹⁸ The Federation of London Working Boys’ Clubs was founded in 1887 by a number of boys’ clubs, to provide an organisation which could formulate a unified policy and philosophy and provide backup services for the Boys’ Club movement. The Federation was renamed in the early twentieth century as the London Federation of Boys’ Clubs, and changed its name again in 1994/1995 to the London Federation of Clubs for Young People, to reflect the changing social situation and the increasing inclusion of girls. H Llewellyn Smith, ‘Introduction’ in H Llewellyn Smith (Ed), *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Volume IX, *Life and Leisure* (London, 1935), p. 22. The archives of the movement are held in the London Metropolitan Archives. See LMA 4283.

Club applauded ‘the benefits derived from the affiliation of the club to the Federation’ commenced in 1900, noting that as well as ‘giving great stimulus’ to club sport, in Federation events ‘Jewish and non-Jewish working boys have been brought into contact with one another in friendly rivalry and friendly intercourse, and this has tended to do away with much racial prejudice’.¹¹⁹

Whilst competing against non-Jews was believed to encourage ‘association’ between races, competitive sport also had other benefits for ‘Anglicisation’. Evidence shows that many club leaders saw opportunities for play against non-Jews as a chance to demonstrate, first-hand, that their members were as sporting, strong and fit as their Gentile peers – the idea being that Jews were, despite criticisms from certain quarters, suitable material for integration. Notions about competitive sport having a ‘missionary’ role in this respect are evident in the reports of the West Central Jewish Lads’ Club. In 1902, the Club claimed that their affiliation to the Federation of London Working Boys’ Clubs ‘has proved advantageous in many ways’. As well as helping club managers gain vital insights into the work and sporting programmes of non-Jewish clubs, membership of the Federation ‘opened many competitions to members and has shown the members of non-Jewish clubs that our lads can hold their own in athletics and games and are not deficient in sportsmanlike feeling’.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Brady Street Club for Working Boys, *Sixth Annual Report* (London, 1902) reprinted in Lazarus, *A Club*, p. 27.

¹²⁰ UCLL, West Central Jewish Working Lads’ Club, *Fourth Annual Report* (London, 1902), p. 7.

The wider community believed strongly in the ‘missionary’ effects of sport against non-Jewish peers. The Jewish establishment applauded the efforts of Jewish clubs in Federation sports and claimed that ‘in going in for the competitions...they were doing a real service to the whole community, for they were showing those who they came into contact the sturdiness and loyalty of the members of their community and the pride they had in their race’.¹²¹ In 1906, the *Jewish Chronicle* noted that Jewish club successes in annual Federation events such as swimming, boxing and athletics were ‘extremely gratifying’ and showed the Jewish community in a positive light. Worryingly though, the editorial also noted an increasing tendency for non-Jewish clubs to ‘hold aloof from contests’ against Jews in certain sports due to ‘repeated defeats’. The newspaper argued that ‘the decline of these pleasant and friendly rivalries would be regrettable’ because ‘the competition between Jewish and Gentile lads creates a healthy spirit of camaraderie and good fellowship’.¹²²

One sport in which non-Jews had suffered ‘repeated defeats’ at the hands of young Jews was gymnastics. As with the contemporary non-Jewish youth movement, gym training and competition grew in popularity amongst the Jewish clubs and the JLB and was believed to offer many physical and mental benefits to young participants. English-Jewish club patrons such as Lord Rothschild praised gym training for helping to create ‘well-developed chests and limbs’ and ‘strong, clean and truthful bodies’ out of supposedly weak immigrant

¹²¹ *Jewish World*, 8 March 1907.

¹²² *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 March 1906.

physiques.¹²³ With the encouragement and financial support of club patrons and managers, gymnastics became popular in the youth movement during the 1900s – with many Jews even developing an ‘obsessive’ attitude towards training and competition.¹²⁴ Before the First World War, the gymnastics teams of the Jewish youth clubs in London dominated local and FLWBC competitions to the point where some non-Jewish teams refused to compete against them.¹²⁵

It was gratifying for the Jewish press and the Jewish establishment to see immigrant boys enthusiastically taking up gymnastics and performing well in competition against their non-Jewish peers. Yet the success of Jewish club gymnasts took on a wider significance at this time. Against the backdrop of debates surrounding the Aliens Bill in 1904, which included discussions surrounding supposed immigrant physical weakness, Jewish gymnastic success was held to be useful evidence of the assimilatory potential of the immigrant children. During this year, alongside newspaper reports on the physical ‘frailty’ of the alien population, a number of prominent politicians made statements suggesting that legislation

¹²³ *Jewish World*, 7 December 1900; *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 February 1900.

¹²⁴ The *Jewish World* highlighted the example of the gymnastics team of the Victoria Jewish Lads’ Club, based on Fordham Street, Whitechapel. In April 1904, the newspaper reported that all of the members of the club’s gymnastics team were employed as tailors, upholsterers and sign-makers, and worked from 8am to 8pm most days, yet ‘in spite of these long spells, gymnastics forms one of their chief recreations and if permitted they would remain at the club after closing hour endeavouring to master the intricacies of a difficult exercise or watching and helping the struggles of a younger member. Threat of suspension from the use of the gymnasium is one of the most popular disciplinary measures’. The reporter continued by adding that ‘some of the lads, not content with gymnastics five or six nights a week, spend their Sunday mornings practising in the open air gymnasium at Victoria Park.’¹²⁴

¹²⁵ Although the Jewish clubs (Brady, West Central, Victoria and Stepney) numbered only four out of over forty affiliated clubs, Jewish gymnasts effectively dominated the Federation’s gymnastic tournaments between 1900 and 1914. Lazarus, *A Club*, p. 23. In 1901, the West Central Jewish Working Lads’ Club report claimed that in the gymnastics section ‘no boy’s club was willing during the past year to accept challenges, as they all said that the team representing the Club was too strong’. UCLL, West Central Jewish Working Lads’ Club, *Third Annual Report* (London, 1901), p. 7.

was needed to protect the physical ‘stock’ of the nation. The former Liberal MP and *Daily Telegraph* proprietor, Harry Lawson-Levy, claimed that the continuing ‘influx’ of Jewish refugees would result in a ‘backwards march to physical deterioration’ for the country as a whole.¹²⁶ Likewise, Liberal MP Sir Henry Norman claimed that continuing Jewish immigration meant that ‘it would not be long before the quality of our own people would be seriously impaired’.¹²⁷

The success of Jewish gymnasts in competition against non-Jewish children, therefore, was a suitable retort to accusations of immigrant ‘degeneracy’ – a fact highlighted by the *Jewish World* in a feature on the Victoria Club in 1904. The article argued that Jewish success in gymnastics took on a special significance ‘at a time when the dangers and horrors of alien immigration occupy so prominent a place in the popular imagination’ and ‘when the columns of certain of the daily papers ring with piteous tales of overcrowding, vice and physical degeneration amongst the alien inhabitants of the East End’. Gymnastic success against local non-Jewish boys was ‘no barren honour for a club whose membership is composed almost entirely of aliens or children of alien parentage’. The article, which was accompanied by pictures of the victorious teams, recorded pointedly that ‘it was noticeable during the competition how favourably the physique of our alien boys compared with that of their Gentile competitors and little trace of that physical degeneration of which so much has been heard is evident in the photographs’. Sport, it was argued, answered critics of the ‘degeneracy’ of the Jewish immigrants, but also helped transform ‘alien’ children into

¹²⁶ Huw Richards, ‘Lawson, Harry Lawson Webster Levy-, Viscount Burnham (1862–1933)’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

¹²⁷ See also Garrard, *English and Immigration*, p. 18.

Englishmen - the fifteen boys making up the two winning gym teams were said to 'all speak English with no trace of a foreign accent. But for their names and perhaps some facial characteristics, they could pass anywhere as native-born Britons'.¹²⁸

Alongside gymnastics, Jewish youth club and communal leaders also placed great value in success against non-Jews in boxing as an aid to integration. From the earliest days of the Jewish youth movement, boxing training and sparring sessions were organised with significant success. Not only was the sport promoted as a means of improving physical fitness and strength, but club leaders valued boxing as a weapon against an increasing tendency for 'indiscriminate fighting' amongst Jewish boys. As first-hand accounts of the pre-1914 period evidence, pitched physical battles between Jewish and non-Jewish children and adolescents were relatively commonplace. Whilst Jewish elites worried that these fights were physically damaging to the young Jews, they were also concerned with the potentially negative impressions that these confrontations could arouse from non-Jewish sources.¹²⁹

In order to combat the 'fighting' temperament amongst young Jews, Jewish youth leaders turned to boxing to give Jewish boys an outlet for their aggression and a means of learning a seemingly much-needed degree of self-control and restraint. Boxing also became a significant aspect of the programme of the Jewish Lads' Brigade, whose management viewed the sport as an important means of promoting the fitness and physical toughness of

¹²⁸ *Jewish World*, 22 April 1904.

¹²⁹ See, for instance, the biography of Jewish professional boxer Ted 'Kid' Lewis, whose childhood was regularly interspersed with fights and battles against non-Jewish children. Morton Lewis, *Ted 'Kid' Lewis: His Life and Times* (London, 1990), p. 5. Likewise, interviews held in the Manchester Jewish Museum demonstrate that fights between Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and gangs were commonplace in the city through the 1890s and 1900s. [M]anchester [J]ewish [M]useum J102, Interview with Jack Goldstone.

its membership. As the Brigade's 1912 Annual Report noted, 'greater attention' was gradually given to the sport during the 1900s as a supplement to the main programme of 'physical and military drill'. In both London and Manchester, the two largest JLB battalions, regular internal boxing competitions were organised during the years immediately preceding and after the First World War.¹³⁰

When the JLB began boxing against non-Jews on a regular basis, much significance was attached to the assistance this could give to the ongoing integration of the immigrant community. In 1920, the Prince of Wales, in his role as head of the British Cadet Forces, instigated a national boxing tournament for the various youth organisations affiliated to the British Armed Forces. The team tournament, called the Prince of Wales' Shield, consisted of several local, county and regional rounds before a national final between the Northern and Southern regional winners. The victors had the added prestige of being presented with the Shield by the either the Prince himself or another prominent member of the Royal Family.¹³¹ Many Jewish Lads' Brigade companies from across the country entered the tournament, yet it was the two largest, the Manchester and London battalions, who experienced the most success. As Kadish has noted, teams representing these two battalions won the Shield an 'almost embarrassing' number of times during the interwar period. Between 1920 and 1939, Jewish teams were victorious on no less than twelve occasions

¹³⁰ [M]anchester [C]ity [A]rchives M130/6/1 Jewish Lads' Brigade, *Annual Report – 1912*, p. 6. MCA M130/3, Grove House Lads' Club Managers' and Subscribers' Minutes, 3 November 1919.

¹³¹ The Shield started as a competition for London cadet battalions the previous year, but was expanded nationwide in 1920. See MCA M130/6/1, Jewish Lads' Brigade, *Annual Report – 1919*, p. 14.

and there were also four ‘all-Jewish’ finals, with the Shield being contested by representatives of the two JLB groups.¹³²

Whilst the Jewish domination of the tournament during this time was extremely gratifying for the Jewish establishment, success in the Shield was also believed to be having positive wider benefits for the Jewish community. Comment was made on several occasions, both by Jews and non-Jews, that successful participation in the competition had helped to underline the success of the physical programme of the Brigade. Jewish boxing success also seemingly promoted a positive view of Jewish physical fitness and strength. In 1933, the Manchester JLB claimed that Brigade domination of the competition was ‘illustrative’ of the superior ‘physical fitness’ of their members, whereas in 1936, an official for the competition noted that ‘other cadet units could not compare, age for age, with the Jewish boys in physique and fitness’. In the same year, a letter was received by the victorious Manchester JLB team from the Headquarters of the Cadet Group noting that ‘their appearance from the physical viewpoint, both in shape and build, left nothing to be desired’. The author of the letter exclaimed: ‘I only wish the entire nation were as physically fit as the winning team of the Manchester Jewish Lads’ Brigade’.¹³³

Alongside helping to change perceptions of Jewish physicality, managers and leaders of the Brigade also valued success in the Shield as an aid for increasing contact between Jewish and non-Jewish adolescents. After their first success in the tournament in 1921, the London

¹³² See Manchester JLB Annual Reports, 1907-1927 and 1928-1935. MCA M130/6/1; M130/6/2

¹³³ MCA M130/6/2, Jewish Lads’ Brigade, *Annual Report – 1933*, p. 9; *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 May 1936; UoSSC MS223/4/14, *Annual Report of the Manchester Jewish Lads’ Brigade* (Manchester, 1936), p. 10.

JLB battalion claimed that victory in the ‘coveted trophy...served to bring home to the community the ‘missionary’ value of the Brigade in promoting sympathetic understanding and goodwill between Jews and their fellow countrymen’. Indeed, aware that their domination of the competition may have been diminishing the amount of goodwill and ‘sympathetic understanding’ gained from participation, the JLB temporarily withdrew its teams from the Shield in 1936 – a decision which (as examined subsequently) was also driven by an awareness of growing popular anti-Semitism at this time.¹³⁴

Offering Equal Provision - The Jewish Athletic Association

Although competitive sport against non-Jews was valued for the ‘Anglicisation’ benefits it offered, Jewish leaders believed that encouraging competition between Jews was also important. Evidence shows that youth club leaders were aware that, for many reasons, many Jewish boys and girls found their opportunities to play sport competitively were severely limited. Without provision equal to that of non-Jewish children, they feared that the ‘sporting’ efforts of the youth movement would be undermined and the ‘Anglicisation’ programme hindered.

The most important limiting factor was observance of the Jewish Sabbath. Whilst the youth movement generally demonstrated little concern for religious matters during the early part of the twentieth century, most institutions chose not to organise or promote sport on the

¹³⁴ MCA M130/6/1, Jewish Lads’ Brigade, *Annual Report – 1921*, p. 7; UoSSC MS223/4/14, *Annual Report of the Manchester Jewish Lads’ Brigade* (Manchester, 1938), p.7.

Jewish Sabbath.¹³⁵ The proliferation of sport on this day amongst non-Jewish society meant that Jews within the clubs, Jewish Lads' Brigade and schools found their opportunities for competitive sport limited. The London Federation of Working Boys' Clubs, for example, held their football and cricket leagues on Saturdays, meaning that the Jewish clubs did not enter teams into these competitions. Within Board schools, similar exclusions also applied to Jewish pupils. Many school sporting activities and competitions took place either after school, when many Jewish children attended supplementary religious classes, or on Saturdays. For children of observant parents, sport on the Sabbath was not permissible, whilst many public recreational and leisure facilities were not available for use on Sundays due to observance of the Christian Sabbath.¹³⁶

In order to address this problem, the Jewish Athletic Association was founded in 1899. The JAA was designed to aid the growth of sport amongst immigrant children by helping the organisation and delivery of the sporting programmes of the youth movement and by providing aid and equipment for sport for clubs and schools. Importantly, the Association also played a significant role in facilitating competitive sports for young Jews by forming Jewish leagues and tournaments and by working with Gentile authorities to expand sporting provision for Jewish children in Board schools. The overriding objective of the Association was to ensure as equal a provision for sport as possible for Jews unable to take part in physical recreation due to religious observance. Whereas play against or with non-Jews had important ramifications for the 'Anglicisation' campaign, the JAA's foundation also

¹³⁵ See Chapter 3, below.

¹³⁶ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 168.

demonstrated the belief in the need for equal sporting opportunities to protect the sporting spirit created by the Jewish youth movement. This would further ensure the successful integration of Jews into mainstream society.¹³⁷

Although created by a small band of volunteer administrators, the JAA was given significant impetus by sections of the English-Jewish elites during its early years. When it was founded, the Association was made up of a handful of volunteer administrators, mainly Jewish youth club managers and workers.¹³⁸ In 1901, however, the Association was taken under the wing of the Maccabaeans Society, a group of English-Jewish intellectuals and professionals brought together in 1891 to promote Jewish culture and identity. The Maccabaeans - who had also played a pivotal role in the formation of the Jewish Lads' Brigade - had gradually become more interested in the promotion of sport for 'Anglicisation' purposes during the late 1890s. In 1900 a resolution was passed at the Society's annual meeting stating that 'the Maccabaeans should take a more active part in fostering an athletic spirit among Jewish boys and girls belonging to the humbler classes'.¹³⁹

The result of the resolution was the convening of the 'Maccabean Athletic Committee', which conducted a comprehensive investigation of sporting provision in over fifty Jewish clubs and schools. Their report, published in 1901, claimed that greater funding and

¹³⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 May 1913.

¹³⁸ Although the Association expanded rapidly, by 1913 the management was still composed of just ten unpaid staff. *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 May 1913.

¹³⁹ Kadish, 'A Good Jew', p. 11.

equipment for sport was needed, more leagues and competitions in various sports were desirable and that Jewish students in Board schools had restricted opportunities for sport due to religious considerations. The Society started a formal connection to the Jewish Athletic Association to address these issues. They believed that bringing sporting provision to a level comparable to non-Jewish boys and girls would have a ‘distinctly beneficial effect on the physique and health of the poorer classes of the Jewish faith’. Regular financial donations to the Association were made throughout the 1900s by the Society, complementing funding drawn from other sections of the English-Jewish community.¹⁴⁰

The Association began as a loosely constituted and defined body, but over time grew to significant proportions. By 1914, it had 51 affiliated clubs and schools and by 1927, when the Association was absorbed into the Association for Jewish Youth (an umbrella organisation which catered for Jewish youth provision more generally), it was reported to have 26,000 individual members – approximately 10% of Anglo-Jewry as it stood in the late 1920s.¹⁴¹ The primary aim of the Association from its foundation through to the late 1920s was to help provide competitive sport for young Jews. Although not directly interested in promoting religious adherence, the JAA’s main task was to minimise the sporting impact of Sabbath observance and to create opportunities for competitive play

¹⁴⁰ UoSSC MS126/AJ17/1/1, Ancient Order of Maccabaeans, *Report of the Maccabaeian Athletic Committee* (London, 1901), pp. 3-13; UoSSC MS126/AJ17/1/1, Balance Sheets of the Ancient Order of the Maccabaeans, 1902-1910.

¹⁴¹ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 168; *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 January 1914; *Jewish World*, 10 February 1927.

between Jews and Jewish teams – thus protecting the wider ‘Anglicisation’ mission of the youth movement.¹⁴²

The JAA’s work had significant ramifications for immigrant integration within the youth club movement. Basil Henriques, for instance, noted that competitive play, in any guise, was vital for all youth organisations as a means of giving individuals a ‘definite goal in view’ (i.e. giving club members something to work towards through their attendance). He also claimed that competitive matches were an important way of improving club spirit – ‘the keener members can be made in the prowess of their club team the greater will be their enthusiasm for the club as a whole’. Jewish youth leaders also saw Association competitions as a method for improving the skill and ability of members in various sports. In the eyes of the Jewish clubs this was vital in order to leave a positive impression on those occasions where Jewish teams did meet their Gentile counterparts in competitive play.¹⁴³

The large infrastructure of weekly ‘Jewish’ leagues, tournaments and one-off sports meetings that the Association developed from 1900 onwards was clearly gratifying to many within the wider community. Although individual athletics meetings could often draw hundreds of competitors and thousands of spectators, it was weekly Association competitions in football, cricket (boys), hockey and basketball (girls) that demonstrated the

¹⁴² Black, *Social Politics*, p. 146.

¹⁴³ Basil Henriques, *Club Leadership* (Oxford, 1943), pp. 128-129; Brady Street Club for Working Boys, *Sixth Annual Report* (London, 1902) reprinted in Lazarus, *A Club*, p. 27.

success of the organisation most clearly.¹⁴⁴ By 1913, for example, it was reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* that 54 teams were regularly participating in JAA competitions – a conservative estimate suggesting that this meant that 600-700 young Jews were playing Association sport on a weekly basis.¹⁴⁵

As well as working to broaden competitive opportunities for youth club members, the JAA also worked hard to ensure that Jewish schoolchildren in ‘Board’ schools could enjoy equal provision of sport. When physical recreation was introduced into the elementary school curriculum in the 1900s, many competitive leagues and tournaments were created on Saturdays and during after school hours – often resulting in those Jews attending *Cheder* [Jewish elementary schools] on weekday evenings or observing the Jewish Sabbath being unable to participate. Aware of the potential effects that this could have on the ‘sporting’ development of the Jewish schoolchildren, and wider effects on ‘Anglicisation’, the Jewish Athletic Association began negotiating with the London County Council to find ways to ensure Jews did not miss out on sport available to their non-Jewish peers. In 1906, these discussions resulted in arrangements that became known as ‘double-sessions’ – when Jewish pupils in ‘Board’ schools were released early on Fridays to participate in sport before the commencement of their Sabbath at dusk. In subsequent years, ‘double-sessions’ were extended to the winter term, not for sport, but to allow young Jews to travel home before the commencement of their rest day.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ The 1908 JAA sports day, held at Stamford Bridge Athletic Grounds, drew 200 individual competitors and a crowd of over 3,000. *Jewish World*, 26 June 1908.

¹⁴⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 May 1913.

¹⁴⁶ *Jewish World*, 1 June 1906; Lammers, ‘Citizens’, p. 407; Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 168.

The established Jewish community praised the efforts of the JAA in securing this key concession. An article from the *Jewish World* in 1906 gave a typical account of how a sport ‘double-session’ worked in practice. In this instance, a number of schools local to Victoria Park released Jewish children into the care of teachers and Jewish youth club workers under the auspices of the Association. For the entire afternoon, from 2.30pm until dusk, competitive games in football, tennis, cricket and hockey were held. The on-looking reporter for the newspaper was delighted at what he saw and applauded the work of the Association in providing sports to young boys and girls denied the opportunity, due to religious observance, to play on Saturdays. He noted

our whole impression is a most excellent one. There are fully 2000 boys and girls taking part under the best possible conditions, not more than half hour distance from their homes, in exercise that is filling their lungs with something better than the mephitic atmosphere a good many of them breathe in and about their homes. Their bodies are being strengthened and braced for the battle of life.¹⁴⁷

‘Double-sessions’ continued through the 1920s and beyond, ensuring that Jewish children of observant parentage had equal sporting opportunities to their non-Jewish peers. In 1923, the idea of abolishing the sessions was debated by the LCC, resulting in an uproar from Jewish parents and the Jewish press who believed this would be ‘disadvantageous’, both from a physical and educational perspective for the 2000 young Jews taking part on average in the sessions at that time. In the 1940s, Local Education Authorities in London began

¹⁴⁷ *Jewish World*, 1 June 1906.

allowing Jewish pupils who were members of sports teams playing in Gentile leagues to leave school early on Fridays to complete League commitments before the commencement of the Sabbath.¹⁴⁸

The Association drew many plaudits from within the Anglo-Jewish community for aiding the development of young Jews and furthering their ‘Anglicisation’ through sporting participation. One of the JAA’s first Presidents, Felix Waley-Cohen, claimed that the organisation ‘influenced thousands of young men and women for the better’.¹⁴⁹ In 1907, Liberal MP and Government minister, Herbert Samuel (1870-1963) noted that ‘he thought the good work the Jewish Athletic Association was doing was indisputable...a work for which not only the community but the country at large should be grateful’.¹⁵⁰ The 1914 JAA awards evening speaker summed up the community’s belief in the Association’s efforts towards sporting ‘Anglicisation’. SJ Lazarus claimed that, through the Association’s efforts, ‘there had been a more marked change...amongst them [immigrant Jewish children] for a desire for outdoor exercise’ and that ‘the reproach formerly hurled at them of a being a stunted race was being removed by physical improvement through athletics’. He concluded that ‘the need to train the body as well as the mind had been recognised and looking around him he could see at once the fruits of that policy’.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 17 May 1923; Basil Henriques and IW Slotki, *The Jewish Sabbath* (London, 1940), p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ Black, *Social Politics*, p. 146.

¹⁵⁰ *Jewish World*, 29 November 1907.

¹⁵¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 January 1914.

There were some prominent members of the Anglo-Jewish elites who were not initially convinced of the practical and symbolic benefits of a separate ‘Jewish’ sporting organisation. It was argued that the development of an organisation serving Jews exclusively could send out the wrong messages to non-Jewish society and run counter to the wider aims and objectives of the community’s endeavours towards immigrant ‘Anglicisation’. Take, for instance, renowned Biblical scholar, religious leader and philanthropist, Claude Montefiore.¹⁵² During his involvement with the West Central Jewish Lads’ Club, which he co-founded in 1898, Montefiore had been a passionate and vocal advocate of the benefits of sport for immigrant Jewish development and integration. He claimed, however, that the foundation of the JAA concerned him significantly and was ‘doubtful over its need and propriety’ as ‘he was not quite sure whether it was necessary to have separate Jewish associations of that kind’. Promoting sport was important, but not at the cost of appearing isolationist or aloof to the wider population.¹⁵³

By the time of his attendance at the 1909 JAA annual awards, Montefiore claimed he had ‘become a thorough convert to the merits and necessity of the Association’. Assured that its foundation and programme was not driven by a deliberate attempt at separatism, Montefiore commented that ‘he now had nothing but praise to offer the Association for the excellent work it had done and was doing for the boys, girls and lads of London’. The fact, he noted, that many ‘Jewish boys and girls were unable to play on Saturday’ due to

¹⁵² For a biographical sketch and detailed discussion of the development of Montefiore’s religious thought, see Daniel Langton, *Claude Montefiore: His Life and Thought* (London, 2002). On his religious views and contribution to the foundation of Liberal Judaism in Britain, see Edward Kessler, ‘Claude Montefiore and Liberal Judaism’, *European Judaism*, 34, 1, 2001, pp. 17-32.

¹⁵³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 December 1909.

religious considerations over the Sabbath meant that it was logical for an organisation like the JAA, which was working towards ensuring equal sporting provision, to be created.¹⁵⁴

Whilst we have seen previously that sport was believed to confer important physical and psychological benefits for young immigrant Jews, it is also clear that great significance was also attached to competitive sport in the ‘Anglicisation’ process. Sporting participation in a tournament, league or organised competition, with other Jews or against Gentiles, was valued in various ways for the assistance it seemingly gave to immigrant acceptance and integration into wider society. Basically, whilst encouraging the playing of sport amongst young Jews was seen to be important in itself, competing against others in a sporting environment was believed to be further catalyst towards trends of assimilation and acculturation.

Evidently, in the first instance, members of the English Jewish elites felt that promoting sporting contact between Jewish children and their non-Jewish peers was a useful medium for helping to minimise the apparent isolation and ‘aloofness’ of the immigrant community. Contact on the football or cricket pitch was seen to be a way of promoting goodwill and friendship between minority and majority community, as well as helping demonstrate Jewish desire for integration and acceptance. Clearly, there was a degree of naivety in the belief that one or two matches against non-Jewish teams would radically transform existing preconceptions. However, the significance lay not necessarily with whether this was

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

achieved, which would be hard to measure, but with the fact that the conviction existed that sport could in some way aid this process – a reminder of the apparent value of sport and physical recreation to the immigrant experience, beyond simple play and leisure.

Evidence of the value of sport, and the implication of competition against non-Jews, can be seen by looking at the examples of gymnastics and boxing within the youth movement in the early twentieth century. Competing against and beating non-Jews in the physically demanding environments of the gymnasium or boxing ring was an important vehicle for helping to change perceptions of the Jewish community. These victories also answered criticisms surrounding supposed Jewish physical degeneracy. In reality, the English-Jewish elites could not have hoped to achieve such outcomes through sporting competition solely between Jewish participants. Sport effectively took on a ‘missionary’ role, helping to demonstrate to the wider population that certain stereotypes and pre-conceptions could be undermined and altered through sporting success.

Despite the evident importance of contests against non-Jews, it is apparent that considerable focus and attention was also given to promoting competitive play between Jewish individuals and teams as an indirect aid for the ‘Anglicisation’ process. This is especially apparent when analysing the foundation and growth of the Jewish Athletic Association, whose sporting and social importance, when reminded of how large the organisation’s membership grew, should not be underestimated. Those who founded and managed the Association were clearly anxious that efforts should be made towards offering as equal a sporting provision as possible to young Jews in the capital. In creating, managing

and expanding the organisation, the Jewish community demonstrated a keenness to respect religious considerations, but also a desire to prevent strict Sabbath observance from restricting opportunity for competitive play.

In this task, the Association was clearly successful. Through its efforts at organising 'Jewish' tournaments, leagues and cups, hundreds of young Jews were given the opportunity on a weekly basis to gain the benefits of competitive play and improve their skills and ability. Likewise, through its efforts with regards to 'double-sessions', the Association also facilitated sporting opportunities unavailable to Jewish children in non-Jewish education. Whilst opinions over the Jewish Athletic Association may have initially been divided, it drew plaudits for curtailing the sporting ramifications of Jewish religious and ethnic difference – evidence in itself of the importance seemingly attached to sporting pursuits by the Jewish elites.

The Association's work demonstrates once more that the English-Jewish community was pro-actively and consciously utilising sport as a catalyst to processes of integration and acculturation. Whilst the sporting programme of the Association may not have been as directly designed to transform Jewish immigrant children as the sporting initiatives of the youth club movement, there was a clear aspiration to promote sport as an indirect aid to the assimilation of 'alien' children. Jewishness, so the Association demonstrated, should be respected, but not necessarily allowed to be a barrier to sporting participation and to the continuing 'Anglicisation' of the youngest immigrants.

The ‘Thoroughly Anglicised’ Jewish Sportsman? The Life and Career of Harold Abrahams

Whilst sport and physical recreation were powerful catalysts in helping thousands of young immigrant Jews assimilate Englishness, integration into English society also helped to facilitate successful sporting careers for a number of prominent English Jews. Take, for instance, respected judge and amateur golfer Lionel Leonard Cohen (1888-1973), Oxford cricket ‘blue’ and England rugby union international John Raphael (1882-1917) and Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1910-1990), who played county cricket for Northamptonshire in the late 1920s. For all of these English Jews of Sephardic origin, social and cultural ‘Anglicisation’, together with experiences of private education, played a facilitative role in their sporting careers. Effectively, assimilation and integration on their part opened up social, cultural, political, economic and sporting opportunities that would not have been easily accessible for Jews of Eastern European immigrant origin, such as those progressing through the Jewish youth movement around the same time.¹⁵⁵

One of the most-well known and successful ‘thoroughly Anglicised’ Jewish sportsman of all, although not hailing from a Sephardic background, was Harold Maurice Abrahams, the renowned sprinter and long jumper.¹⁵⁶ Abrahams, the son of a Polish Jewish immigrant, was a successful public school athlete and Cambridge athletics ‘blue’ before going on to

¹⁵⁵ Richard Wilberforce, ‘Cohen, Lionel Leonard, Baron Cohen (1888–1973)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 March 1990.

¹⁵⁶ Collins, ‘Jews’, p. 147.

win the gold medal for the 100 metres sprint at the 1924 Paris Olympics; a victory famously depicted in 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*. As well as experiencing significant sporting success, after his athletics career ended abruptly in 1925 Abrahams went on to become a prominent figure in British athletics administration, sports journalism and charity work, as well as being a prolific writer.¹⁵⁷

Interestingly, despite his sporting success and his significant contribution to various fields after his retirement from athletics, relatively little is known about Abrahams beyond the ‘figurative reconstruction’ of him in *Chariots of Fire*, a flawed representation of the sprinter which has effectively clouded the popular memory of the English-Jewish Olympian. Although Abrahams is one of the most famous figures of twentieth century British athletics, no biography of him exists (in comparison to the multitude of publications based on his ‘rival’ in the film, Eric Liddell) and, surprisingly, considering how prolific a writer Abrahams was in later years, no autobiographical material was ever published.¹⁵⁸ Some academic research was sporadically conducted during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s

¹⁵⁷ Abrahams was forced to retire from athletics in 1925 after suffering a broken leg whilst competing in the long jump at an athletics meeting. *The Times*, 7 May 1925. After his retirement, Abrahams worked as a barrister, a columnist for *The Times*, held various positions in the British Athletic Board, including Chairman (1948-1975), and was elected President of the Amateur Athletics Association in 1976. He also co-authored in 1931, *Oxford versus Cambridge*, a complete record of all of the 7489 ‘blues’ who had represented their Universities at sport. He was appointed CBE in 1957. Norris McWhirter, ‘Abrahams, Harold Maurice (1899–1978)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

¹⁵⁸ The first official biography of the athlete, *Running with Fire: The Harold Abrahams Story* (London, 2011), by writer and sports journalist Mark Ryan, is to be released in March 2011. A number of biographies of ‘The Flying Scotsman’, Eric Liddell, have been published in recent years. For example, Sally Magnusson, *The Flying Scotsman: The Eric Liddell Story* (London, 1981); John W Keddie, *Running the Race: Eric Liddell, Olympic Champion and Missionary* (London, 2007); David McCasland, *Eric Liddell: Pure Gold* (London, 2003).

and his comprehensive papers are also archived at the University of Birmingham.¹⁵⁹ Yet despite all of this, the inaccurate depiction in *Chariots of Fire* remains the only popular reference point for the life of the athlete, even though an investigation of his life and career illuminates a great deal on notions of Jewish integration and ‘Anglicisation’ and touches on important themes, events and debates surrounding British sport in the pre-World War Two period.

This section will begin to address the dearth of academic research on Abrahams’ career and life. The central contention is that, far from being the ‘outsider’ depicted in *Chariots of Fire*, Abrahams’ ‘Anglicisation’ was extensive and his integration into English society was a significant factor in his sporting successes. Whilst many Jews at this time were being encouraged by the Jewish elites to take up sport to aid their physical and mental ‘Anglicisation’, Abrahams faced no such pressure. His privileged background, in comparison to the majority of other second generation immigrants, effectively opened up many educational and social opportunities as well as facilitating a successful career in amateur athletics: traditionally the reserve of the English, middle-class, Oxbridge educated. Whilst previous elements of this chapter have focused on sport catalysing processes of ‘Anglicisation’, the case study of Harold Abrahams reveals that the opposite could also be true. Integration, made easier due to his socio-economic background, contributed to a

¹⁵⁹ The former archivist of the British Athletics Archive based at the University of Birmingham, John Bromhead, presented a paper entitled ‘Harold Abrahams as Athlete, Author and Amateur’ at the University of Warwick in 1988 and also compiled much of the Abrahams archive based in Birmingham’s Special Collections department between the late 1970s and early 1990s.

successful elite sporting career – something for which he was applauded, and later admonished, by the community of his birth.

After investigating the inaccuracies of the representation in *Chariots of Fire*, a depiction which falsely portrays him as marginalised and discriminated against, an analysis of Abrahams' family and educational background demonstrates how his acceptance and integration into the public-school and Cambridge 'set' proved an enabling factor for his successes in the exclusive milieus of amateur athletics and the Olympic Games. Evidence also suggests that Abrahams' relationship with the English-Jewish community was complex and that the athlete was celebrated, and subsequently condemned, for his own assimilation. Additionally, it shows Abrahams himself felt that his own integration had aided his athletic career. After analysing both his status as an 'English-Jewish' hero and Abrahams' personal beliefs in the sporting 'need' for 'Anglicisation', Anglo-Jewry's reaction to Abrahams' decision to 'kill off' a British boycott of the 1936 Olympics and to follow the official line of the public-school sporting and political figures concerning Berlin – a move which the Jewish press felt indicated Abrahams' 'Englishness' over any loyalty towards British and international Jewry – will also be examined.

The limited representation in *Chariots of Fire* contrasts sharply to the historical reality. Abrahams was an English-born Jew who integrated into the English middle-classes through his private education, enjoyed a successful athletic career, espoused integration to younger Jews and was then criticised by the Jewish press for favouring the 'British' line over Berlin instead of supporting the community of his birth. The central themes of Abrahams' life,

effectively, were ‘Anglicisation’ and integration. A desire to move into or support English society characterised many of Abrahams’ personal and sporting decisions.

‘Too Semitic’?¹⁶⁰ – Abrahams and Chariots of Fire

Although Harold Abrahams was a relatively well-known figure during his own lifetime as a sportsman, journalist and sports administrator, it is the representation of him in the film *Chariots of Fire*, released three years after his death in 1978, which informs much of popular memory and opinion of the sprinter. The film, directed by Hugh Hudson and based on a screenplay written by Colin Welland, depicts the run up to the 1924 Paris Olympics from the perspectives of Abrahams and fellow British runner, Eric Liddell, who was victorious in the 400 metres event. Although a commercial and critical success (the film won four Oscars at the 1981 Academy Awards and grossed nearly \$60m worldwide), *Chariots of Fire* has been analysed by historians as a ‘chronicle of the 1920s’ and an ‘allegory’ of the early 1980s, rather than a truthful reconstruction of this part of British social, cultural and sporting history.¹⁶¹

A number of historical ‘inaccuracies’ have been highlighted by many analysts of the film, yet the most obvious ‘falsification of historical reality’ is evident with regards to the portrayal of Abrahams, who is depicted throughout the film as an ‘outsider’ whose Jewish

¹⁶⁰ Holt uses this phrase to describe the way Abrahams is viewed by his Cambridge peers and masters in the film. Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 275.

¹⁶¹ Ellis Cashmore, ‘Bigotry, Manhood and Moral Certitude in an Age of Individualism’, *Sport in Society*, 11, 2, 2008, p. 159.

background prevents his full social and sporting acceptance. As well as a number of basic factual errors which lead to a 'significant distortion in the character portrayal of Abrahams' (he was not über-confident of victory in the 100 metres nor anywhere near as fanatic in his training as shown), *Chariots'* major flaw with regards to the representation of the English-Jewish sprinter is the overemphasis on anti-Semitism.¹⁶² Racial discrimination, both overt and genteel, is a prominent theme within the film. Abrahams, played by Ben Cross, is both frustrated and motivated by the anti-Semitism he experiences during his time at Cambridge University.¹⁶³

Whilst Abrahams' experiences at University were not characterised by anything resembling the level of discrimination portrayed in the film, his experiences in education were not completely free of anti-Semitism. Abrahams himself noted that he had faced a 'demon anti-Semitism' during his time at Repton school, something which he claimed acted as an important motivator during his early athletics career. According to the sprinter, the 'keen sense of inferiority' he felt due to his Jewish background pushed him to take up running at public school more seriously. In a BBC radio interview in 1963, Abrahams noted that 'I had to find something where I could score off people and running, of course, you can, you can get first and win and I was determined to do so'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² [B]irmingham [U]niversity [S]pecial [C]ollections HA/13/1, John Bromhead, 'Harold Abrahams as Athlete, Author and Amateur', lecture given at University of Warwick, 1988, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Ed Carter, 'Chariots of Fire: Traditional Values/False History', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 28, April 1983, p. 16.

¹⁶⁴ BUSC HA/2, Harold Abrahams, 'What Makes a Champion' (unpublished); BUSC HA/17/21, Harold Maurice Abrahams interview, BBC Radio, *People Today*, 20 September 1963

Although evidently significant earlier in his life, by the time he entered Cambridge University it seems that Abrahams faced little or no anti-Semitism and that discrimination was no longer a motivating factor. Norris McWhirter, Abrahams' friend and author of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for the sprinter, claimed that Abrahams himself would have regarded the idea of 'anti-Semitic undertones at Cambridge as being "over-fanciful"' and there is no evidence to suggest that discrimination affected his time at University in the manner portrayed in the film.¹⁶⁵ Abrahams' daughter, Sue Pottle, later claimed that 'he never told me about anti-Semitism at Cambridge, at his public school, Repton, yes, but Cambridge no... I certainly don't think you could say it had a major influence on his career'.¹⁶⁶ This is not to say that discrimination against Jews did not exist in the Oxbridge environment. Weber has shown, with regards to the period before 1914, that a 'pervasive Gentleman's anti-Semitism' was apparent, although discrimination was not generally 'overt' or 'violent'.¹⁶⁷ For Abrahams and his older brothers, however, life at Cambridge was apparently trouble-free – indeed, all passed through University with sporting distinctions and had all subsequently become firmly embedded in the English establishment.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ McWhirter, 'Abrahams'.

¹⁶⁶ *Daily Express*, 14 September 2007. See also, *The Observer*, 9 September 2007 in which Pottle noted that 'the bit about anti-semitism was all made up. I can't remember my father ever talking about it except at Repton. I don't think it affected him during his working life'.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Weber, *Our Friend 'The Enemy': Elite Education in Britain and Germany before World War I* (Stanford, 2008), p. 208. Weber remarks that discrimination against British Jews was most prominent when applying for scholastic appointments. As all of the Abrahams' family focused on sport during their years at University, they would not have necessarily encountered the latent anti-Semitism that affected many of their more academically driven peers. Weber, *Our Friend*, pp. 200-202

¹⁶⁸ BUSC HA/13/1, Bromhead, 'Harold Abrahams', p. 6; Carter, 'Chariots of Fire', p. 16. Both Sidney and Adolphe Abrahams were later knighted for their services to medicine and law respectively.

The depiction in the film therefore overemphasises anti-Semitism. As well as going a long way towards developing a mythology about discrimination as a pivotal factor in Abrahams' sporting success, it creates the impression that Abrahams, because of his Jewish background, was something of an outsider. Importantly, these ideas also filtered into the popular imagination. It seems that the victimised portrayal of Abrahams as a winner in the face of discrimination became the accepted norm. Speaking in 1989, businessman and major donor to production costs of the film, Mohammed Al-Fayed, claimed he was 'inspired by a man who was the victim of severe racial prejudice' and that he was 'fascinated by the story of a man subjected to grave prejudice and English snobbery'.¹⁶⁹ Similar sentiments were evident amongst the Jewish community. In her review of *Chariots* in the *Jewish Chronicle* in April 1981, Pamela Melnikoff claimed that the film skilfully demonstrated that 'the subtle anti-Semitism he [Abrahams] encountered at Caius College stung him into a stubborn and aggressive determination to 'show them''. Melnikoff also claimed that Abrahams was driven by a desire to 'erase' the 'popular belief' that Jews and sport didn't mix in order to 'raise the status of the Jew in the eyes of the mocking world'.¹⁷⁰

In reality, and not as claimed in the film or subsequently, Abrahams did not have such a grand mission to try and effect Jewish stereotypes or to use sport as a response to genteel English snobbery. It is important to examine one particular theme within *Chariots of Fire* in order to understand Abrahams' motivations and career choices. At various points within the movie, it is suggested that Abrahams is 'really more English than Jewish'. Whether it is

¹⁶⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 22 November 1989

¹⁷⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 April 1981.

the symbolic solo rendition of 'He is an Englishman', the Anglican Masses which begin and end the film or Abrahams' annoyance at his Cambridge masters' suggestion that he does not run for his country, the picture is painted that Abrahams was somewhat 'Anglicised'. Significantly, the film also suggests that, because of his social standing rather than through his Jewishness, Abrahams is gradually accepted into the establishment. As Carter concludes, the film demonstrates that wealth and social standing did more to open up opportunities for Abrahams than his Jewishness did to close doors for him. In essence, it is more accurate to see Abrahams as an accepted figure within the English establishment, rather than as the 'outsider' portrayed in the film.¹⁷¹

An investigation of Abrahams' family environment and upbringing, together with his education and career as an athlete, does go a long way to support the suggestion that he was 'more English than Jewish'. Seemingly, Abrahams' 'Anglicisation' is more important in explaining his sporting success than any anti-Semitism encountered during his career, as argued by *Chariots of Fire*. This is not to say that Abrahams did not face discrimination during his life, as has already shown to be untrue. But Abrahams' desire to integrate, assimilate and move up the social ladder – a desire evident elsewhere within his family - is much more significant.

Harold Maurice Abrahams was born in Bedford on 15 December 1899 to Isaac and Esther Abrahams. Isaac, a Polish Jew, had moved to Britain during the 1870s. Despite speaking and writing very little English, he successfully established himself as both a money lender

¹⁷¹ Carter, 'Chariots of Fire', p. 16.

(he founded the Bedfordshire Loan Company in 1885) and as a trader in jewellery and precious stones. Isaac, who arrived in Britain ‘all but penniless’ before the wave of Eastern European immigration in the 1880s and 1890s, married a Welsh Jewess from Merthyr Tydfil, Esther Isaacs, and had six children; two daughters and four sons, of which Harold was the youngest.¹⁷²

Significantly, Isaac Abrahams, who himself drew considerable pride from his naturalisation in 1902, exhibited a keen desire for his sons to progress up the social ladder and integrate fully into the higher echelons of English society. This demonstrated itself most strongly through his ‘burning convictions’ that his sons should all benefit from public-school and Cambridge education, something which he believed was pivotal in making fine, upstanding young Englishmen out of his four boys. Isaac’s ‘new wealth’ enabled him to fund private and University education for his three eldest sons before Harold Abrahams entered Repton public school in 1914 and eventually Caius College, Cambridge in 1919 to read law.¹⁷³

Although the second-generation immigrant Abrahams family were a minority at a time when the vast majority of Jewish Oxbridge pupils were the sons of ‘long established British Jews’, they were part of a significant wider trend amongst Anglo-Jewry.¹⁷⁴ In Britain, the end of the nineteenth century saw increasing numbers of Jews progressing through private education. Whilst Jews may have at various times been regarded as ‘outsiders’ to the upper

¹⁷² McWhirter, ‘Abrahams’; BUSC HA/7/1, Memorial Address at Harold Abrahams Funeral, 20 February 1978.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Weber, *Our Friend*, p. 197.

echelons of British society, entrance into the prestigious public-school and Oxbridge ‘set’ was an important symbolic and facilitative factor in Jewish integration into elite social circles. As Weber has noted, ‘by 1914, Oxbridge had become for its Jewish students what it had traditionally been for their Gentile fellow students; the finishing school for its social elites’.¹⁷⁵ Although numbers of Jews benefiting from private education was relatively small, Endelman sees this trend as an indicator both of a strong assimilatory and an integrationist tendency amongst more socially mobile immigrant Jews such as the Abrahams. Jewish attendance at public-school and University was one significant step towards entry into the elites of English society, which was said to have been open to all Jews coming from ‘new-wealth’ backgrounds.¹⁷⁶

The integrationist tendencies of the family were also present during their time in private education. All of the Abrahams boys became engaged in the sporting environment so closely connected to the English private education system. Whilst attendance at public-school and Cambridge demonstrated an ‘Anglicising’ and integrationist desire, Harold, together with his elder brothers, also became extremely interested in sport, with all four becoming celebrated and successful athletes in their own right. Adolphe Abrahams, who became a physician and was knighted in 1939, was a Cambridge athletics ‘blue’, as was Sidney ‘Solly’ Abrahams, who competed in the 1906 and 1912 Olympic Games before later being sworn to the Privy Council. Similarly, Lionel Abrahams, later to become a successful

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 95.

¹⁷⁶ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, pp. 76-80.

solicitor and coroner, was highly successful as a sprinter during his time at public school and University.¹⁷⁷

In sporting and social terms, this is significant in itself, for sporting success was more important as an aid for integration into the contemporary public-school and Oxbridge environment than intellectual or educational prowess. Individual sporting achievement in the obsessively ‘athletic’ public-school and University environments was one sure-fire means of gaining acceptance, even for those pupils from a Jewish background. The prestige that Isaac Abrahams’ four sons won their schools and colleges through sport, therefore, would have aided their integration into these establishments much more than their Jewishness would have hindered their acceptance.¹⁷⁸

Harold Abrahams frequently commented that it was his desire to emulate his brothers’ achievement which proved a major catalyst to his elite sporting ambitions. He declared that his wish to gain for himself that proud sign of acceptance at Cambridge, a blue blazer, motivated him to follow in the educational and sporting footsteps of his older siblings. From an early age, Harold was ‘surrounded by this atmosphere of running’ and said ‘almost literally from my cradle I was guided and encouraged to perform’.¹⁷⁹ In 1963, Abrahams admitted that by the age of six he wanted desperately to earn himself a ‘blue blazer’ and during his career he was known to have outwardly proclaimed that representing his

¹⁷⁷ McWhirter, ‘Abrahams’; BUSC HA/7/1, Memorial Address at Harold Abrahams Funeral.

¹⁷⁸ Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁷⁹ BUSC HA/17/21, Harold Maurice Abrahams interview, BBC Radio, *People Today*, 20 September 1963; BUSC HA/7/1, Memorial Address at Harold Abrahams Funeral.

University at sport was more important to him than representing his country. At Repton, athletics became an ‘obsession’ for Harold, whilst during his time at Cambridge Abrahams frequently claimed that he was more interested in running than his studies.¹⁸⁰

Abrahams’ entry into the exclusive private education milieu also opened up sporting opportunities outside of school and college. Whilst Harold clearly felt that sporting success would, as it had done for his brothers, facilitate his integration into the Cambridge ‘set’, it was also the case that his private education aided his entry into the exclusive world of amateur athletics; dominated at this time by ex-public school and Oxbridge alumni. As Crump has noted, the original founders of amateur athletics clubs in the Victorian Era, and of the Amateur Athletic Association in 1880, were generally privately educated. Whilst athletics gradually achieved a ‘wider social constituency’, most participants and administrators within the sport remained of this background well into the twentieth century.¹⁸¹ As Holt has claimed, whereas working-class participation in professional ‘pedestrianism’ was well established during the Victorian period, modern track and field athletics remained an ‘almost entirely amateur preserve’.¹⁸²

Abrahams, a privately educated, ‘Anglicised’ Jew hailing from a family of athletes, was perfectly suitable material for this exclusive world. During his career, he went on to

¹⁸⁰ BUSC HA/2, Harold Abrahams, ‘Competing at the Olympic Games’; Abrahams noted that ‘as far as I was concerned in 1920, I attached far more importance to getting my ‘blue’ at Cambridge than being chosen to represent Great Britain in four events in the [Antwerp] Olympics’. BUSC HA/17/21, Harold Maurice Abrahams interview, BBC Radio, *People Today*, 20 September 1963; BUSC HA/2, Transcript of interview with Harold Abrahams, 20 October 1977.

¹⁸¹ Jeremy Crump, ‘Athletics’ in Mason, *Sport in Britain*, p. 44.

¹⁸² For a general survey of ‘amateur’ dominance, see Holt, *Sport and the British*, chapter 2, ‘Amateurism and the Victorians’.

‘achieve national fame and respectability’ through his amateur athletic endeavours.¹⁸³ After winning his first track race aged only nine, Abrahams went on to win both the 100 metres and long jump events at the prestigious Public Schools Championship in 1918, before going on to experience considerable success as a Cambridge athlete. As well as dominating sprinting at Oxford and Cambridge varsity meetings in the early 1920s, Abrahams was made President of the Cambridge University Athletic Club in 1922, won three events at the Oxbridge versus Yale and Harvard meeting in 1923 and was victorious in that year’s Amateur Athletic Championships (these last two successes were pivotal in bringing Abrahams to the attention of the national media as a ‘hope’ for the 1924 Olympics). His crowning athletic glory was his victory in the 100 yard sprint in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris.¹⁸⁴

Whilst this all shows that Abrahams’ sporting motivations seem to have been driven more by sibling rivalry and jealousy than anti-Semitism, it is also important to note that Abrahams’ public-school and Cambridge background, a facilitating factor in the lives of many socially mobile English Gentiles and Jews, clearly played a significant role in his sporting career - primarily by enabling his involvement in a largely middle to upper-class sport characterised by ‘Gentleman amateur’ ethos and competitors. In an educational sense, Abrahams was following a path more recognisable for Gentiles than Jews at this time. Similarly, in sporting terms, by moving into the sphere of amateur athletics via public-school and Cambridge, Abrahams was also firmly entering into an exclusive sporting and

¹⁸³ Crump, ‘Athletics’, p. 53.

¹⁸⁴ *Athletics Weekly*, 6 January 1973; *The Times*, 7 May 1925; BUSC HA/2 Transcript of interview with Harold Abrahams, 20 October 1977.

social environment not available or open to less privileged or ‘Anglicised’ immigrant Jews. Arguably, whilst Abrahams’ integration into the world of private education aided his sporting career, it was also the case that through sport, he was becoming more ‘Anglicised’ and accepted as part of the middle to upper-class establishment.

The English-Jewish Hero?

It is clearly the case that throughout Harold Abrahams’ family, education and sporting life, ‘Anglicisation’ and integration were central themes. It is apparent that Abrahams himself exhibited a desire for acceptance and integration which helped aid his sporting career. Yet evidence also suggests that his family’s background and his public-school and Cambridge career assisted his entry into both an exclusive social and cultural environment and a sport dominated by middle to upper class amateur ‘Gentleman’.

Abrahams’ integration is also reflected in wider reports of his sporting successes, both at the time and since, which make no mention of his Jewish background. Whereas *Chariots of Fire* may have depicted Abrahams as something of a ‘marginalised’ figure, in the minds of contemporary press and subsequent athletics publications, Abrahams was first and foremost an English sportsman from a privileged social and educational background.¹⁸⁵ For example, in the aftermath of his 1924 Olympic victory, the *Daily Mirror* referred to Abrahams’ as the ‘first Englishman to win this race at the Olympic Games’ and applauded the efforts of ‘the old Cantab’. In a feature length article on Abrahams’ career published in 1973, *Athletics*

¹⁸⁵ Cashmore, ‘Bigotry’, p. 162.

Weekly, celebrated ‘the day an Englishman won the Olympic sprint crown’ and made no mention of Harold’s Jewish roots.¹⁸⁶

Amongst the Jewish community, Abrahams was celebrated before and after his 1924 victory as an ‘Anglo-Jewish athlete’. Throughout the 1920s, he featured regularly and prominently in the sports pages of the Jewish press. For the established community, who patronised newspapers such as the *Jewish Chronicle* and who had stressed the need for ‘Anglicisation’ for Jewish immigrants for over three decades, Abrahams’ sporting success and visible acceptance amongst the English social and sporting elites was extremely gratifying. At every turn, the English-Jewish community lauded Abrahams’ successes and continually stressed the wider social and cultural importance of his athletic career. After his victories in the Oxbridge versus Harvard and Yale athletics meeting in 1923 the *Jewish Chronicle* noted that Abrahams was a ‘striking instance of the capacity of the Jew in athletics whenever he has had the opportunity of developing his muscles through healthy sport’.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, in the same year the *Jewish World* claimed that Abrahams was a symbolic retort and challenge to anti-Semitic stereotypes:

It has often been said that Jews have produced very few athletes of note, as they are too much engaged in commerce, the arts and finance to take interest in sports...It is on the track that the Jewish community can look with pride at the wonderful successes of one of its own sons – Harold M Abrahams – who has rightly been described as one of the ‘greatest all-round athletes who has ever represented Cambridge University’...no English team of athletes would be complete without him.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ *Daily Mirror*, 9 July 1924; *Athletics Weekly*, 6 January 1923.

¹⁸⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 July 1923.

¹⁸⁸ *Jewish World*, 15 March 1923.

Jewish communal organisations also rushed to celebrate Abrahams' athletic achievements and to secure the athlete's symbolic involvement in their own activities with young immigrant Jews. In June 1923, Abrahams was the guest of honour at a dinner organised by the Maccabaeans Society. The invitation of Abrahams, who was the youngest Jew honoured in this way by the Society, to the honorary dinner was a symbolic acceptance of the athlete into the English-Jewish elites. Similarly, in 1924, Abrahams was invited to take on the Presidency of the Jewish Athletic Association, a role he accepted and held until the late 1920s. Jewish institutions, which had seen Abrahams celebrated by the English public-schools and by Cambridge University, were also keen to show that the Jewish community itself welcomed Abrahams' sporting achievements.¹⁸⁹ The Jewish community were also pleased that Abrahams' success had 'brought lustre on the name of English Jewry' and was also leading to a rise in interest in athletics amongst younger Jews.¹⁹⁰

Importantly, what this all demonstrates is that the Jewish community effectively held Abrahams up to be a successful 'example' of how 'Anglicisation' could lead to sporting success and social acceptance. The accomplishments of the Bedford athlete were promoted in order to reinforce and substantiate the 'Anglicisation' campaign, a message espoused since the late nineteenth century. In Abrahams, the English-Jewish press and community had someone from an immigrant background who had progressed through the exclusive public-school and Cambridge system and who had gained prestige for himself and his

¹⁸⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 April 1923, 1 September 1924; *Jewish World*, 28 June 1923, 2 October 1924.

¹⁹⁰ *Jewish World*, 29 November 1923.

community through his efforts in amateur athletics – an example which young immigrant Jews should look up to and try to emulate. When the *Jewish World* suggested offering Abrahams the Jewish Athletic Association Presidency in April 1923, it noted that such an appointment would ‘inspire Jewish lads to try and follow in his footsteps...’ a comment which seemingly referred both to his sporting successes but also to his successful ‘Anglicisation’, integration and acceptance.¹⁹¹

Whilst Abrahams may have been thought of by the wider Jewish community as something of an ‘Anglicised’ and integrated personality, he also saw himself in similar terms - noting frequently that his distance from his Jewishness was an important factor in his athletic success. Abrahams argued on several occasions that ‘Anglicisation’ was needed for a successful sporting career because an overly devout and conscientious observance of Jewish religion and culture was a hindrance to elite sporting success. Jewishness, he argued, had to be either mostly or wholly marginalised if Jews wanted to experience similar levels of sporting achievement. Abrahams publicly aired his thoughts on the relationship between ‘Anglicisation’ and sport in an awards evening speech for the Jewish Athletic Association given in 1925. In the speech he attributed the lack of Jewish success in elite athletics to a lack of ‘equal opportunities’ because of the ‘difficulty’ in the fact that ‘most principal athletics events were held on a Saturday’. He, however, did not believe that observance of the Jewish Sabbath should stop young Jews from competing in such events

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 19 April 1923.

and noted that his willingness to contravene religious law throughout his own career had helped him achieve considerable athletic ‘successes’.¹⁹²

Abrahams’ most comprehensive espousal of the sporting ‘need’ for ‘Anglicisation’ came in 1927. In a full page feature written by him entitled ‘The Jews in Athletics’, published in the *Jewish World*, Abrahams summarised Jewish sporting achievement and discussed why he felt more Jews had not distinguished themselves in the sporting arena. As well as outlining a number of ‘Jewish’ characteristics which he felt ‘suitable’ for sporting competition (Jewish ‘quick thinking’, their ‘high opinion of their own ability’ and ‘self-assurance’ were all highlighted), Abrahams claimed the most important factor in Jewish sporting success was a willingness to ‘Anglicise’ and to move away from one’s religion. Abrahams argued that sporting achievement, especially at the highest level, was incompatible with a dedicated outlook on Jewish religion and culture. Athletes should be devout to the ‘religion’ of training and excelling in their sport, not to religious law and viewpoints:

One must make it clear that a strict adherence to Judaism would prevent one from participating in Saturday competitions and, as a result, the ‘strict’ Jews could never hope to attain international recognition, since at a conservative estimate ninety per cent of important competitions are held on a Saturday afternoon. A religion (qua such) that is one’s philosophy of life (or theistic views) has little if anything to do with the qualities which characterise an athlete. True, clean living and rigid self-denial are the foundations of athletic success, but these could hardly be termed the tenets of one’s religion.¹⁹³

¹⁹² *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 November 1925.

¹⁹³ *Jewish World*, 10 February 1927.

Abrahams singled out for attention the work of the Grafton Athletic Club, founded in the East End of London in 1908 as a running club for Jews too old to attend the various Anglo-Jewish youth clubs founded around that time.¹⁹⁴ The Grafton, Abrahams noted, was ‘composed entirely of Jewish athletes’ but ‘competes in events on the Sabbath’ – something which he felt was aiding their work with young immigrant and British-born Jews:

I express no opinion of the rights or wrongs of such activities on the Sabbath (my own activities will speak for my personal views – and it is, in the end, a matter of personal belief) but at any rate here is a club doing really good work among the Jewish men.¹⁹⁵

Clearly, Abrahams was noting that assimilation and integration, especially with a more relaxed view towards religious belief, was a useful and necessary factor in Jewish participation in sporting competitions. Observing the Jewish Sabbath was one important block in this respect. But Abrahams was also arguing that, more generally, religion and sport did not mix and were somewhat polarised. A Jewish sportsman wanting to reach the highest echelons had, in theory, to be as assimilated as possible.¹⁹⁶

In a wider sense, Abrahams’ argument is interesting when set in the context of growing religious indifference amongst young immigrant Jews during the interwar period.¹⁹⁷ Jewish communal organisations, which had loudly espoused the need for ‘Anglicisation’ during

¹⁹⁴ The renowned sports administrator, Arthur Gold, began his athletics career with the Grafton Club in 1933. *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 June 2002.

¹⁹⁵ *Jewish World*, 10 February 1927.

¹⁹⁶ See, for instance, the section below on sport and the Jewish Sabbath, where I highlight a number of examples of elite Jewish sportsmen who chose to ignore religious law to compete on the Jewish rest day.

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter 3, below.

the early part of the twentieth century, were increasingly realising that integration and assimilation had been overly successful and that religious observance amongst young Jews was rapidly declining. Sport, in the minds of communal and religious elites, was one contributory factor in this 'drift' and interest and participation in physical recreation was said to be weakening the bond between Jews and their religion and culture.

Abrahams, as an established figure and sporting 'celebrity', was perhaps immune from criticism for seemingly encouraging religious apostasy (his article did not cause any subsequent debate). Yet his own willingness to desecrate the Sabbath was indicative not only of wider trends amongst the immigrant generation, but also of his own personal lack of religious observance. Although he had been Barmitzvah'd in 1913, neither Abrahams' himself, nor his family, took religious considerations seriously – something which was later attributed to Isaac Abrahams' beliefs, after moving to Britain, in political, religious and personal freedom of choice for himself and his family. Later in his life, Abrahams took the increasingly common step for assimilated and 'Anglicised' Jews of converting to Christianity (he became a practising Catholic in 1934) and marrying outside of the Jewish community – he wed Sybil Marjorie, a D'Oyly Carte singer and daughter of a Rugby School master, in 1936. Although born into a family of immigrant Jewish background, over his lifetime Abrahams gradually came to resemble more of an English establishment figure than a Jewish 'outsider'.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 February 1913; BUSC, Interview with Tony Abrahams; McWhirter, 'Abrahams'.

The Treacherous' English Jew? The 1936 Berlin Olympics

Whilst Abrahams was a celebrated and accepted figure amongst the English-Jewish community during the 1920s, his decisions in 1936 did much to alter the Jewish public's perception of the 'Anglicised' former star of British athletics. Effectively, Abrahams' 'English' attitudes and approach to the controversial 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, as both a sports administrator and BBC commentator, were seen by the Jewish community as a 'cowardly stab in the back'. Whilst it was conceded that the athlete was extremely 'Anglicised' and integrated, he was criticised for showing little concern for the plight of oppressed Jews under the Nazi regime in favour of backing the British establishment's official line on the sporting 'need' to allow the Games to continue. 'Does Mr Abrahams acknowledge the fact that no matter how British he may be, no matter to what extent sport may be his religion, he is yet a Jew?' asked one correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle* pointedly in May 1936.¹⁹⁹

Berlin had been awarded the Olympic Games in 1931, after beating Barcelona in an International Olympic Committee vote concerning the host city. After Hitler and the National Socialists came to power in 1933 and began repressing minority groups, international concern grew that the 1936 Summer and Winter Games, scheduled to be held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, would be utilised as a political tool by the Nazis to espouse Hitler's racist ideals and expansionist ambitions. Subsequently, attempts to organise boycotts of the Games were widely supported in America and by Jewish athletes and

¹⁹⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 May 1936.

sporting organisations, although eventually all of the major sporting nations did send teams to both Olympiads.²⁰⁰

In Britain, whilst there may have been some concern that Germany proposed to use sport as a political tool, there was no general desire to rally against the Nazis in sporting terms amongst officials or the wider public.²⁰¹ Although there was ‘no strong line against the Games’, a campaign in favour of a British boycott was launched by the trade union movement, the Communist Party and the Labour Party, as well as the *Manchester Guardian*. In 1935, the *Guardian* claimed that allowing the Games to be held in Berlin would be a ‘violation of the Olympic principles’ as Jews would not be able to compete on ‘an equal footing with other athletes’.²⁰² Significantly, the idea of a boycott also drew support from the Jewish establishment. In March 1936, the *Jewish Chronicle* noted its support for a motion in favour of a boycott put forward to the meeting of the Amateur Athletic Association by the National Workers’ Sport Federation.²⁰³

Importantly, however, Harold Abrahams, a senior figure within the AAA at this time, spoke out against the resolution and the wider boycott movement:

I know there is not a single person in this room who does not deplore the conditions in Germany today, but in spite of these conditions, I ask myself whether it is ultimately in the

²⁰⁰ Arnd Kruger, ‘Germany: The Propaganda Machine’ in Arnd Kruger and William Murray (Eds), *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics and Appeasement in the 1930s* (Chicago, 2003), pp. 18-21.

²⁰¹ Richard Holt, ‘Great Britain: The Amateur Tradition’ in Kruger and Murray, *The Nazi Olympics*, pp. 70-72.

²⁰² *Manchester Guardian*, 6 December 1935.

²⁰³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1936. The NWSF was the sporting wing of the Communist Party and drew much of its leadership from politicised Jews such as Benny Rothman.

best interests of world sport and better world relationships that the AAA should pass this resolution and withdraw from the Games.²⁰⁴

As Walters has noted, Abrahams had also put forward the same argument to the British Olympic Association in December 1935 – days before they formally accepted the invitation to send a British team to the Games.²⁰⁵ Abrahams' actions, as Holt and Mandell have noted, delayed a crucial vote on the resolution and effectively 'killed off' the British boycott movement.²⁰⁶

Abrahams, however, had no wish to anger the Jewish community. He claimed he 'had no delusions about the situation in Germany' for oppressed Jews and other minorities. Despite this though, he felt that punishing Germany's political leaders through sporting means and turning the Olympics into a British political issue, was both distasteful and hindered 'the furtherance of those ideals in sport... in which we all believe'.²⁰⁷ Importantly, Abrahams was following the general line on the Berlin Games espoused by other British sporting establishment. Whilst there were clear concerns over the political and diplomatic effect of a potential boycott from the British Government, sporting officials (of a largely privately-educated, middle to upper class background) believed firmly in the sanctity of sport and the

²⁰⁴ Quoted in Guy Walters, *Berlin Games: How Hitler Stole the Olympic Dream* (London, 2006), p. 124.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 59. At the 1935 meeting of the BOA, Abrahams argued that if the Games were boycotted then this would lead to a deterioration of international relations. He also felt that a boycott would unnecessarily harm sporting ties to the Nazi regime.

²⁰⁶ Holt, 'Amateur Tradition', p. 72; Richard Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (London, 1971), p. 80.

²⁰⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1936.

‘amateur ethic of non-intervention’ – opposing a boycott as it ‘went against the grain’ of their ‘public school traditions’.²⁰⁸

Abrahams, who was evidently motivated by the same ideals and ethics that characterised the stance of the British sporting establishment, was criticised by the Jewish community for giving ‘cachet to the rotten Nazi regime’ and betraying British and international Jewry.²⁰⁹

In 1935, after Abrahams had spoken out against a boycott at the meeting of the British Olympic Association, the President of the Board of Deputies, Neville Laski, wrote to him complaining about his decision: ‘It passes the bounds of knowledge that I possess to understand how any national or international Olympic committee...could think for one moment of holding the Games in Berlin’.²¹⁰ One article in the *Jewish Chronicle* in May 1936 called on him to show more than just ‘passive sympathy’ and noted that, even though Abrahams was now assimilated in all but name, ‘it is his duty to do his all to help the German Jews and to secure for them that fairness of treatment which is essential not only in sport but in all walks of life’. A debate in the pages of the newspaper raged throughout the summer of 1936, with the editor surmising in September 1936 that Abrahams’ support for the Berlin Games had ‘called forth resentment, not only from this journal, but by the Jewish community in general’.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Holt, ‘Amateur Tradition’, p. 72. Significantly, evidence also later emerged that Abrahams had been in regular contact with Avery Brundage (American International Olympic Committee Chairman) in the years leading up to 1936. Brundage was a staunch opponent to boycotting Berlin and believed that ‘an Olympic boycott on account of the Jews would excite dangerous, possibly uncontrollable anti-Semitic sympathies’. Caroline Marvin, ‘Avery Brundage and American Participation in the 1936 Olympic Games’, *Journal of American Studies*, 16, 1, 1982, p. 89.

²⁰⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 May 1936.

²¹⁰ Quoted in Walters, *Berlin Games*, p. 60.

²¹¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 September 1936.

Abrahams was also criticised by Anglo-Jewry during the Games themselves. Whilst his opposition to the boycott was believed to be an affront to his Jewish background, he was also attacked by the Jewish community for ‘playing into Goebbels’ hands’ by attending the Games as a commentator for the BBC. Abrahams, who had worked with the BBC on sports broadcasting since 1924 and had pioneered the art of radio commentary on live events, agonised over attending the Games and sought Government guidance on the matter on several occasions. He later noted that he eventually ‘went there with a good deal of misapprehension’ and ‘unhappiness’ and claimed that ‘although I hadn’t been a practising Jew for years, I was very uneasy about going at all’.²¹²

Abrahams had decided by May 1936 to attend the Olympics with the BBC and ‘knew’ that his decision would be ‘very much criticised’ by some within the Jewish community. Correspondence in the letters column of the *Jewish Chronicle* attacked him for giving the Nazis a propaganda coup through having a prominent English Jew freely attending, and showing support for the Games. One letter, signed ‘A Supporter of the Olympic Ideal’, asked pointedly, ‘How does Mr Abrahams relish the project [sic] of Nazi party bosses, large and small, bowing to him with all the appearances of friendship due to a loyal supporter and then laughing at him behind his back? For laugh they will’. Again, questions were asked within the Jewish community whether the ‘Anglicised’ Abrahams was

²¹² McWhirter, ‘Abrahams’; BUSC HA/17/21, Harold Abrahams BBC interview.

concerned with the international Jewish cause at all, or whether his sympathies and motives lay with the British establishment.²¹³

There was some support for Abrahams within the Jewish community, as evidenced by correspondence in the *Jewish Chronicle* in April 1936. One letter, from 'L.C.', agreed with Abrahams' protests at the proposed boycott, claiming that such a move would lead to a 'deepening of misunderstanding' between Germany and the international community.²¹⁴ As we have seen, Abrahams himself, both at the time and subsequently, noted that his decisions to protest against the boycott movement and to attend the Games were not taken lightly and that he was fully aware of the plight of the Jewish community under the Nazi regime. In March 1936, Abrahams claimed that 'he did not realise that his action in publicly opposing the boycott might cause hurt to the Jews of this country and be taken by them as an act of treachery'. He added that such was his personality 'If I had been born in Germany, knowing myself as I do, I doubt if I should be alive today'.²¹⁵

Whilst it may be inaccurate to say that Abrahams was unsympathetic or ignorant of the political and sporting ramifications of his actions, the personal approach he took to the Berlin Olympics seems much more indicative of an 'Anglicised' individual than of someone with a strong personal, social and cultural attachment to his Jewish heritage. In reality, Abrahams was more driven and motivated by wider sporting and political arguments concerning the 1936 Games and in following the official British line. He

²¹³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 May 1936.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* 3 April 1936.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* 27 March 1936.

exhibited no desire to join the boycott movement promoted by the *Jewish Chronicle* and supported within the international and British Jewish communities. One contemporary quote from Abrahams, who also edited the Official British report into the Games which was ‘remarkable for its utter lack of political discussion’, seems crucial in ascertaining his attitude, position and level of assimilation by 1936.²¹⁶ During the controversial meeting of the Amateur Athletic Association in March of that year, Abrahams pointedly, and symbolically, in terms of the hierarchy employed, remarked that:

He approached it [the boycott idea] as an Englishman who had been fortunate to represent his own country at two Olympic Games, as a man who had enjoyed working with his athletic colleagues for over ten years on the Amateur Athletic Association and as a man of Jewish origin.

Significantly, therefore, whilst his Jewishness may have played some role in his decision making process, Abrahams gave more weight to the fact that, as an Englishman, an Olympian and as a sports administrator, British involvement in the Berlin Games must go ahead despite wider social and political issues. It was evidently the case that, though he felt some connection and sympathy with the community of his birth, his ‘Anglicised’ motivations and values clearly lay closer to those of the British establishment.²¹⁷

Clearly, whilst *Chariots of Fire* has done much to inform and influence public opinion on Harold Maurice Abrahams since its release in 1981, feature films must be carefully approached by those desiring an accurate historical picture of the Bedford athlete. As Carnes has noted in his volume entitled *Past Imperfect: History according to the Movies*,

²¹⁶ Mandell, *Nazi Olympics*, p. 297.

²¹⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1936

whilst ‘movies inspire and entertain...they do not provide a substitute for history that has been painstakingly assembled from the best available evidence and analysis’.²¹⁸ Whilst *Chariots* clearly portrays Abrahams as something of an ‘outsider’ figure and ‘too Semitic’ in his character and approach, the best available evidence points to ‘Anglicisation’ and integration as being much more important processes in his life and career than exclusion or anti-Semitism – although Abrahams clearly felt, at various times in his life, that discrimination had acted as a motivational factor.²¹⁹

In four different ways we can see how it is much more accurate to see Abrahams as an ‘Anglicised’ and integrated individual rather than the marginalised figure depicted in *Chariots of Fire*. Firstly, in Abrahams, we have an example of a sportsman from an immigrant background (although his circumstances were far from typical compared to others from immigrant backgrounds) whose family’s pursuance of ‘Anglicisation’ proved an enabling factor in a highly successful athletic career. Through a public-school and Cambridge education, Abrahams, like other socially mobile Jews, entered into an obsessively sporting environment and gained access to the exclusive world of British amateur athletics. Skill, dedication and ability were obviously important factors in his national and international success. Yet Abrahams, compared to many others, had the opportunity to fulfil his athletic potential due to his own and his family’s integrationist tendencies, economic independence and educational background.

²¹⁸ Mark C Carnes, *Past Imperfect: History According to The Movies* (New York, 1996), p. 10.

²¹⁹ Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 275.

Secondly, it is important to note that Abrahams was held by the English-Jewish community to be a useful example of 'Anglicisation' and assimilation. As well as being celebrated and accepted by the Jewish establishment as something of an 'English-Jewish' hero, Abrahams was consciously portrayed both as justification for the so-called 'Anglicisation' campaign and as evidence of the ability of immigrant Jews to enter into the highest echelons of British social and sporting society. Likewise, and thirdly, during his career Abrahams also claimed that he himself was 'Anglicised' and integrated and espoused assimilation, with a weakened attachment to religious and cultural Jewishness, as a necessary factor in elite sporting achievement. Effectively, he argued that being 'too Semitic' in your personal and sporting life was incompatible with reaching the highest levels of sporting achievement.

Fourthly, by examining Abrahams' approach and attitude towards the controversial Olympic Games of 1936, we can clearly see that his social, cultural, political and sporting sympathies were almost wholly English in character. It is unfair and inaccurate to believe that Abrahams was unsympathetic or indifferent towards the plight of international Jewry. Yet he was evidently more driven by following the 'English' line on the Games espoused by sporting and political officials than by making a political statement through sport about the Nazi oppression of the Jews. Abrahams, who clearly understood that his actions would be viewed negatively by British Jewry, was motivated by public-school, 'amateurist' ideology rather than by sympathy and allegiance towards an ethnic grouping he had spiritually, culturally and physically left behind him by 1936.

Evidently then, the picture painted of Harold Abrahams' life and career is one of an integrated and 'Anglicised' individual as opposed to that of an outsider. Yet whilst clearly assimilated, Abrahams was by no means a fully accepted, 'Establishment' figure. Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that he was an extremely controversial character within British sport after his retirement from competition in 1925 and could foster polarised opinions. Abrahams frequently courted controversy over his outspoken views on the 'need' for British athletic specialisation, the Olympic Games and his suggestions for the modernisation of the British athletic movement. In addition, he was disliked by many within sporting journalism and within British sports administration. Significantly, Bromhead has highlighted the fact that, unlike his brothers, Abrahams was never knighted as a sign of his lack of acceptance amongst the highest social and sporting circles.²²⁰

Whilst Abrahams quickly and thoroughly cast off his Jewishness and integrated, in sporting, cultural, social, religious and political terms, into English society, he was anything but an 'Establishment' figure. Essentially, Abrahams had a 'hybridised' formation of an English and Jewish character which meant he was neither fully accepted by the ethnic community of his birth nor the social elites into which he strove to integrate. What is evident, however, is that Abrahams' personality, character and attitude were clearly much more English than Jewish. It is wrong to view his life before, during or after his sporting

²²⁰ BUSC HA/13/1 John Bromhead, 'The Life and Times of Harold Abrahams'. For Abrahams' views on the 'need' for specialisation see *The Times*, 25 April 1926, 18 July 1931. For his views on the Olympic Games see BUSC HA/13/1 Adophe Abrahams Memorial Lecture. Norris McWhirter claimed Abrahams 'worked against the stolid petty opposition of senior office holders in various governing bodies, often athletic manqués...to raise athletics from a minor to major national sport' during his time with the British Amateur Athletic Board from the 1940s through to his death in 1978. McWhirter, 'Abrahams'.

career as anything other than that of an ‘Anglicised’ and integrated son of an Eastern European Jewish immigrant.

Conclusions - Sport and ‘Anglicisation’

The evidence seen in this chapter demonstrates that the experiences of Jewish immigrants in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain were affected and shaped by sport. In many varied ways, immigrant involvement in physical recreation (or the second generation immigrant children more specifically) impacted on Jewish integration into all levels of British society. Sport, evidently, became more than just a simple leisure activity and was inherently linked to shaping the aspirations of many young immigrants. Physical recreation also affected and influenced their entry and reception into mainstream society.

Sport played, or was believed to play, a vital role in the ‘Anglicisation’ of Jewish immigrant children and in the processes and initiatives designed to catalyse their acculturation. Historians of Anglo-Jewry have previously examined the direction and content of ‘Anglicisation’ programmes driven by the Anglo-Jewish elites, but have not generally understood or demonstrated the significance of physical recreation. It is evidently the case that community leaders attached great significance to the direct and indirect assistance that sport could give to immigrant integration and acculturation, seeing the promulgation of a ‘sporting’ attitude as central to these programmes’ success. In one sense, the Jewish elites believed strongly in the ability of sport to shape Jews both physically and

psychologically to make them appear, act and think like their non-Jewish peers. They also trusted in the power of physical recreation as a tool for breaking down socio-cultural barriers and alleviating tensions and anxieties between Jewish and non-Jewish society.

Such a belief in the power of sport was also evident in the experiences of immigrant Jews in the higher echelons of English society. The case study of Harold Abrahams, an atypical second generation immigrant, reveals that physical recreation was also an important facet of life for more privileged Jews during the early twentieth century. Evidence shows that integration on Abraham's part opened up exclusive sporting opportunities, yet also demonstrates that sporting success aided his acceptance by his public school and University peers and by the Anglo-Jewish establishment. Importantly, however, it was also true that Abrahams' social, religious, cultural and sporting integration and acculturation eventually contributed to his alienation from the Jewish community. Seemingly, for this second-generation immigrant Jew, 'Anglicisation' through sport, and sport through integration into the English elites, placed Abrahams in a milieu awkwardly located between Jewishness and Englishness.

In order to improve our understanding of the acculturation and integration of Jewish immigrants into British society, experiences and attitudes linked to sport and physical recreation need to be much more comprehensively examined. An investigation of the role of sport in both collective and individual 'Anglicisation' reveals a great deal about the attitudes of communal leaders towards immigrant co-religionists and illustrates the tensions that arose at this time between Jewish and non-Jewish society. Additionally, this chapter

also shows how importance came to be attached to sport by the Anglo-Jewish elites, demonstrating the strong belief in the ability of physical to shape and form English identity and 'Englishness'.

Sport, Religion and Ethnicity

In his discussion of migrant ethnicity and identity since 1800, Panayi argues that the descendants of British immigrant groups gradually ‘adapt British norms’ and ‘hybrid identities’ are formulated, ‘using elements of both the homeland and the environment into which they are born’. Through interactions and identification with their surroundings, ‘the second and subsequent’ generations find themselves ‘caught between two cultures’ and develop new forms of behaviour, customs and new modes of expressing and developing their ethnic identity. Over time, the distinctive ethnicity of the immigrant generation is gradually eroded and ‘the norms of the homeland’ are replaced by ‘those of Britain’.¹

Panayi utilises the example of the Eastern European immigrant Jewish community to demonstrate this process. After settling in Britain in the decades leading up to the First World War, he argues that immigrant Jews, or their children and grandchildren more specifically, gradually cast off the vestiges of the migrant identity. Over time, behavioural patterns, social mobility, intermarriage, assimilations of language, food, dress and increasing secularisation all work to dilute the original immigrant ethnicity. A process of ‘cultural adaptation’ occurs as generation’s progress, creating new forms and expressions of individual and collective Jewishness.²

¹ Panayi, *An Immigration History*, pp. 136, 140-141, 144.

² *Ibid.* pp. 136, 141.

This paradigm is also reflected within scholarship directly concerned with Anglo-Jewish history. In his book on *Radical Assimilation*, Endelman takes a longer view of the Jewish community in Britain back to Resettlement, but claims that Jewish ethnicity has been eroded through interactions and relations with the wider community. In his analysis, communal unity, religious observance and geographical and cultural cohesion within the Jewish community have all been weakened through life in modern Britain, which has largely been characterised by ‘toleration and prosperity’. For Endelman, Jewish ethnicity has undergone substantial change as ‘England... presented Jews with an unprecedented challenge to the preservation of their religious and ethnic cohesiveness’. He claims that ‘the weakening of Jewish solidarity runs as a persistent theme throughout Anglo-Jewish history’.³

These themes and processes are especially evident since the Eastern European Jewish immigration. Mainly from the interwar period onwards, the second and third generation immigrants gradually cast off the vestiges of the Old World Judaism that their parents and grandparents had brought with them. Through interactions with wider society, the key aspects of immigrant Jewish ethnicity, such as strict religious observance, communal solidarity, endogamy, concern for immigrant culture and mores, were slowly replaced by a hybridised English-Jewish identity. After the Second World War, this ‘drift and defection...continued to thin the ranks of English Jewry’ as increasing secularity, social

³ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, pp. 3-7.

mobility, intermarriage and a general weakening of communal and ethnic cohesion combined to radically alter Jewish identity.⁴

Whilst various social, cultural, political and economic forces impacted on this process, it also seems that sport had an important effect on Jewish identity. Outside of Britain, historians of Jewish sport have made some attempt to examine and analyse the links between physical recreation and Jewish ethnicity destruction and construction. For instance, Gurock's *Judaism's Encounter with American Sports* demonstrates the important negative impact that sport had on Jewish religious identity and on the formation of secularised American-Jewish identities during the modern period.⁵ Similarly, in his *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field*, Levine focused on the notion of sport acting as a 'middle ground', a socio-cultural milieu where the young immigrant Jews cast off their immigrant identity and where hybrid forms of American-Jewishness were developed and refined.⁶

Although sport has not received much direct attention from scholars working on Anglo-Jewish ethnicity, it has been touched on in wider discussions with regards to the transformation of immigrant identity. Endelman, for example, claims the 'enthusiastic' consumption of 'English popular culture' during the interwar years was an important factor in promoting religious indifference and ignorance amongst the younger immigrant generation. Interest in sport and physical recreation, and other such 'amusements of urban

⁴ Ibid. p. 203.

⁵ Gurock, *Judaism's Encounter*, p. 11. Gurock refers to the 'corrosive spirit of sports' with regards to Jewish ethnicity and details how, from the Middle Ages onwards, Jewish interest in physical recreation had contributed to the erosion and re-construction of Jewishness.

⁶ Levine, *Ellis Island*, pp. 25, 38.

life', were much more attractive to immigrant youths than the 'Old World culture of their parents'.⁷ Livshin has shown that social and sporting organisations had a noticeable impact on Jewish religious observance and 'acculturation' during the 1920s and 1930s.⁸ Likewise, in his examination of Jewish social mobility, Cesarani has claimed that sport was a 'leisure activity that divided the Jewish working class along generational lines'. Sport not only both affected and reflected 'generational and geographical rifts', however, it also had an impact on the 'socialisation' of Jews into mainstream society – thus acting as a corrosive on communal solidarity.⁹

This chapter will further examine the relationship between sport and the apparent transformation of Jewish ethnicity since the Eastern European immigration. Sport offers a vehicle with which processes of social change and modifications to identity can be viewed and developed. Through an analysis of the sporting impact on immigrant ethnicity, the issues of social and cultural tension and generational rift can also be examined. Importantly, however, the chapter will not only seek to understand how sport reflects wider issues concerned with the 'drift' of the young of the immigrant community, but it will also show the significant direct impact of sport a number of key areas of immigrant ethnicity. Not only did the sporting interests of the second and third generation contribute to decline in religious observance and the weakening of communal cohesion and solidarity, it also

⁷ Ibid. p. 176; Endelman, *The Jews*, pp. 205-206.

⁸ Livshin, 'The Acculturation of the Children', pp. 90-93.

⁹ David Cesarani, 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Suburbs: Social Change in Anglo-Jewry Between the Wars, 1914-1945', *Jewish Culture and History*, 1, 1, 1998, pp. 13, 16.

hindered attempts to stem the socio-cultural ‘drift’ and re-engage Jews with their religion, culture and traditions.

As well as helping our understanding of the erosion of immigrant ethnicity, an analysis of several aspects of Jewish sporting participation illuminates the impact of physical recreation on identity formation. Whilst sport may have impacted negatively on religious observance and communal cohesion, it was also a vehicle for young Jews to form new, secularised identities as English-Jews. Although it is clear that participation in sport often dealt a knockout blow to immigrant culture, religion and communal ties in the lives of many second and third generation immigrant Jews, it is also shaped the creation of hybridised forms of Jewishness – identities which often more closely resembled their non-Jewish peers within the majority community.

The first part of this chapter will deal with sport’s impact on levels of religious observance amongst the British-Jewish community since the late nineteenth century – focusing especially on the way sport affected compliance with the laws and customs of the Jewish Sabbath. It is generally agreed that religious adherence and participation in religious practices, customs and organisations formed a key aspect of many different immigrant ethnicities. Amongst the Jewish community of Britain, however, levels of observance have undergone a stark decline since the age of Eastern European Jewish immigration – reflecting trends towards increased secularity amongst the wider population. This is especially apparent with regards to adherence to the Jewish Sabbath, one of the most visible

and basic tenets of the Jewish religion, which has also become less strictly and markedly observed.

Whilst a number of factors may have been examined to explain changes to this key aspect of immigrant ethnicity, the role of sport in this process has been generally overlooked. Historians of Anglo-Jewry have noted that Sabbath observance, due to economic factors, employment trends, social mobility and behavioural patterns, has undergone a marked decrease – with a more Orthodox adherence to law and customs becoming less common. Increasing interest in sport, especially amongst the second and third generation, also had a knock-on effect on the diminishing cultural and religious concern for the Sabbath. There are many examples of Jews with sporting interests either developing a more liberalised approach to religious customs and traditions or abandoning the rest day altogether. The role of sport in lessening or altering observance of the Sabbath, and of religious practices and beliefs more generally, will be addressed and analysed.

The case study of Jewish involvement in professional boxing will show the considerable direct and symbolic impact that the sport had on communal solidarity. Throughout the twentieth century, the Jewish immigrant community became increasingly characterised by greater social mobility and development of significant socio-cultural differences and generational rifts between the first generation immigrants and their offspring. From the interwar years onwards, the immigrant community was seen to be transformed with a considerable fracturing occurring between the aspirations, values and behaviour of the older and younger immigrant Jews.

Jewish participation and interest in professional boxing made an important figurative and palpable contribution to these processes. In reality, boxing was one of the sharpest areas of contrast between the established and immigrant community, as well as between the first and second generation immigrants themselves. Through their involvement in the sport, one of the most visible avenues of British-Jewish sporting participation, cultural and social differences between immigrant parents and children were reflected and exacerbated. A key means of social mobility, and thus a factor in the growing physical and psychological split within the immigrant community, Jewish participation in professional boxing also exerted a powerful effect on socio-cultural change within Anglo-Jewry. Through this sport, processes undermining the cohesion of the immigrant community were both affected and reflected.

Sport also proved an impediment to attempts within the British Zionist movement to reinvigorate and re-engage the younger generation with their religion and culture. Whilst the Maccabi movement had undergone considerable growth in Continental Europe since the turn of the twentieth century, it was not until the mid 1930s that the organisation gained a foothold within Britain. Borne out of the Zionist conception of the 'New Jew', Maccabi was primarily aimed at encouraging sport and physical recreation amongst younger Jews in order to facilitate and promote the idea of the establishment of a Jewish nation-state. In Britain, the earliest days of the movement was also characterised by a desire to help promote Jewish education and interest in religion and culture – areas where the Maccabi leaders felt the Anglo-Jewish youth movement had been neglectful. Whilst promoting sporting opportunities was at the very core of British Maccabi, it was also hoped that the

organisation would help to stem the ‘drift’ of younger Jews away from their cultural and religious Jewishness.

Unlike other Zionist youth organisations, in their mission to ‘re-Judaize’ their members Maccabi was a distinct failure – due in no small part to the predominance of sport within the organisation. Maccabi’s leadership within Britain, whilst cognisant of the growing religious apostasy and detachment of younger Jews, could not effectively employ their resources and programme to promote interest in Jewish religion and culture. The clear preference for concentrating on sporting activities, prevalent amongst sections of the national and local leadership and especially evident amongst the average member, made attempts at launching effective cultural and religious education initiatives difficult. A case study of Maccabi demonstrates neatly, therefore, the ‘drift’ of younger Jews and the general apathy towards Jewish religion and culture, often in favour of sport, that existed for many second and third generation Jews.

Sport played a significant role in the erosion of immigrant ethnicity and the formation of new, secularised English-Jewish identities amongst the second and third generation. Involvement and interest in physical recreation had a notable impact on a ‘drifting’ population decreasingly concerned with the religion, culture, authority and traditions of their parents and grandparents. Not only did physical recreation contribute to growing religious indifference, especially concerning the Sabbath, and both facilitate and demonstrate the detachment and generational split between the original migrants and their offspring, but it also hampered Zionist efforts designed at reinvigorating Jewish religion

and culture. Essentially, within two generations of immigration, sport had been a significant factor in the erosion and reconfiguration of immigrant ethnicity and identity.

The Impact of Physical Recreation on Observance of the Jewish Sabbath

When trying to ascertain aspects which make up both individual and collective migrant ethnicity, it is clear that religious belief and observance is often a ‘fundamental’ component.¹⁰ This is especially true for the Jewish community of Great Britain who, hailing from many different regions and countries, often saw religious organisations and customs as a provider of some form of collective identity. Whilst it is incorrect to talk of one, unified Jewish community, attachment to religion is a fundamental aspect of what identified Jews as Jews and defined Jewish ethnicity.¹¹

By extension, therefore, if a weakening of attachment to religion occurs within a migrant community, there is often believed to be an accompanying effect on that group’s collective identity and ethnicity. In the case of Anglo-Jewry, from the arrival of Russo-Jewish immigrants from the late nineteenth century onwards, there is much evidence to suggest a marked decline in religious observance. Whilst the façade of organised religion may have remained strong, as indicated by the increasing number of Synagogues during the early twentieth century, there are many indications that adherence and concern for faith amongst

¹⁰ Panikos Panayi, *Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain, 1815-1945* (Manchester, 1994), p. 90.

¹¹ Panayi, for instance, claims that ‘faith has remained central in the collective and individual identities of virtually all migrant communities in Britain’. Panayi, *An Immigration History*, p. 145.

the Jewish community has steadily declined.¹² For instance, in 1903 one study of levels of religious worship in London concluded that only one quarter of the capital's immigrant Jewish population regularly attended Synagogue.¹³ In 1924, a social examination of London Jewry entitled 'Alien London' concluded that 'the younger generation who grew up during the war have, to a very large extent, lost their religious belief'.¹⁴ Livshin has noted that trends of decreasing observance continued throughout the interwar years, while one commentator claimed in 1964 that 'a basic fact of religious life in Anglo-Jewry is that the great bulk of the community has only the slightest concern with Judaism'.¹⁵ It has also been noted that the post-1945 period more generally has seen a 'gradual decline in religious adherence' amongst the Jewish community – a trend reflected amongst other migrant groups and the British population as a whole.¹⁶

This 'irreligion' was especially evident amongst the British-born children of the immigrant population. Although not fully assimilated or accepted into the mainstream society by the interwar years, many young Jews felt a greater affinity to the majority culture than to the customs and traditions of their parents.¹⁷ Accompanying this, their interest in religious observance underwent a stark decline. Attendance at Synagogue and *Talmud Torah* [Jewish

¹² See, for instance, Bernard Homa, *Orthodoxy in Anglo-Jewry: 1880-1940* (London, 1969).

¹³ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 147.

¹⁴ *The Times*, 28 November 1924.

¹⁵ Livshin, 'The Acculturation of the Children', pp. 90-93. Norman Cohen, 'Trends in Anglo-Jewish Religious Life' in Julius Gould and Shaul Esh (Eds), *Jewish Life in Modern Britain* (London, 1964), p. 41. Writing in 1981, Immanuel Jakobovits claimed that the arguments concerning secularisation and statistics put forward in 1964, one of which claimed that 70% of the community was 'largely indifferent' to religion, were 'still valid'. See Immanuel Jakobovits, 'An Analysis of Religious Versus Secularist Trends in Anglo-Jewry' in Lipman and Lipman, *Jewish Life in Britain*, p. 32.

¹⁶ Panayi, *An Immigration History*, p. 155.

¹⁷ Smith has argued that whilst religious observance, and the whole concept of religion itself, was increasingly alien to younger Jews, they retained a strong sense of Jewish identity. Elaine R Smith, 'Jews and Politics in the East End of London, 1918-1939' in Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p. 144.

religious school] decreased considerably, whilst concerns about the ‘decline in religious observance’ were ‘frequently expressed’ by communal and lay leaders across the whole interwar period.¹⁸ The Jewish establishment became increasingly anxious over ‘evidence of widespread ignorance on matters Jewish and lack of observance or worship’ amongst the younger generation. In one report into London Jewry in 1925, for instance, the ‘irreligiosity of Jewish youth...figured prominently’, whilst a youth worker the following year complained of what he saw as the ‘dangerous erosion of Jewish values’. By 1931, religious leaders were claiming a notable and alarming ‘decline of observance amongst young people in Anglo-Jewry’.¹⁹

The increasing secularisation of the Jewish community, which Panayi argues is indicative of Anglo-Jewry’s increased ‘adaptation’ to British life, is extremely apparent when examining attitudes towards the Jewish Sabbath. Observance of the Jewish rest day, as expressed through adherence to the various Sabbath laws prohibiting work, travel, the carrying of money etc and promoting attendance at Synagogue, is a key tenet of the Jewish religion. Despite this, strict observance of the Sabbath has become markedly less common since the end of the nineteenth century. Gartner claims that whilst many first-generation Jews kept the Sabbath in a largely traditional manner at this time, by 1903, as indicated by contemporary investigations, more than half of London’s Jews worked on the rest day.²⁰ In her survey of East London Jewry published in 1934, Henrietta Adler noted that Sabbath

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 143.

¹⁹ David Cesarani, ‘The East London of Simon Blumenfeld’s *Jew Boy*’, *London Journal*, 13, 1, 1987, pp. 47-49.

²⁰ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant*, p. 194.

observance was decreasing amongst the younger generation of the community.²¹ Green has claimed that, whilst the ‘special nature’ of the rest day was largely intact during the interwar years, ‘for increasing numbers of Jews, the Sabbath laws and the Sabbath rituals seemed to be outward trappings, outmoded, unimportant laws and unnecessary to their faith’. The general trend amongst Anglo-Jewry, at this time and beyond 1945, was for a decreasing concern and observance of the Sabbath laws, traditions and customs.²²

Many factors have been highlighted to explain this trend. Most importantly, historians and social commentators have focused on the effect of the increased need and willingness of Jews to work on the Sabbath, citing prevailing work patterns amongst contemporary non-Jewish society as having a noticeable effect on observance of the rest day. Adler, for instance, noted that economic conditions for the bulk of East London Jewry made it ‘increasingly difficult’ for Jews to observe the Sabbath in anything like a strict, Orthodox manner.²³ The emergence of new technologies, such as the electric light and the wireless radio, as well as general cultural changes within the younger generation, have also been highlighted as significant factors in increasing indifference towards the Jewish Sabbath. Clearly, the Jewish rest day was undermined and eroded from many different angles during the period from the late nineteenth century onwards, resulting in a marked reduction in numbers strictly adhering to Sabbath law.²⁴

²¹ Henrietta Adler, ‘Jewish Life and Labour in East London’, in Hubert Llewellyn Smith (Ed), *New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Volume XI, (London, 1934), p. 278.

²² Green, *Social History*, p. 330.

²³ Adler, ‘Jewish Life’, p. 278.

²⁴ Green, *Social History*, p. 330.

Reflecting similar changes in non-Jewish society in the nineteenth century, one factor which also contributed to a reduced observance of the Sabbath was Jewish participation in sport.²⁵ Whilst the impact of playing and watching sport on adherence to the customs and laws of the Jewish rest day has not been completely overlooked by historians, evidence suggests that the influence of physical recreation is more considerable than previously acknowledged.²⁶ Amongst the established and immigrant community, from the late nineteenth century through to the Second World War, increasing Jewish direct and indirect participation in sport was a significant factor in changing attitudes towards the Jewish Sabbath.²⁷ In contrast to the picture painted by some historians, for many Jews Saturday was increasingly a day of play, or watching professional sportsmen play, rather than a day of rest and prayer.²⁸

The trend for sport on the Sabbath did not go unnoticed by Jewish religious and lay leaders. Indeed, there were many within both the Jewish elites, and the community as a whole, who deplored Jews shunning the Synagogue on the Sabbath in favour of engaging in physical

²⁵ Lowerson has shown that Christian religious leaders in the nineteenth century increasingly saw sport as an important challenge to observance of the Christian Sabbath and that there was much 'secularisation arising from social habits'. John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914* (Manchester, 1993), p. 268-277.

²⁶ In his discussion on the impact of greater interest in English popular culture on Jewish religious observance more generally, Endelman hints that increasing Jewish participation in sport was working to undermine levels of Sabbath observance. See Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, pp. 176-177.

²⁷ There is evidence that sport also impacted on Sabbath observance in the *Yishuv* [Jewish community in the mandate of Palestine]. See, for instance, Helman, 'Sport on the Sabbath', pp. 47-58.

²⁸ Several historians have argued that Jewish participation in sport was affected by strict observance of the Jewish Sabbath. McKibbin, for instance, claims that the reason why professional boxing became so popular amongst Anglo-Jewry during the early twentieth century was that 'observant Jews' could not play football on the Sabbath and looked to alternative sports on alternative days of the week. Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford, 2000), p. 366. Likewise, Shipley has similarly claimed that Jewish success in boxing can be explained 'because the Jewish Sabbath ruled out the alternative sport, football, for it was chiefly played on Saturday before sundown'. Shipley, 'Boxing', p. 99.

recreation. Concerns were raised not only for the spiritual and social well-being of the individual Jew playing or watching sport on the rest day, but also for the effects of increasing amounts of sport on the Sabbath for the health and cohesion of the Jewish community more generally. The question was asked: how could Jews be expected to respect themselves, their elders, their community and their religion if they could not respect one of the fundamental principles of their Jewishness? For many, the issue of observance of the Sabbath went to the very core of the health of the Anglo-Jewish community.

If individual Jews choosing sport on the Sabbath was alarming enough, then the thought of Jewish organisations actively encouraging sport on the rest day appalled many religious leaders. In the case of the Jewish youth movement, founded with an ‘Anglicising’ mission at its very core, dissenting voices amongst the community emerged who disliked the effect that sport had on these organisations’ religious tone. Whilst criticisms such as these were evident from the movement’s earliest days, anxiety over the marginalisation of religion within these institutions grew considerably in the interwar period. Against the background of growing communal awareness and concern over the ‘irreligion’ of second and third generation immigrants, increasingly vociferous calls were made for the youth movement to lead the way in ‘re-Judaising’ a gradually more apostate younger generation. At the centre of this was increasing respect for the Sabbath and, by extension, limiting sport in favour of more religious content and emphasis.

Whilst pressure was placed on the youth movement to lessen its sporting focus, it was not the case that all of the calls were heeded. There was a growing agreement amongst some

Jewish youth leaders that more could be done on religious matters, and that Sabbath observance should form a more central aspect of the youth movement's programme. Despite this, however, evidence also shows that there still remained a core who believed that the advantages of sport outweighed whatever could be gained by a strictly observant attitude towards the Jewish rest day. Evidently, for many, sport had become a central aspect of Anglo-Jewish life, its physical and emotional benefits overshadowing the perceived religious and social harm it caused. Whilst sport did not solely create Jewish 'irreligion' or account wholly for relaxed approaches towards the Sabbath, Jewish interest in physical recreation was clearly an important factor in changing the beliefs and attitudes of a significant proportion of the population.

Individual Jews

Even amongst 'Anglicised' English Jews hailing from the Jewish elites, there is evidence to suggest that sport could sometimes form a part of Sabbath activities. Whilst members of the Jewish 'Cousinhood' could often be publicly observant in religious matters, strict standards of adherence were not necessarily maintained in their private lives. As Englander has noted, the Jewish elites of the late Victorian period often mirrored their Christian peers in terms of approach to religious matters – their social, communal and political lives being characterised by strict observance, but their attitudes in private being governed more by an 'inconsistent Victorian religiosity'.²⁹ This was the case for Samuel Montagu (1832-1911), banker, philanthropist and co-founder of the Federation of Synagogues. Montagu, who

²⁹ Quoted in Langton, *Claude Montefiore*, p. 66.

according to one biography was a ‘strict adherent of Orthodox Judaism’, often allowed his household to play tennis on the Sabbath, yet prohibited croquet as he felt a ‘chipped mallet constituted work’.³⁰

Indications that the wider Jewish population were foregoing traditional Sabbath observance in favour of sport often appeared in general discussions concerning supposedly declining religious standards. In 1898, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that the Conference of the National Union of Women Workers, concerning the ‘welfare and education of [the] young’, had addressed the benefits of strict Sabbath observance for the Jewish community but complained about the propensity of some Jews using the rest day for sport and leisure purposes. Miss Lidgett, a Poor Law guardian from St Pancras, noted that ‘she considered that the Jews had, by the observance of their Sabbath, strengthened their brain-power, as one day’s rest in seven gives increased force to mental action’. She went on to add, however, that more Jews were spending their Saturday ‘at play’ and that ‘a Sabbath spent in tennis, golf and bicycling is not ideal and does not smooth the rigours of the soul’.³¹

Similar concerns were echoed four years later, yet this time came from within the Jewish religious community itself. In 1902, Reverend John Harris gave a paper entitled ‘The Conditions and Needs of Modern English Judaism’ at the Liverpool Jewish Social Club.³²

³⁰ Ibid; Edwin Green, ‘Montagu, Samuel, first Baron Swaythling (1832–1911)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

³¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 November 1898.

³² Harris was later an outspoken advocate for pacifism amongst the Anglo-Jewish community during the First World War. See Evelyn Wilcock, ‘The Reverend John Harris: Issues in Anglo-Jewish Pacifism, 1914-1918’, *Jewish Historical Studies*, 30, 1987/1988.

Harris noted that ‘Sabbath after Sabbath, the faces of our friends are not seen in our Synagogues’ and went on to ask:

Are they all engaged in absolutely imperative business? With those so engaged I have sympathy. But what of those who may be found at the time of divine worship on the golf-links, the river or the cricket-field? What of those who may be found on a Friday night in the theatre and the music hall?..Do these things seem of small moment? It is because we are faithless in small matters that the greater evils befall us.³³

Although comments such as these indicate that fears and anxieties about Sabbath sport were apparent in the pre-1914 period, the ‘problem’ of sport on the rest day became much more widespread from the interwar years onwards. It was at this time that those who had progressed through the sports-obsessed Jewish youth movement reached adulthood. Like their Gentile peers, many were increasingly drawn to sport and leisure opportunities that abounded on Saturday – the main day for such activities within non-Jewish society.³⁴ As Cesarani has noted, it was during the interwar years, when the ‘British-born offspring of the Jewish working class were being socialised into the British working-class’, that more and more Jews from the immigrant community began exploring sporting opportunities on the Sabbath. Faced with the ‘competition’ of sporting and leisure activities (cinema, dancing etc), respect and adherence for the Jewish rest day, and Judaism more generally, ‘suffered a dramatic decline’.³⁵

³³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 February 1902

³⁴ Benjamin Lammers, ‘The Birth of the East Ender: Neighbourhood and Local Identity in Interwar East London’, *Journal of Social History*, 39, 2, Winter 2005, p. 338.

³⁵ Cesarani, ‘A Funny Thing’, pp. 13-17.

What is clear is that whilst many Jews wanted to involve themselves in sporting activities on the Sabbath, some did not want to appear openly unobservant. In order to avoid an open break with either familial or communal elders, many young Jews found ways to minimise their chances of detection and the anxiety their sporting activities could cause. Willy Goldman noted in his autobiography concerning his East End childhood that he regularly played street football on the Sabbath, but made sure to play away from his own road to avoid the possibility of being seen desecrating the rest day by his *Cheder* teacher.³⁶ Likewise, Abraham Goldstone, born in Manchester in 1910, recounted many years later the length he used to go to in order to play football for his local team without incurring the wrath of his observant father:

I remember the time that I used to play football for the team...and my father was very religious at the time and he wouldn't let me play. He wanted, all he wanted to do, was to go to the Synagogue on Saturdays, you know what I mean. And I was playing football and I had to get my football boots out on a Saturday afternoon and I had to throw them out of the cellar window to somebody who was waiting and then walk out. He says to me 'Wo gehst du?' that means 'Where are you going?' and I says 'I'm going to the park'. He says 'Okay then, be back in time' and I used to go and play football.

Importantly, Abraham also noted that his experiences were not unusual and that 'none of the boys' parents knew that they were playing football'. Indeed, the team used to wash their own jerseys in order to avoid their parents' detection.³⁷

³⁶ Willy Goldman, *East End My Cradle: Portrait of an Environment* (London, 1988), p. 32. Interestingly, Goldman notes that his father had a less than observant attitude to the Sabbath as well, preferring a lie-in on Saturdays to attending Synagogue.

³⁷ MJM J100, Interview with Abraham Goldstone.

The same fear of appearing publicly apostate was also evident amongst those Jews who had the opportunity to play sport for professional teams. Collins highlights the example of Broughton Rangers, a professional rugby league team based in the centre of Manchester's immigrant Jewish community. During the interwar years, Broughton had a number of Jewish players on their books, including Lester Samuels and Reuben Gleskie, who chose to play as amateurs 'so that they could compete on a Saturday afternoon with a clear conscience'. Clearly, whilst these players did not want to let Sabbath observance impede on their sport, they were not willing to fully ignore every tenet of Sabbath law – in this case trying to avoid the rules preventing work by not publicly taking remuneration for their efforts.³⁸ Interestingly, one of the most successful Anglo-Jewish professional sportsmen, David Hyman 'Harry' Morris (1897-1985), also had a relaxed attitude to Sabbath observance, despite his adherence to wider Jewish festivals and customs. Morris, who played football professionally for Brentford, Millwall and Swindon Town (for whom he scored a club record 229 goals), regularly played on the Sabbath, but was known throughout his career to refuse to play on High Holy Days.³⁹

There were, however, many Jews who freely and openly enjoyed sporting activities on the Sabbath with little or no misgivings about the impact of their apostasy on their elders. Jews such as Martin Bobker, born in 1911 in Manchester, were typical of a growing number of second and third generation immigrants who had fully assimilated the leisure and sporting routines of their non-Jewish peers. By the time he was eighteen, Martin, who worked in a

³⁸ Collins, 'Jews', p. 146.

³⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 June 1990. On Morris' career at Swindon more generally, see Dick Mattick, *100 Greats: Swindon Town Football Club* (Stroud, 2002), pp. 78-79.

waterproof garment factory, said that his ‘typical’ weekend was distinctly un-Jewish. Starting with a Friday night trip to the greyhound track at nearby Salford, followed by billiards and then cards at a friend’s house, Martin’s ‘Sabbath’ continued with more billiards on Saturday lunch time, another trip to the dogs and an occasional visit to Maine Road to see Manchester City play football.⁴⁰ Similarly, another young Mancunian Jew hailing from an immigrant family, Joe Garman, also recounted many years later that his Sabbath often entailed trips to watch professional football matches. Joe claimed ‘my lack of orthodoxy suited my own whims’ and noted that he never allowed religion to get in the way of his love for sport and leisure activities on a Saturday.⁴¹

As these two examples show, one of the most popular activities for young Jews on the Sabbath did not necessarily involve directly participating in sport. During the early twentieth century, spectating at professional sporting contests was an increasingly popular and prevalent activity for Jews on their rest day. Increasingly, and perhaps more commonly than actually playing sport on the Sabbath, Jews were to be found in the terraces of rugby, cricket and football grounds watching others compete. Mirroring similar trends in Central Europe, it is clear that for many young Jews from the interwar years onwards Saturday was a day for attending local temples of sport, rather than visiting their local synagogue.⁴² As

⁴⁰ MJM J43, Interview with Martin Bobker.

⁴¹ MJM J89, Interview with Joe Garman.

⁴² See, for instance, Michael John, ‘Anti-Semitism in Austrian Sports Between the Wars’ in Brenner and Reuvani, *Emancipation through Muscles*, p. 131. John notes that increasing numbers of Austrian Jews were spectating at Hakoah Vienna games during the interwar years.

Green surmises with reference to London Jewry, ‘spectator sport was a growing passion among the younger East End Jews and most of it took place on Saturdays’.⁴³

As early as the 1890s, there were indications that Jews were already becoming keen sports spectators and ignoring laws and customs surrounding their Sabbath. During this decade ‘significant numbers’ of Jews began going to watch rugby matches in Leeds on Saturday. Such was the strength of support for Leeds Parish Church that the team became locally known as the ‘Sheenies’ – an anti-Semitic reference to the club’s large fanbase.⁴⁴ Similarly, Manchester Jewry during the 1900s was also known to include a large number of fans of local rugby league team Broughton Rangers, whose two home grounds, Wheater’s Field and (from 1913 onwards) the Cliff, were closely situated to the city’s large Jewish immigrant community centred around Cheetham Hill.⁴⁵

Jewish passion for rugby remained strong during the interwar years, a fact which soon came to the attention of communal leaders and was a serious cause for concern. In 1928, Professor Selig Brodetsky (1888-1954), renowned Zionist leader and mathematician, wrote in a booklet entitled *The Intellectual Level of Anglo-Jewish Life* of his concern over the number of Jews in Leeds using their Sabbath, not for rest or prayer, but for watching rugby and cricket. He commented that ‘the road in which I live in Leeds, leading to and from the famous Headingley ground, is crowded every Saturday by... wandering Jews, upon whom the ‘packele’ of the Torah seems to sit very lightly indeed’. Brodetsky was clearly

⁴³ Green, *Social History*, p. 331.

⁴⁴ Collins, ‘Jews’, p. 146.

⁴⁵ MJM J309, Interview with Sydney Lea.

concerned that a penchant for passive involvement in sport had grave potential consequences for the religious health of the community.⁴⁶

Above all other professional sports in Britain that Jews liked to watch, however, it was association football which was the most popular. The first indications of Jewish interest in professional football emerged in the pre-1914 period, especially amongst the second generation immigrants. In 1911, Algernon Lesser, a well-known Jewish youth worker, was interviewed for the *Jewish World* about 'Anglicising Methods' and his work with immigrant children. Lesser noted that, perhaps to the surprise of some within the community, boys of the Brady Street Club were becoming keen followers of football and that their enjoyment of indigenous sporting pastimes was beneficial for their ongoing acculturation. He claimed that

Most non-Jews, and many of our own community also, would be astonished if they were to visit a Jewish boys' club on a Saturday evening and listen to the conversation which goes on among the members. The results of the games in the football leagues that afternoon are most keenly discussed, and loud is the wailing and great the distress among the supporters of the 'Spurs' if Tottenham Hotspur have had to lower their colours.⁴⁷

Despite there being a clear interest in football, it was not until the interwar years when Jews in any considerable numbers began attending matches. As noted previously, part of the explanation for this seems to have much to do with the fact that the British-born, second generation - many of whom had progressed through the ranks of the 'sporting' youth

⁴⁶ Quoted in Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p. 176.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Lazarus, *A Club*, p. 38.

movement - were coming of age at this time. Importantly, however, it was also the case that the 'economic advance' experienced by many Jews during the interwar years would also have proved a facilitative factor.⁴⁸ Endelman, for instance, points out that the 1920s and 1930s saw considerable numbers of young, immigrant Jews moving into 'white collar' employment, meaning they experienced an accompanying rise in free time and expendable income for use on leisure activities such as watching sport.⁴⁹

It is clear that the interwar years saw a considerable rise in Jewish attendance at football matches – something which had significant consequences on levels of observance of the Sabbath. Green points out in his volume on East End Jewry during the interwar years that 'from a day of rest and prayer, Saturday in the Jewish East End was...becoming a day given to leisure and enjoyment.' Chief among the leisure activities chosen was football and 'teenagers and young adults flocked in increasing numbers to see their rival teams play on Saturday afternoons'. Whilst declining levels of observance clearly facilitated greater attendance at football matches, it would have also been the case that football effectively kept some Jews away from their Synagogue – proving a bigger draw than traditional forms of Sabbath adherence. In short, 'as Synagogues slowly lost their clientele, attendances at football matches increased'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Green, *Social History*, p. 99.

⁴⁹ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 197.

⁵⁰ Green, *Social History*, p. 331.

The professional team which appears to have attracted most Jewish support at this time was Tottenham Hotspur FC, a club based in North London.⁵¹ As previously noted, ‘The Spurs’ began to attract Jewish interest and support in the pre-1914 period, but it seems that considerable numbers only began attending games at White Hart Lane during the 1920s and 1930s. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, almost all Jews ‘who followed the game [association football]’ during the 1920s ‘were ‘Spurs supporters’, whilst it seems their Jewish fanbase grew considerably during the 1930s as well.⁵² By the time that the controversial England versus Germany game was held at Tottenham’s ground in December 1935, mainstream newspapers were claiming that up to a third, about 10,000 people, of Tottenham’s regular home attendance was made up of Jewish fans.⁵³ A year earlier, sports writer Trevor Wignall noted in his *Daily Express* column that a recent trip to watch Tottenham Hotspur had seen him surrounded by Jewish fans on the terraces.⁵⁴ By the 1970s, due to their large Jewish fan base, Tottenham supporters adopted the moniker ‘The

⁵¹ A number of histories of the club have been published. For the period from the club’s inception in 1882 through to 1946, G. Wagstaffe Simmons, *History of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club 1882-1946* (London, 1947) is an invaluable resource. Later volumes on the club’s history include Julian Holland, *Spurs: A History of Tottenham Hotspur* (London, 1956) and Ralph L. Finn, *Tottenham Hotspur FC: The Official History* (London, 1972).

⁵² *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 March 1996.

⁵³ *Manchester Guardian*, 16 October 1935. The match was a source of much controversy at the time, with many fearing that the presence of a Nazi German national team at a London Ground with a large Jewish fanbase could be a potential flashpoint. A relatively strong campaign against the match emerged, with support from Jewish groups, trade unions, factory groups and football organisations, whilst concerns were also raised that there could be potential clashes between Nazi supporters and anti-Fascist groups. The match passed off peacefully, being seen by historians as something of a propaganda coup for Germany, and indicative of the policy of ‘sporting appeasement’ which the British Government chose to follow throughout the 1930s. See Peter Beck, *Scoring for Britain: International Football and International Politics, 1900-1939* (London, 1999), Chapter 7: ‘The Greatest Ever Triumph of the “Keep Politics Out of Sport” Brigade’? England versus Germany, 1935’, pp. 173-213; Brian Stoddart, ‘Sport, Cultural Relations and International Relations: England versus Germany, 1935’, *Soccer and Society*, 7, 1, 2006, pp. 29-50; Paul A Spencer, ‘A Discussion of Appeasement and Sport as seen in the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times*’, *Australian Society for Sports History Bulletin*, 2, 1996, pp. 3-19; Richard Holt, ‘The Foreign Office and the Football Association: British Sport and Appeasement, 1935-1938’ in Pierre Arnaud and James Riordan (Eds), *Sport and International Politics: The Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport* (London, 1998).

⁵⁴ *Daily Express*, 22 October 1934.

Yids’, seemingly as part of a response of being labelled as ‘Yids’ by rival supporters. As Efron has noted, the characterisation of Tottenham as the ‘Jewish’ team still remains strong today.⁵⁵

Many reasons can be put forward to explain why Tottenham garnered so much Jewish support during the first half of the twentieth century. Firstly, it does seem that the social and geographical mobility of Jewish Londoners in the interwar period played a significant role in increasing Jewish support for ‘The Spurs’. Jewish settlements in areas like Golders Green and Finchley grew considerably in the interwar years as many second generation, socially mobile and increasingly secularised Jews relocated from the East End. For the growing number amongst this community interested in popular culture and sport, Tottenham Hotspur offered a geographically close option for Jews wanting to watch professional football locally.⁵⁶

Although not solely limited to Anglo-Jewry, another influence on growing support for Tottenham was the age-old footballing fashion of ‘glory-supporting’ [the practice of choosing a team due to their success, not because of any geographical or familial reasoning]. In the early twentieth century, Tottenham were one of the most prominent professional teams in the capital, becoming the first club outside of the Football League to win the FA Cup in 1901. A letter written to the *Jewish Chronicle* from a long-standing

⁵⁵ Efron, ‘When is a Yid’, pp. 235-256.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 236. On the geographical relocation of a large portion of London Jewry during this time, see Howard Brotz, ‘The Outlines of Jewish Society in London’ in Maurice Freedman (Ed), *A Minority in Britain: Social Status of the Anglo-Jewish Community* (London, 1955).

Jewish Tottenham fan noted that his own support for the club began after their second FA Cup final victory in 1921: ‘I sincerely believed this was God’s Chosen Football Club’.⁵⁷ As the historian of West Ham United has shown, there were many Jewish Tottenham fans who had experienced social mobility and economic success and who that ‘wanted to be associated with an institution like the ‘Spurs because it was successful and because they had a certain flair’.⁵⁸ It was also the case that many Jewish Tottenham fans claimed their support for the club was made easier by the fact that it was one of the capital’s easier grounds to access, due to the extensive electric tram network which covered London at this time. This is somewhat ironic considering that, in the modern context, White Hart Lane is seen to be one of the most poorly serviced grounds in terms of public transport.⁵⁹

Whilst Tottenham Hotspur may have been seen as London Jewry’s premier football club, their bitter North London rivals, Arsenal FC, also began to attract a significant number of Jewish football fans during the 1930s. This decade, which mainly saw Tottenham languishing in the second tier of English football, was an especially successful one for Arsenal, who won multiple League and FA Cup championships. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, this accounts for why Arsenal ‘amassed a loyal group of Jewish fans’ during this decade, beginning a Jewish connection to the club which remains strong in the modern day.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 March 1995

⁵⁸ Chuck Korr, *West Ham United: The Making of a Football Club* (Urbana, 1986), p. 210.

⁵⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 March 1995.

⁶⁰ Efron, ‘When is a Yid’, p. 236; *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 August 1963. In 2004 Arsenal fanzine *Arsenal World* reported that ‘many Jewish Arsenal fans’ had raised objections to their new ground at Ashburton Grove being named after a well-known United Arab Emirates-based airline. See *Arsenal World*, 28 December 2006.

Whilst success may have been an important factor in why Arsenal gained a significant Jewish fanbase, it is also clear that the club worked hard away from the pitch to develop strong ties with London Jewry. Legendary Arsenal manager, Herbert Chapman, was labelled a ‘great friend of the Jewish people’ on his death in 1934 for the extensive work he conducted with local Jewish charities. After Chapman’s death, two of his successors, George Allison and Billy Wright, worked to maintain the club’s links to the Jewish community under their respective regimes. In November 1934, for example, Allison wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle* noting his pleasure at the ‘connection’ that Arsenal had with London’s Jews:

I am happy to think we have a large number of Jews who derive healthy entertainment and get enjoyment from the demonstrations of sportsmanship which they see at the Arsenal ground. For many years it has been our great pleasure to contribute to Jewish charities and to help those deserving causes which Jewish organisations have ‘fathered’ and I am conscious of the fact that we are only able to do this to the fullest degree because of the support which we receive from the Jewish community.⁶¹

Away from London, Jews in some of the main provincial settlements were also becoming keen football followers during the first part of the twentieth century. According to various sources, Leeds United gained a notable Jewish following amongst the city’s second and third generation immigrant community from the 1930s, whilst Manchester United also seemingly won over many Jewish football fans in the pre-World War One period.⁶² The

⁶¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 November 1934

⁶² Anthony Clavane, *Promised Land: The Reinvention of Leeds United* (London, 2010), pp. 76-81; *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 August 1963; MJM 2008/23/18, ‘My Sporting Life – David Cohen’, p. 1. Cohen recounts that his love for Manchester United developed during his adolescence, when he would often rotate attending United and Manchester City games each Saturday.

main Manchester club supported by Jews was Manchester City, founded initially in Ardwick in 1880. Oral interviews held at the Manchester Jewish Museum demonstrate that many young, second generation immigrant Jews became keen and regular Manchester City supporters from the interwar years onwards.⁶³

For many young Mancunian Jews, football clearly took precedence over anything resembling a strict Sabbath observance. Religious rituals and customs were gradually replaced with routines based around sport and spending time with other non-observant friends. Sydney Lea, born in Manchester in 1902, recalled that he and a group of Jewish friends became Manchester City season ticket holders during the 1920s and developed a regular pre-match custom for the much anticipated home games. Mirroring footballing rituals elsewhere within Anglo-Jewry and the wider population, on Saturday morning the group would go to the Grosvenor Hotel in central Manchester where they would ‘have a couple of drinks and a few games of billiards’ before hailing a taxi (‘five fellas in, five pence each’) to proceed to the ground in the early afternoon. Sydney did not only regularly forego Jewish religious customs to support his beloved club, he also curtailed family commitments for important games – in 1923 he cut short his honeymoon to ensure he could attend City’s first game at their new Maine Road stadium.⁶⁴

Evidently, Sydney and his friends’ football spectating involved a notable degree of religious laxity. Significantly, there is no evidence to suggest that Sydney felt any anxiety

⁶³ See MJM J43, Interview with Martin Bobker; J89, Interview with Joe Garman; J309, Interview with Sydney Lea.

⁶⁴ MJM J309, Interview with Sydney Lea.

over using his Sabbath for sport rather than a stricter observance. For him, and thousands of Jews across the country, Saturday had become a day for sport, not for attending Synagogue or adhering to the seemingly stifling laws and customs associated with adherence to the Jewish Sabbath. Despite being clearly comfortable with his own apostasy, Sydney was keen not to appear totally un-observant in the company of his family. On those occasions when he took his father to watch Manchester City - an activity which in itself did not displease his parents - Sydney refrained from one regular activity to avoid incurring his father's disapproval. Many years later, Sydney commented 'well, you see, I used to smoke when I was watching football and the old man being there I wouldn't want to hurt his feelings...it being the Sabbath and all.'⁶⁵

This contradictory, or more accurately, selective, attitude towards Sabbath observance emerges elsewhere amongst other Jewish football fans. Whilst some were relaxed and outwardly expressed no concern that their spectating at football matches had ramifications for their faith (which was not necessarily important to them anyway), some believed they could indulge in their passion and still adhere to Sabbath law. In 1934, the *Jewish Chronicle* interviewed a 'well-known member of the community' who was also a keen supporter of Arsenal FC. When asked 'surely you don't attend football matches on Sabbath?', he replied:

I certainly do, as I don't break Jewish law. I don't pay, I am a season ticket holder. I purchased my pass on a weekday and when I enter the Arsenal ground on Sabbath it is the same as if I was entering a public park, since no money changes hands.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The columnist was confused as to whether this entailed an ‘explanation or excuse’, yet the gentleman was adamant that regular attendance at professional football was compatible with his interpretation of Sabbath law and customs.⁶⁶

There were some religious Jews who chose, and felt comfortable with, attending the Synagogue *and* the football stadium on Sabbath. Whilst it appears that many of those who followed football did so at the expense of Sabbath services, some Jews managed to combine a visit to the *Shul* [Orthodox Jewish term for the Synagogue] with a trip to watch football on the same day. One Jewish Tottenham fan in the 1920s recounted his regular Sabbath routine whenever Tottenham were playing at home:

In those days, before floodlights were invented, almost all games took place on Saturday afternoons from about two o’clock. It was possible to be in synagogue until the end of *musaf* [additional prayers held on Sabbath and other special services], to nip home for a quick plate of *lokshen soup*, and then board a tram from Aldgate to White Hart Lane. No other ground could offer such ease of access.⁶⁷

What this and all the other examples show is that Jewish sports spectators were making a series of concessions and selections with regards to their faith on a weekly basis when it came to the Sabbath. Whilst their passion for watching sport remained constant, approaches towards their religion and their rest day varied considerably. Reflecting and influencing wider trends towards religious apathy within Jewish society, Jews interested in sport came

⁶⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 November 1934.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 15 March 1995.

to increasingly view Saturday as a day for indulging their passion, not for traditional Sabbath rest and spiritual enrichment.

Jewish Clubs

Whilst it is evident that the interwar years saw many young, second generation immigrant Jews using their Saturdays for sport and leisure, it is also the case that a number of Jewish organisations were also adopting relaxed attitudes towards the Sabbath in favour of promoting sport. Communal and religious leaders increasingly voiced concerns that the Jewish youth movement, founded to aid ‘Anglicisation’, was now effectively contributing to the erosion of Jewish identity. Not only did prioritising sport on the Sabbath catalyse the evident growth in ignorance of the laws and customs of the rest day. It was also argued that the obsession with sport that these organisation’s demonstrated well into the interwar years - an obsession so important in the ‘Anglicisation’ project - was also affecting the growing religious apathy of wider Jewish society.

In the years before the First World War, whilst it worked to prevent outright Sabbath desecration where possible, it was generally the case that the youth movement did not view the promotion of religion as a core objective. Tananbaum has shown that whilst the original leaders of the Jewish youth movement wanted to see ‘some level of religiosity’, they did not want their members to be ‘too Jewish’. Whilst some of the Jewish clubs were evidently more religious in tone and atmosphere than others – Stepney and Oxford and St George’s, for instance, both held regular Sabbath services and promoted prayer and religious

education – the majority consciously minimised the religious content of their programmes; reflecting the centrality of ‘Anglicisation’ in their work.⁶⁸ As we have seen with the example of the JAA, however, club leaders did work hard to ensure that sporting activities would not impede Sabbath observance. Importantly, the creation of the JAA was driven mainly by sporting considerations and a desire to facilitate physical recreation – not directly as a way of promoting Sabbath adherence.⁶⁹

Despite this, it was still common for some Jewish youth organisations to organise sport on the Jewish Sabbath for their members. For instance, the Myrdle Jewish Girls’ Club was reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1914 as regularly organising hockey for its members on Saturdays. One club leader commented that her girls were ‘none the worse Jews for indulging in healthy and outdoor sport’ on the Sabbath.⁷⁰ Likewise, the Jewish Lads’ Brigade often took a lax attitude towards the Sabbath in the pre-World War One period. The programme for Sabbath on their first summer camp in Deal, Kent in 1899 noted that after the Brigade Chaplain had ‘read the service... the whole day was given up to sport’.⁷¹ In 1911 it was reported that the Liverpool JLB were organising cricket games on the Sabbath, a sport which ‘has been indulged in on the Sabbath for years past without raising objections from any quarter’.⁷²

⁶⁸ Tananbaum, ‘Ironing Out’, p. 64, 69.

⁶⁹ See above, pp. 80-107; Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 168.

⁷⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 September 1914.

⁷¹ Kadish, ‘*A Good Jew*’, p. 98.

⁷² *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 August 1911.

Evidently, these examples reflect the fact that ideas of acculturation and ‘Anglicisation’ were central to the Jewish youth movement during the pre-1914 period. At this time, ‘Anglicisation’ was considered the most urgent need, resulting in the prioritisation of sport as a means of assimilation and the marginalisation of religious education. Despite the general acceptance of this by communal and religious leaders before the First World War, however, there is some evidence that there was growing concern over the effect of promoting sport on the ‘Jewishness’ of club members. Although the debate about the negative effect of sport on Sabbath observance and religious identity grew in the interwar years, there was an outspoken minority who were critical of what they saw as a harmful focus on sport and physical recreation.

Much of this criticism came from within the youth movement itself. For example, the Reverend RF Stern, a co-founder of the Stepney Jewish Boys’ Club and club President from 1907, used his annual address in that year to claim that the club’s sporting programme was acting as a serious impediment to religious education and the promotion of religious adherence and observance. He argued that there was ‘nothing specifically Jewish in athletics’, claiming that the promotion of sport amongst the youngest of the population was harmful to the future of Anglo-Jewry overall.⁷³ Stern’s comments were reflected later that year at the Jewish Literary Congress, where one speaker ‘complained that too much attention was paid by the managers of boys’ clubs to...athletic exercises, to the disadvantage of Jewish culture’.⁷⁴

⁷³ *Jewish World*, 22 February 1907.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 28 June 1907.

Some of the club managers themselves were concerned over the effect of the clear sporting focus on the youth movement. In 1904, Simon Myers, manager at the Stepney Jewish Boys' Club, wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle* commenting that 'the pursuit of physical culture is being pushed in a manner too one-sided'. He continued

I am second to none in enthusiasm for the glories of the football and cricket field for our lads, but I think a halt should be called among the managers of our clubs, so that something may be done for the religious side of the work...I am painfully aware that there is a rooted objection among club managers to any kind of real religious work being promulgated in the lads' clubs, but none of them dares to deny that a large majority of the lads seldom see the inside of a place of worship and seldom utter a word of prayer from one week to another.⁷⁵

Particularly concerning for some critics of the youth movement was the effect that sport had on attitudes towards Sabbath observance. It was felt that, by encouraging young Jews to develop a 'sporting' attitude, more would see Saturday as a day of leisure and recreation, rather than prayer and spiritual development. In 1914, Leonard Stern condemned the Brady Street Club in an article in the *Jewish Chronicle*. Stern noted that 'East London is not exactly a nursery of religion' and that the 'whole question of religion in the Jewish clubs stinks in his nostrils'. He attacked Brady Street for their role in the growing religious apathy of the younger population, making particular reference to the fact that Brady was 'all on the side of the more athletic form of Sabbatarianism'.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 October 1904.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Tananbaum, 'Ironing Out', p. 66.

Whilst there was evidently some concern over the effect of sport on religious observance before 1914, anxiety and pressure for change grew considerably during the interwar years. Against the background of a general decline in religious attitudes in Jewish and non-Jewish society at this time, Jewish communal leaders became fearful over the future religious and ethnic identity of the community. As Livshin has highlighted, communal leaders up and down the country were increasingly distressed at what they saw as a ‘lack of religious spirit, religious apathy and disintegration amongst Jewish youth’ – something which they attributed to the success of programmes of acculturation and assimilation. Many within the Jewish elites in the 1920s felt that, with regard to ‘Anglicisation’, ‘the whole thing had gone too far’ and that effort was needed in order to stem the growing religious apostasy of the population.⁷⁷

During this period, the Jewish youth clubs were criticised for failing to do more to protect and promote Jewish identity and culture. In 1927, Basil Henriques claimed that it was ‘an appallingly grave matter’ that ‘most of the clubs...have failed boldly to face the religious question’. He conceded that whilst ‘Anglicisation’ was an important aim for these institutions during the pre-1914 period, when immigration seemed to pose a considerable threat to the community, this was no longer the case in the 1920s. He argued that ‘the problem today is to keep the Jews Jews...and to Judaise those who have become Anglicised...Without guidance from their club manager-friends, the adolescents are being

⁷⁷ Livshin, ‘The Acculturation of the Children’, p. 90. Livshin highlights the example of the Manchester Jews’ School whose curriculum was overhauled at this time in an effort to introduce a stronger religious element and combat trends for growing religious apathy. Fears abounded amongst Anglo-Jewry that more should be done to protect religious and spiritual identity.

allowed to wander from the field'.⁷⁸ Cesarani has noted that the *Jewish Chronicle* began a campaign at this time to 'revivify the religious institutions of Anglo-Jewry' to work against the 'threat posed by ignorance and irreligion'. Central to this debate was the Jewish youth movement who had 'assisted...assimilation' but had 'neglected the Jewish values that would give moral ballast to their [the members'] lives'.⁷⁹

Within this condemnation, sport was increasingly targeted for criticism for acting as a factor in growing 'spiritual' apathy and as a block to greater efforts and focus on religious education. Many within the communal and religious leadership believed that sport's usefulness to the community had ceased and that the continuing emphasis on physical recreation within the youth movement was unhealthy and detrimental to the spiritual well-being of the population. Rabbi Joel Blau, for instance, was convinced that the creation of a 'New Jew' was incompatible with a continuing focus on sport. He commented that 'the argument has been that since the young people want athletics, swimming baths, dances, lectures on not too difficult subjects, we will give it to them'. Yet it was wrong, he felt, to think that Anglo-Jewry could 'accomplish a religious revival by means of 'houla-houla' [dancing] and swimming pools'.⁸⁰ A 1930 conference convened by the Association for Jewish Youth on the theme of 'The Club and the Religious Problem' complained that 'sport' within the youth movement had been 'stressed unduly'. The 'main conclusion and

⁷⁸ *Jewish Graphic*, 25 February 1927.

⁷⁹ David Cesarani, *The 'Jewish Chronicle' and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 137.

⁸⁰ *Jewish World*, 17 September 1925. Blau was similarly critical of the effect of sport on American Jewry's religious well-being and identity. See Gurock, *Judaism's Encounter*, pp. 69-70.

consensus of opinion' reached was that a 'religious influence must be brought to bear on the clubs'.⁸¹

Throughout the 1930s efforts were made to bring a greater religious emphasis into Jewish club life and to improve Sabbath adherence – a key aspect of Jewishness which they felt had been marginalised. As Smith has noted, communal leaders felt that the youth movement should spearhead attempts to 're-Judaise' the religiously indifferent immigrant youth. Suggestions were made, throughout the interwar period, for a 'strong religious bias' to be introduced into the various Jewish clubs.⁸² In 1935, for example, all AJY clubs agreed to Sabbath services in conjunction with the United Synagogue to combat the fact that 'the majority of club members were growing up completely out of touch with religion and with a growing disregard for Jewish customs and traditions'.⁸³

Despite this and similar initiatives, it would be incorrect to believe that sport was gradually marginalised in favour of greater religious education and activities. As Tananbaum has shown, the various youth clubs and JLB groups retained a strong sporting focus throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, archival evidence from this period suggests that 'most organisations privileged sports, athleticism – all aspects of Britishness – and saw Jewish identity as essential, but arguably secondary'. Reflecting 'philosophical and generational differences' between the communal elites and the members of the youth movement, sport

⁸¹ *Jewish World*, 17 April 1930.

⁸² Smith, 'Jews and Politics', p. 144.

⁸³ *East London Advertiser*, 26 January 1935.

continued to be prioritised over religious education generally, and Sabbath observance more specifically.⁸⁴

This was especially true with regard to the Jewish Lads' Brigade. Kadish has noted that during the interwar years 'JLB activities were not marked out by their religious atmosphere and their religious content was minimal'. Sport continued to form a central component of the Brigade's programme and was regularly, and without concern, organised on the Jewish Sabbath. Summer camps for Southern and Northern JLB battalions throughout the 1930s regularly gave Sabbath over to organised sport and games. One account of the 1931 London JLB camp, for instance, noted that 'all kinds of games were played' on the Sabbath, with the Brigade Chaplain, Dr Morris Ginsberg, being a particularly enthusiastic participant. Clearly, not all religious authorities took issue with the promotion of healthy physical recreation on the rest day.⁸⁵

Within the club movement, a similarly tolerant attitude towards Sabbath sport was also in evidence during the interwar years. In 1930, Basil Henriques claimed that 'with regards to Saturdays, we have just got to face facts – that the boys work in the morning and that they...play cricket and football in the afternoon'. Whether they indulged in sport inside or outside of the youth club on the Sabbath, Henriques was generally supportive, seeing sport as a much more preferable alternative to 'lounging about and gambling'. Evidently, the belief still existed, even at a time when there was growing concern over the apparent

⁸⁴ Tananbaum, 'Ironing Out', p. 65.

⁸⁵ Kadish, *A Good Jew*, p. 103.

‘irreligion’ of the younger generation, that sport had an important prophylactic function. For Henriques, the appearance of Anglo-Jewry externally still took precedence over the internal dynamics and debates of the community.⁸⁶

In the provincial clubs, an even more relaxed attitude towards physical recreation on the rest day was evident. In Manchester, where the Grove House Jewish Lads’ Club and the Manchester JLB existed side by side, no real consistent concern for maintaining the Sabbath was perceptible throughout the interwar years.⁸⁷ Club leaders and managers regularly ignored the Sabbath and prioritised sporting activities over religious observance. The 1919 Grove House annual report, for example, noted that opening hours had been extended to the Sabbath and that ‘cricket, football and basketball games are organised on Saturday afternoon’.⁸⁸ Club teams in these and other sports regularly trained on the Sabbath whilst club leaders, who expressed no real anxiety over religious observance in their institution, entered teams into non-Jewish Saturday leagues and tournaments.⁸⁹ Ironically, one of the biggest hurdles encountered with organising these teams was not the local community, but the members themselves – some whom often missed training or matches to watch professional football.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ UoSSC M172/AJ250/15, Basil Henriques, ‘An address on the ‘Club and the Religious Problem’, 4 April 1930, p. 12.

⁸⁷ Kadish has noted that the ‘religious element’ of Grove House was particularly marginal. Kadish, *A Good Jew*, p. 103.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Kadish, *A Good Jew*, p. 99.

⁸⁹ MCA M130/3, Grove House Lads’ Club Managers’ and Subscribers’ Minutes, 6 January 1919, 7 June 1920, 2 October 1934, 30 May 1939.

⁹⁰ Ibid. MS130/3, Minutes, 6 September 1920. The club’s minutes from 6 September 1920 demonstrate this problem aptly. It was noted that the captain of one of the club’s cricket teams had been ‘suspended sine die from the club for having wilfully absented himself from a cricket match in order to watch a professional football match’. The Secretary also noted that ‘due to the early commencement of professional football’ and

The club further contradicted Sabbath law when they began charging an admission fee for football spectators coming to club grounds. As the Grove House football section became increasingly successful during the late 1920s, the decision was taken to begin asking those growing numbers who watched club teams on the Sabbath to pay for their entrance to the Elizabeth Street ground. For more observant members of Manchester Jewry, however, the idea of charging an admission fee took Grove House's desecration of the Sabbath a step too far. A letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1931 from a Jewish resident of Hightown, Manchester (an area of settlement which had seen the arrival of more prosperous artisan and middle-class Jewish immigrants) complained

If we will but study the activities of this club, we will find that although it consists entirely of Jewish youth...nothing is done to strengthen the spirit of Judaism in its members. The Sabbath is publicly and without the least shame desecrated by them. Football matches between them and rival teams are always played on Saturday afternoons. This desecration has been carried a step further by an admission fee being charged although most of the club's supporters are Jews.⁹¹

The response of the club to this criticism gives an interesting insight into the attitudes of club managers towards Jewish religious observance and the Jewish Sabbath. It is noted in club minutes days after the letter's publication that managers decided to 'ignore' the criticisms over the Sabbath 'desecration'. This judgement contrasts sharply with the club's eagerness to work to placate the County Football Association after they raised concerns about advertising games and charging for admission on Sundays a year later (i.e.

the attendance of members at local games, the cricket section had folded and club teams had been withdrawn from local competition.

⁹¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 January 1931

encouraging the desecration of the Christian Sabbath). Grove House's eventual resolution to honour the Christian Sabbath and ignore anxiety over the Jewish rest day demonstrated the continual sporting focus of the club as an aid to integration for the city's Jews. When it came to a choice between Jewishness and sport, sport clearly won, but not at the risk of causing problems with the local non-Jewish sporting authorities.⁹²

It is clearly apparent that sport had a notable impact on levels of observance of the Sabbath amongst a significant portion of Anglo-Jewry from the late nineteenth century through to the Second World War. It is not the case to say that every Jew was indulging in sport on their rest day.⁹³ However, evidence suggests that for many Saturday was seen as a day of play, or watching others play, rather than for attendance at Synagogue or adherence to Sabbath laws and customs. Whilst many social, economic and cultural factors account for the general decline in Sabbath observance seen in the early part of the twentieth century, sport also clearly worked to undermine and modify attitudes amongst Anglo-Jewry towards their rest day.

When seen in the wider context of changing attitudes towards religion, the trend for a sporting use of the Sabbath takes on greater significance. The interwar years were a time when concern over levels of religious observance and 'Jewishness' grew considerably. This was especially true with regards to the British-born children of immigrant Jews, many of

⁹² MCA M130/3, Minutes, 12 January 1931, 6 July 1932, 6 February 1933.

⁹³ For example, Jewish sports writer and author, Anthony Clavane, claimed that despite being a keen footballer, he was not allowed to break the Sabbath in his highly observant household to indulge in his passion on the rest day. Clavane, *Promised Land*, p. 76.

whom were seen to be becoming decreasingly concerned with Jewish religion, customs and values. It is clear that sport was one activity which impacted on the cultural and religious attachment of these younger Jews to their community – something that was increasingly understood and feared by communal and religious leaders. Sport may have been affecting observance of the Sabbath, but it was also having the wider effect of undermining the preservation and promotion of Jewishness.

These anxieties are especially evident in the interwar years and were increasingly aimed at the Jewish youth movement – one of the main points of contact between the Jewish communal leadership and the younger generation. Whilst there was a minority within the movement who felt that sport was having a negative impact on Jewish identity before the First World War, the general consensus remained in favour of sport for ‘Anglicisation’ purposes. Faced with growing evidence of youth ‘irreligion’ in the 1920s and 1930s, however, concern over sports’ impact on religious and cultural identity, and on Sabbath observance specifically, within these institutions grew. Pressure was placed on the youth movement to initiate a process of ‘re-Judaisation’ and it was implied that sport would need to be marginalised to ensure its successful operation.

While sport came in for a great deal of criticism for exacerbating apathy and lax attitudes towards the Sabbath, it is apparent that many within the youth movement continued to prioritise sport over religious activities. Mirroring wider trends, it is clear that some youth leaders themselves saw physical recreation as a more acceptable use of Saturday than either attendance at Synagogue or adherence to Sabbath laws. Clearly, whilst religious and

cultural differences over sport on the rest day existed across the population, those who worked with the youngest of the community still placed great value in the benefits of physical recreation. Despite communal criticisms and advice urging them otherwise, for some youth leaders, as well as many British-born second and third generation Jews, Saturday was a day reserved for sport, not Synagogue.

The ‘New’ Golden Age of Jewish Professional Boxing

Whilst interest in sport exerted a significant impact on levels of religious observance, it is also true that it affected Jewish ethnicity in a wider sense. In the early twentieth century, Jewish involvement in sport and physical recreation both reflected and hastened a growing socio-cultural ‘drift’ of younger Jews away from their familial and communal elders. At a time when the second generation immigrants were believed to be gradually abandoning central aspects of immigrant identity and culture, a key area where the fracturing of immigrant society was seen to be occurring was in the sphere of sport and physical recreation. The sporting choices made by the younger generation at this time challenged and affected the preservation of immigrant Jewish ethnicity and also signified their social and cultural departure from their parents and communal elders. The sport with which this process was most associated and which concerned communal leaders the greatest was British professional boxing – dominated by Jews from the late nineteenth century through to the Second World War.

Historiographical notions of Jewish ethnicity being challenged and undermined by a socio-cultural ‘drift’ were first, and most comprehensively, expressed by Endelman in his volume on *Radical Assimilation*. He contends that modern Anglo-Jewish history as a whole is characterised by a ‘drift’, whereby allegiance and concern for ‘traditional sympathies’ were gradually eroded due to the effects of life in the West on Jewish immigrants. For Endelman, the ‘fabric of communal solidarity’ was gradually eroded as ‘new interests and loyalties jostled for primacy with old associations and concerns’. Whilst the unity and cohesion of Anglo-Jewry was affected by this process, it also led to a ‘dilution of Jewish identity’ as more Jews gradually assimilated into mainstream society and became English in language, religion, dress, culture, work practices and settlement patterns.⁹⁴

Whilst Endelman takes a longer view from resettlement to the Second World War, similar ideas are evident in investigations by other historians of Anglo-Jewry on much shorter time frames. Cesarani, for instance, has examined the interwar period and concluded that, with the progression of one generation, communal cohesion and Jewish immigrant identity were both significantly undermined. Whilst not a ‘monolithic formation’, the immigrant Jewish community largely shared a language (Yiddish), were united by an interest and concern for Jewish knowledge, religion, Old Country politics and community and lived in a small geographic area. In contrast, by the interwar years their children spoke English, were generally becoming more secularised (as we have seen in the previous section), were increasingly apathetic towards communal politics and organisations and were experiencing significant social and geographic mobility. In essence, Jewish immigrant identity had been

⁹⁴ Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, pp. 1-3.

seriously undermined in a short period of time as the children of immigrants grew closer to the majority culture and environment.⁹⁵

There is much evidence from the time to support the idea that the British-born immigrant generation was becoming increasingly indifferent towards the culture and traditions of their parents. For example, an investigation concerning 'Jewish Social Life' published in *The Times* in 1924 concluded that it was evident that there was a 'reaction against parental control and civic or religious discipline' amongst the 'Jewish children of alien parents'.⁹⁶ Similarly, notions of a socio-cultural 'drift' were also apparent amongst the second-generation immigrants themselves. As Joe Jacobs noted in his autobiographical account of life in London's East End in the interwar period, 'the hold which the original immigrants had exercised was beginning to fracture'.⁹⁷

One area where the growing lack of interest in immigrant identity, and the accompanying 'fracturing' between generations, can be seen most clearly is in the leisure choices of the younger generation. Whereas first generation immigrants spent their free time at their own clubs, prayer halls, Yiddish theatre or silent cinema, during the early twentieth century their offspring were gradually 'socialised' into the indigenous working class and began taking up English leisure pursuits.⁹⁸ As Williams has noted with regards to second generation

⁹⁵ Cesarani, 'A Funny Thing', p. 6.

⁹⁶ *The Times*, 28 November 1924.

⁹⁷ Joe Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto: My Youth in the East End, Communism and Fascism, 1913-1939* (London, 1978), p. 190.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 13-16. As Smith has noted, however, it was not the case that second-generation Jews were completely assimilated into the English working classes. She argues that whilst most Jews were 'divorced from Jewish tradition and as a consequence are removed from the Jewish masses, they could not assimilate

Manchester Jewry, their ‘influences were no longer the traditions of the Eastern European *shtetl*, but those of working class Manchester, the culture of the street corner, the neighbourhood café, the Monkey Parades [promenading in public], the cinema, the ice palace and the dance hall’.⁹⁹ In his examination of the *Jewish Chronicle* during this period of Anglo-Jewish social history, Cesarani has noted that the newspaper believed that the leisure choices of the young seemingly ‘contributed to the emergence of a disaffected, sometimes disorderly, population of young Jews’. It reported that increasing Jewish interest in leisure and sport was leading to the creation of an ‘estranged generation’ and contributing to the ‘erosion of control by the traditional communal agencies’.¹⁰⁰

More than any other sport, the ‘fissuring’ of the second generation from their birth community was most apparent within professional boxing: a sport which seemingly impacted significantly on the cohesion of the community and caused great anxiety amongst the Anglo-Jewish elites. From the 1890s through to the Second World War, Jewish participation in the British professional boxing scene was widespread. Whilst the late Georgian period, which saw the successes of Mendoza, Elias and others, is most often seen as the hey-day of Jewish boxing in Britain, the exploits of world-champion English-Jewish pugilists such as Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis and Jack ‘Kid’ Berg are also of great significance in the history of the sport. During the early twentieth century, Jewish involvement in boxing was also prominent outside of the ring and many Jews of immigrant origin went on to become

themselves with the English working class because they did not possess a common tradition’. Smith, ‘Jews and Politics’, p. 142.

⁹⁹ Bill Williams, *Manchester Jewry, A Pictorial History: 1788-1988* (Manchester, 1988), p. 81.

¹⁰⁰ Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, p. 145.

successful promoters (Harry Jacobs, Victor Berliner, Jack Solomons), managers (Harry Levene) and trainers (Jack Goodwin). Watching and betting on the sport was also prevalent amongst the younger section of the Jewish community at this time, becoming a popular pastime for increasing numbers of working-class Jews. Such was the popularity of watching boxing amongst London Jewry, that a number of Jewish owned and managed 'small-halls' were founded during this time period, attracting thousands of Jewish patrons for boxing programmes held several times each week.

By the 1950s however, Jewish participation and interest in the sport had waned due to a number of factors. Significant Jewish social and geographic mobility from the Second World War onwards removed Jews from the urban areas and social stratum most generally associated with direct and indirect participation in the sport.¹⁰¹ Socio-economic changes during the 1950s, such as rising employment and increasing standards of living, drastically reduced the lure of the ring for an increasingly affluent community – both Gentile and Jewish. Finally, there was also an influx of 'fresh outsiders' and 'newer ethnic groups' from this period onwards, especially West Indian immigrants for example, who arrived on British shores and whose sons made their way, like Jews and the Irish before them, into the professional ring.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Social mobility has been pinpointed as a significant factor in the decline in American Jewish boxing after World War Two. Steven Riess, 'Tough Jews' The Jewish American Boxing Experience, 1890-1950' in Riess, *Sports and the American Jew*, p. 103.

¹⁰² Shipley, 'Boxing', pp. 103-104.

In a sporting sense, Jews clearly had a significant impact on professional boxing during the early twentieth century. As well as providing some of the best and most successful British fighters of this time, the Jewish community's impact on the sport outside of the ring was also considerable. On several occasions, non-Jewish commentators on the sport praised the impact of Jewish participation on raising the standard and profile of British boxing. In 1914, *Boxing* remarked that Jews had done a 'special service' to the sport and that 'it is actually since the arrival of the Hebrew professional boxer that the ring has made its big stride in social esteem'.¹⁰³ Likewise, in 1935, an official from the British Board of Boxing Control claimed that 'there is no doubt in my mind that were it not for the influence of Jewish boxers, the game, so beloved of sportsmen the world over and in England, would scarcely be where it stands today'.¹⁰⁴

Significantly, evidence suggests that Jewish participation in the sport also had a discernible socio-cultural impact on the Jewish community and on Jewish ethnicity more generally. In one sense, interest in boxing contributed and symbolised the growing 'drift' and detachment of second generation immigrants from their parents' culture, authority and identity. However, Jewish professional boxers themselves also epitomised the new British-born Jew whose character and leisure tastes more closely reflected the English working classes. Those involved in the sport and interested in watching and gambling on boxing, generally showed little concern for the authority of their parents or communal elders, further catalysing the 'split' that was occurring between wider Anglo-Jewry and the

¹⁰³ *Boxing*, 12 September 1914.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 March 1935.

younger generation. Fears were raised over Jewish interest in boxing from many parts, with concern often focusing on the apparently ‘disreputable’ nature of the sport and the fact that Jewish participation seemed distinctly ‘un-Jewish’ in terms of employment and leisure. Effectively, Jewish involvement in the sport challenged communal solidarity, undermined Jewish identity and culture and catalysed and symbolised the creation of a new form of secularised, British-Jewish identity amongst second-generation immigrant children.

An analysis of the impact of Jewish boxing on the relationship between first and second generation Jews will demonstrate that the sport acted as a powerful divisive force and impacted negatively on the perpetuation of immigrant culture and ethnicity. Likewise, it will also be highlighted how Jewish involvement in boxing, spectating in particular, impacted on the cohesion of the community more generally, being a source of considerable concern and anxiety for the Jewish communal elites and ‘respectable’ Jewry – ever fearful of the ‘disreputability’ of the sport and the impact that Jewish interest in it could have on the socio-cultural wellbeing of the community.

In essence, evidence shows that Jewish involvement in the sport exerted a powerful effect on Jewish ethnicity more widely, but also impacted on the individual identities of the younger generation. Whilst interest in boxing hastened and deepened the growing ‘split’ within the Anglo-Jewish community, it also symbolised the growing ‘drift’ of the second generation and increased their apathy towards the culture and ethnicity of their parents. Through boxing, second generation Jews escaped the stuffy, overbearing culture and

authority of their familial and communal elders and began forming their own secularised, independent, British-Jewish identities.

Boxing and the 'Drifting' Second Generation

Between the 1890s and the 1950s, many second generation Jewish immigrants in Britain became professional boxers. By the interwar years, Jews, both in Britain and in America, had become the largest ethnic minority group represented in the sport.¹⁰⁵ Seemingly, many of the factors underpinning this trend were not specific to the Jewish community, and reflected the move of many non-Jews into the professional ring as well. For instance, upon arriving in Britain, the vast majority of Jewish migrants settled in predominantly urban, working-class and economically deprived areas of major cities such as London and Manchester. Whilst throughout its history prize-fighting had always benefited from the patronage of the 'respectable' middle and upper-classes, traditionally the large majority of combatants had been drawn from the geographical areas, and socio-economic milieu, in which Jewish immigrants now found themselves.¹⁰⁶

Many Jewish boxers, like their non-Jewish counterparts, entered prize-fighting as a natural progression from being involved in street fighting as adolescents. Shipley has noted that it was common for young boys who fought on the street to make the move into the 'small-

¹⁰⁵ Ruti Ungar and Michael Berkowitz, 'From Daniel Mendoza to Amir Khan: Minority Boxers in Britain', in Berkowitz and Ungar, *Fighting Back*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 20.

hall’, often encouraged by their peers, in order to test their skills in a sporting arena.¹⁰⁷ Many young Jews who were involved in street-fighting (which, as previously noted, was common in areas of Jewish urban settlement) followed this path. Alf Mansfield, a second generation immigrant Jew who adopted an Anglicised moniker on his boxing debut, claimed he was encouraged to take up the sport after performing well in fights with local non-Jewish gang leaders.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, two-time World Welterweight Champion (1915-1916, 1917-1919), Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis, real name Gershon Mendeloff, claimed he began his career after being caught fighting by a London policeman who told him to try his hand in the professional game.¹⁰⁹

Seemingly, Jews were also attracted to the prize ring for the financial rewards that it could offer. One source claims that many boxers took to the sport because ‘there was money to be had – never a fortune, but good, quick money at apparently little physical cost nor too much discomfort’.¹¹⁰ It is apparent that the financial draw of the sport was a factor in the decision of many young Jews to enter the professional ‘game’. One famous Jewish boxer from Manchester in the interwar period, Sam Aarons (aka ‘Kid’ Furness) claimed he only became a professional boxer because he couldn’t find work after leaving the army after the First World War.¹¹¹ Likewise, Moe Mizler, a successful boxer in London in the 1920s and

¹⁰⁷ Shipley, ‘Boxing’, p. 83.

¹⁰⁸ *Boxing*, 26 September 1914.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ John Harding with Jack Berg, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg: The Whitechapel Windmill* (London, 1987), p. 26.

¹¹¹ MJM J1, Interview with Sam Aarons.

1930s, noted his decision to turn professional in the late 1920s was driven by the need for money to support his market stall.¹¹²

Whatever their individual reasoning, it is evident that the decision of scores of young Jews to become professional boxers represented a clear break from the first generation and a challenge to the preservation of immigrant culture and ethnicity. To many first generation Jews, the idea of people boxing for employment was completely alien and in stark contrast to life and culture in the *shtetl*. The idea of fighting itself was frowned upon and religious authorities denounced boxing as *goyishe midas* [mores of the heathen], seeing the sport as being at odds to traditional Jewish religion and culture.¹¹³ As well as having a ‘deep aversion to the uses of violence’, a legacy of life during the *pogroms* [anti-Semitic repression within Tsarist Russia], many immigrant Jews saw boxing and sport more generally as an ‘un-Jewish’ leisure activity – unsurprising considering the immigrant community came from countries which lacked anything resembling British sporting culture.¹¹⁴ In a reflection of contemporary American Jewish society, where ‘parents universally decried boxing as violent, dangerous, immoral and dominated by bums and thugs’, immigrant Jewish parents in Britain were ‘nearly always religiously and emotionally opposed to their sons taking part in boxing’.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *East London Advertiser*, 3 November 1934.

¹¹³ Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, p. 24.

¹¹⁴ Green, *Social History*, p. 309; Cesarani, ‘A Funny Thing’, p. 16.

¹¹⁵ Green, *Social History*, p. 309. Riess, ‘Tough Jews’, p. 65. This is not to say that first generation Jews in Britain were completely averse to physical confrontation. See, for instance, the example of Ralph Finn’s first generation immigrant grandfather, Zaida, who, whilst completely socially, culturally and religiously opposed to sport and boxing, was not afraid of defending himself physically when either he or his family were in danger. Ralph Finn, *No Tears in Aldgate* (Bath, 1973), pp. 50-53

Evidence suggests that the first generation parents of the most successful Anglo-Jewish boxers generally adopted this stance towards the sport. It is clear that many concerned and anxious parents felt that their sons' decision to enter the ring was a clear rejection both of their authority and of immigrant culture and ethnicity. When Ted 'Kid' Lewis embarked upon his professional career aged fifteen, his decision became a source of considerable friction between him and his Russo-Jewish immigrant father, Solomon Mendeloff. Lewis, born Gershon Mendeloff on 24 October 1894 in St-George's-in-the-East, London, was the only son of eight children, a fact which exacerbated his parents' anxiety over his move into the professional ring. Solomon, who had lost family members during the *pogroms* and who had fled Russia to avoid bloodshed, was appalled by Gershon's decision to engage in physical violence for sport. Equally as concerning, however, was the fact that Gershon had chosen boxing over becoming an apprentice in his father's furniture workshop, thus rejecting the 'traditional' move into the family business. Over time, however, the money 'Kid' Lewis earned from his increasingly successful exploits in the ring eased the tension caused by his rejection of his parent's authority and culture.¹¹⁶

Similar sentiments are also evident in biographical accounts of the other most successful Anglo-Jewish boxer of this time, Jack 'Kid' Berg. Berg was born Judah Bergman junior on 28 June 1909 to Russian Jewish immigrant parents above a fish and chip shop on Cable Street, East London. During his successful professional career he became Junior Welterweight World Champion [referred to now as the Light-Welterweight division] between 1930 and 1931 and also held the British Lightweight Championship from 1934 to

¹¹⁶ Lewis, *Ted 'Kid' Lewis*, pp. 5, 20-21.

1936. As with his idol, Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis, Jack faced considerable parental opposition and disdain when he became a professional boxer aged only fourteen. His father was a devout Jew and a strict disciplinarian, yet struggled to control his often wayward and ‘precocious’ young son who was obsessed with enjoying contemporary leisure pastimes and trends.¹¹⁷ Whilst he was concerned by his son’s rejection of ‘traditional’ immigrant religion and culture throughout his childhood, he was enraged when Judah junior began his career in the ring – something which sat uneasily with the religious and ‘resistant to change’ first generation immigrant.¹¹⁸

Berg’s biographer claimed that his father felt both unease and shame at his son’s decision to enter such a disreputable form of employment which contrasted sharply with his own religious and cultural identity. Apparently the ‘obdurate’ and ‘dignified’ Judah senior refused to ‘bow down and accept the inevitable’. As well as vainly ridiculing his son’s fighting pretensions (‘You! A box-fighter? Never!’), he warned him of the obvious physical dangers associated with the sport and the effects that it could have on his boyish ‘good looks’. For young Jack ‘Kid’ Berg, however, these appeals seemingly did not matter. He apparently cared little for the authority, culture and ethnicity of the older generation and remained insistent that they would not prevent him from pursuing his career in the ring.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ As a child, young Judah was unruly and uncontrollable. Much of his early childhood, when not at school, was spent on the streets surrounding his first home at Cable Street and his second family home in Fieldgate Mansions on Romford Street. By the time he was in his early teens he was regularly staying out all night four to five times a week and taking regular trips ‘up West’ to enjoy the dance-halls and cinemas of the capital’s West End. Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, pp. 17-20.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 31.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 38.

The reaction seen in these two cases was mirrored elsewhere in both British and American Jewish immigrant society at this time. Many first generation immigrant parents struggled to come to terms with their sons' decisions to abandon Jewish religion and culture in favour of professional boxing.¹²⁰ Seemingly for second generation Jews like Lewis and Berg, life in Britain improved self-confidence and made them less willing to enter the 'claustrophobic' culture and attitudes of their parents. Whilst 'traditional Jewish culture' held 'little significance for them', the 'more amenable sub-culture of the streets – boxing' held considerable appeal. As Harding has noted, these second generation Jewish boxers' 'break with parental aspirations mirrored events occurring at all levels of Jewish society' at this time. Jewish interest in professional boxing 'contributed to a parting of the ways with the older generation who were being left behind, if not always physically, then certainly emotionally'.¹²¹

Boxing contributed to a 'parting of the ways' in a more direct sense for some of the most successful Jewish boxers of the time. By modern standards, a career in professional boxing in the 1920s and 1930s did not generally bring considerable financial rewards. But for a number of Anglo-Jewish boxers, success in the ring facilitated social mobility and helped them secure a physical departure from the area and social stratum of their birth. 'Kid' Lewis, for instance, spent several successful years boxing in America and Australia and

¹²⁰ Levine recounts the stories of several prominent American-Jewish boxers of the early twentieth century, such as Louis Wallach, Abe Attell and Benny Leonard, whose decisions to enter the prize-ring caused considerable friction between them and their elders who felt that 'boxing went against Jewish tradition'. Levine, *Ellis Island*, pp. 151-152.

¹²¹ Harding, *Jack 'Kid' Berg*, p. 33.

owned homes in Britain and the United States by the end of his career.¹²² Likewise, ‘Kid’ Berg used his boxing earnings in the early 1930s to move from his Whitechapel home to a ‘smart house in the suburbs with maid, car, dogs and all that goes with prosperous suburbanites’. Whilst social and geographic mobility of this kind would have been rare for the majority of Jewish professional boxers, the sport’s appeal to the young can be partly explained by the social, material and financial awards it offered the successful few.¹²³

The ‘parting of the ways’ was also evident in spiritual terms as well, but whilst many second-generation Jewish boxers displayed little concern towards immigrant ethnicity and culture, they retained a strong sense of a secularised Jewish identity. Although many English-Jewish professional pugilists were not religiously observant and exhibited no real interest in ‘traditional Jewish culture’, this did not mean that they completely discarded their Jewishness. Indeed, whilst many may have adopted ‘Anglicised’ aliases upon their entry into the sport (to help them avoid the detection of their ever-sceptical parents), it was often the case that they chose to proudly wear both a Union Jack and a *Magen David* on their boxing shorts in a visible demonstration of their dual British-Jewish identity.¹²⁴

Whilst this was not necessarily accompanied with a strong identification with Jewish religion, customs or traditions, this symbolic expression of ethnic pride showed that some vestige of their Jewishness remained. Likewise, whilst second-generation Jewish boxers

¹²² Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 102.

¹²³ Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, p. 200.

¹²⁴ Michael Berkowitz, ‘Jewish Blood-Sport: Between Bad Behaviour and Respectability,’ in Berkowitz and Ungar, *Fighting Back?*, pp. 70-71. There were significant outpourings of Jewish support for these two boxers when they each returned from successful spells boxing in America. Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 137; Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, pp. 161-163.

had clearly undergone a social, cultural and religious ‘drift’, this did not mean that their successes in the ring were not celebrated by the community of their birth. ‘Kid’ Lewis and ‘Kid’ Berg may not have been Jewish in their religion or cultural outlook, yet they proudly saw themselves as English-Jewish boxers and their exploits were keenly followed by the British Jewish community. As Taylor has noted, boxers like ‘Kid’ Berg and ‘Kid’ Lewis were revered as ‘idols’ of the ‘Jewish East End’ both during and after their careers.¹²⁵

In a reflection of the comfort and ease with which these boxers cast off immigrant culture and developed their own secularised identity, there is evidence that some Jewish pugilists utilised their ethnicity as a tool for furthering their careers. Although many boxers did not feel any strong sense of religious or cultural Jewishness, they were comfortable and willing to use their minority background as a means of self-promotion.¹²⁶ This is particularly evident with Jack ‘Kid’ Berg when he embarked on his American boxing career in the late 1920s. There he regularly highlighted and played on his Jewish background to help promote himself and increase his appeal to Jewish fight fans. As Bodner has noted, such a tactic was increasingly common at this time in America and was strongly encouraged by American boxing promoters eager to introduce an ‘ethnic angle’ in fights to increase their appeal. Although individual Jewish, Irish, Italian and black boxers may not have felt any strong sense of ethnic pride when competing, American fight fans (especially in large

¹²⁵ Matthew Taylor, ‘Round the London Ring: Boxing, Class and Community in Interwar London’, *London Journal*, 34, 2, July 2009, p. 148.

¹²⁶ Such was the market and commercial value of being a boxer of immigrant background at this time, especially a Jewish boxer, that some fighters even claimed immigrant roots falsely. Take for instance the non-Jewish American Heavyweight boxer Max Baer, who ‘claimed Jewish origins as a means of attracting a Jewish following’ during the 1930s. Berkowitz, ‘Jewish Blood-Sport,’ p. 70.

immigrant cities such as New York and Chicago) were generally drawn more to fights between boxers of different backgrounds where racial pride was apparently at stake.¹²⁷

Although Berg did not feel any real religious or cultural affinity to Judaism, he began to emphasise his minority background to increase his ‘box-office’ potential. Soon after he arrived in America in 1928, he began, and was encouraged, to use his background as a second-generation Jewish immigrant to help in the promotion of his fights. In 1929, Berg introduced a pre-fight routine whereby he would come to the ring wearing various Jewish religious garments – including a *tallit* [prayer shawl] and a *kippah* [skull cap] – and then undergo a lengthy ritual of removing the items and praying. As Berg’s trainer in America later noted, his boxer was by no means religious or interested in Orthodox customs or traditions, the routine being a means of garnering the support of local Jewish fight fans.¹²⁸ It was, as Berkowitz has highlighted, a ‘stunt meant to emphasise the partisan lines by which boxers could be labelled, hopefully resulting in greater interest in ticket sales’. In this task, it was clearly successful, as Berg’s later fights in America evidenced.¹²⁹

When placed in its historical context, there was nothing extraordinary about Berg utilising ethnicity, race and nationality as a means of sporting promotion. Indeed, such practices are as old as the sport of prize-fighting itself. In the days of Daniel Mendoza, bouts between

¹²⁷ Allen Bodner, *When Boxing was a Jewish Sport* (London, 1997), p. 67.

¹²⁸ Riess, ‘Tough Jews’, p. 96.

¹²⁹ Berkowitz, ‘Jewish Blood-Sport’, p. 70. When Berg undertook the sixth defence of his Junior Welterweight title in 1930 against black boxer Kid Chocolate, it was noted that whilst Berg ‘was an Englishman’ he had gained significant support from Jewish fight fans across the country, with over ten thousand ‘Hebrew rooters’ from inner-city New York travelling and paying to watch the contest. *Boxing, Racing and Football*, 13 August 1930.

Christians and Jews or Jewish and Irish fighters were amongst the most well-known contests of the time. Chill has highlighted, with reference to the professional boxing in the late Georgian period, that such ethnic and religious battles ‘generated tremendous excitement’ which ‘helped drive the spectatorship, gambling and public attention that in turn provided the sport its financial support’. As Berg did in America in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in the much earlier period ‘Jewish, Irish and Black boxers adopted symbols, manners of dress and distinctive styles that highlighted their difference... to increase their popularity’.¹³⁰

Berg’s decision to ‘highlight’ his ‘difference’, whilst himself being detached from any real sense of cultural or religious Jewishness, demonstrates the confidence and comfort he felt in himself and his English-Jewish identity. Whilst traditional Jewish religion clearly held no real appeal for Berg and other second-generation Jewish boxers like him, he confidently, and without apprehension, used his background as a means of self-promotion. In effect, boxers such as Berg represented the new, secularised second-generation Jew who had experienced significant ‘socialisation’ into the British working-classes and entered eagerly into this group’s leisure and sporting pursuits. Boxers like ‘Kid’ Lewis and ‘Kid’ Berg had clearly discarded immigrant culture and identity in exchange for a new form of Jewishness based on their experiences as British-born second generation immigrants, rather than the culture and lifestyles of their parents.

¹³⁰ Adam Chill, ‘The Performance and Marketing of Minority Identity in Late Georgian Boxing’, in Berkowitz and Ungar, *Fighting Back?*, p. 34.

Undermining ‘Communal Solidarity’?

Whilst professional boxing was a source of considerable anxiety for first generation Jews, a similarly strong dislike of Jewish involvement in professional boxing was also evident amongst the Jewish elites and ‘respectable’ elements of Anglo-Jewish society. Green has noted that ‘unlike the situation in other poor minority groups’, such as the Irish, ‘there was considerable ambivalence in the Jewish community towards pugilism’.¹³¹ Jewish religious authorities, for instance, viewed participation and interest in the sport with considerable unease, seeing boxing as a negative influence on the unity of the community. In 1923, Rabbi Israel Brodie (1895-1979) claimed that boxing was one factor hampering communal attempts to ‘get hold of the younger generation and [to] try to induce them to show more interest in Judaism’.¹³² Similarly, Cesarani has highlighted that, by the 1930s, the *Jewish Chronicle* began to view Jewish involvement in the sport as reflecting the growing ‘social problems’ amongst young Jewry. Indeed, the idea of there being a ‘social chasm which split Anglo-Jewry’ was a theme which ran through much of the newspaper’s sports and leisure coverage at this time.¹³³

Evidently, the Jewish communal elites viewed those Jews who had made the move into the professional ring with great disapproval. As Harding has noted, Jewish prize-fighters in the modern period ‘had to endure much by the way of condemnation from within their own community’. They ‘were seen by “respectable” Jews as an embarrassment’ who would not

¹³¹ Green, *Social History*, p. 308.

¹³² Quoted in Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 306.

¹³³ Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, pp. 144-145.

only draw negative attention on the community from non-Jews, but would also act as unwanted encouragement for younger Jews to take up a career in the ring and ‘drift’ further from their religion and culture.¹³⁴ Undoubtedly, the fact that many Jewish professional boxers in Britain maintained links with criminal elements and ‘were tarnished by alleged association with gambling and what was believed to be promotion of poor morals’ also impacted in the opinion of ‘respectable’ Jews on the sport.¹³⁵

Unsurprisingly, clear efforts were made to protect Jewish amateur boxers from the negative influence of the professional ring. Whilst boxing within the youth movement aided and supported the wider initiatives of the established community, increasing Jewish interest in professional boxing symbolised the growing ‘drift’ and detachment of some within the second generation. The sport was particularly disliked by those who supported and ran the various youth organisations and by those who worked with young Jews. For example, when Basil Henriques opened the Oxford and St Georges’ Jewish Lads’ Club in 1914, he found great support from local school headmasters. They felt that his club could offer a positive alternative for young Jews in their spare time instead of the increasingly popular, and unsuitable, ‘temptations’ of the street - particularly the local Premierland boxing arena.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, p. 25.

¹³⁵ Berkowitz, ‘Jewish Blood-Sport’, pp. 76-77. Berkowitz claims that both ‘Kid’ Berg and ‘Kid’ Lewis had clear links to the criminal underworld, and with the world of gambling, both during and after time in the professional ring. He alleges that the ‘criminality’ of Jewish boxers is one factor in why relatively little academic research has ever been done on their careers.

¹³⁶ UoSSC MS132/AJ195/7, Rose Henriques, ‘Unpublished typescript of a biographical journal of Basil Henriques’, p. 247.

Leaders of the youth movement also worked hard to protect impressionable young Jews within their clubs from being drawn to the ‘disreputable’ world of prize-fighting. In 1921, for instance, the patron of the Oxford and St Georges’ Jewish Lads’ Club, the cigarette magnate Bernhard Baron (1850-1929), strongly voiced his disapproval at plans to allow ‘Kid’ Lewis to attend a tournament between Jewish amateur boxers. In a letter to the club founder and manager, Basil Henriques, Baron noted

I cannot express in strong enough language my disapproval of the arrangement to have professional boxers to box in the same ring as amateur boys. I can have absolutely nothing to do with a function of this kind which has my strongest disapproval. At the present time, when it is so difficult for boys to get work, the temptation to become professional boxers is very great and your tournament is merely encouragement to club boys to act in this way.¹³⁷

The tournament committee, whilst noting the positive financial implications of allowing Lewis to box, withdrew his invitation only days later.¹³⁸

A similar attitude towards professional boxing was evident elsewhere within the Jewish youth movement throughout the interwar years. Seemingly, Jewish youth leaders across the country were keen for their members not to go down the wrong path and ‘drift’ further away from their community and culture. In 1925, the Grove House Jewish Lads’ Club Committee rejected an appeal by a manager to allow local boxing promoters to use club premises to hold professional boxing promotions – seemingly an attempt on his part to help the club’s poor financial standing. The suggestion was summarily thrown out by the

¹³⁷ UoSSC AJ220/3/5, Letter to Basil Henriques from Bernhard Baron, 11 July 1921.

¹³⁸ Ibid. ‘Report of a meeting of managers of competing clubs and members of the Hutch Boxing Committee’, 18 July 1921. One member of the Committee noted that ‘although they would lose financially in dropping Kid Lewis, he felt quite certain that they would gain in prestige and that all present were quite convinced they were doing the right thing.’

Committee, which noted that it did not want members exposed to the ‘undesirable elements’ associated with the sport and wanted to protect amateur boxers within the club from the lure of the professional game.¹³⁹ In 1935, the Stepney Jewish Lads’ Club introduced a rule whereby ‘no professionals are to be admitted to the boxing class’ in order to protect their amateur club boxing team.¹⁴⁰

Whilst involvement in professional boxing was a cause of considerable communal anxiety, growing interest amongst the immigrant Jewish population for watching the sport, and gambling on it, was even more alarming. Throughout the early twentieth century a number of boxing halls and arenas were opened by Jewish promoters and managers of immigrant background keen to capitalise on growing interest in the professional fight scene. Halls such as Wonderland (open between 1894-1911), the Judæans Athletic and Social Club (1902-1914), Paragon Hall (1911), Premierland (1912-1931) and the Devonshire Club (1931-1940) all opened in the ‘Jewish’ East End in the period between the late 1890s and the 1930s and became a central part of the vibrant London boxing scene of the early twentieth century.¹⁴¹ Although open to all, Jewish fight fans made up the bulk of these clubs’ patrons and it is clear that watching professional boxing was a popular leisure pastime for Jews during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1914, it was noted that the Judæans, located in a stable loft on Cable Street, East London, regularly drew in excess of 1,000 people for its promotions, with the vast majority of spectators being of ‘the Jewish

¹³⁹ MCA M130/3, Grove House Lads’ Club Managers’ and Subscribers’ Minutes, 7 December 1925.

¹⁴⁰ UoSSC AJ250/1, Stepney Jewish Lads’ Club Minute Book, 10 September 1935.

¹⁴¹ Raphael Samuel (Ed), *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London, 1981), p. 25-26, 315; Shipley, ‘Boxing’, p. 93; Lewis, Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis, p. 15; Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, p. 44. See also Taylor, ‘Round the London ring’, pp. 144-147.

race'.¹⁴² Similarly, in December 1928, reports indicated that 80% of the regular visitors to Premierland, a 3,000 capacity arena housed in a disused factory on Back Church Lane, Whitechapel, were of Jewish origin.¹⁴³

Against the backdrop of growing fears concerning the 'split' in Jewish society during the interwar years, communal leaders viewed the reality of thousands of Jews watching boxing on a weekly basis with considerable apprehension. Cesarani has noted that the Jewish elites saw boxing spectating as growing evidence of 'Jews not associating themselves with Jewish life' and drifting physically and culturally closer to mainstream society.¹⁴⁴ One article from the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1929 asked 'Is Anglo-Jewry Decadent?' and voiced concerns over the contribution of attending boxing to the waywardness of younger Jews. It stated 'in the East End today we find young men growing up almost with a loss of moral sense. They are adherents of the cheap boxing halls...[and] are joining, unfortunately, the hooligan element of the populace'.¹⁴⁵

At first glance, it is clear why fears were raised about the effects of watching boxing on the 'moral sense' of the Jewish population. In some respects, as contemporary reports suggest, the picture painted of these 'Jewish' halls was generally somewhat 'rough and ready' – as the Judæans was labelled in 1909.¹⁴⁶ Crowd disturbances were relatively common and were most likely and most violent when matches were held between Jewish and Gentile fighters.

¹⁴² *Boxing*, 28 November 1914.

¹⁴³ [N]ational [A]rchives MEPO/2/2215, Minutes, 8 December 1928.

¹⁴⁴ Cesarani, 'The East London', p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 August 1929.

¹⁴⁶ *Boxing*, 16 October 1909.

As Willy Goldman has noted, whenever ‘racial consideration... cropped up’ at a Jewish hall, ‘it was certain that whoever finally triumphed in the ring, the real battle would be fought out afterwards.’¹⁴⁷

The biography of ‘Kid’ Lewis recounts one such fight between him and a young non-Jewish boxer at Premierland in 1912. Violence that began during the match continued after Lewis’ opponent had been awarded a controversial victory and there ‘then ensued a typical Premierland “free-for-all” with fist fights around the ring and bottles flying’.¹⁴⁸ When joined with reports that Jewish boxing halls were habitually dangerously overcrowded (patrons at the Judæans were always ‘packed in like sardines around the ring’), that gambling and betting proliferated and that they were often frequented by members of the criminal underworld (Jewish gangster Edward Emmanuel was a regular at Wonderland) then it is no surprise that ‘respectable’ society – both Jewish and Gentile - viewed their existence with a great deal of concern.¹⁴⁹

Jewish boxing halls, like British professional boxing more generally during this period, were not as ‘unmanageable’ nor as ‘dangerous’ as the Jewish establishment believed. As Taylor has noted, whilst ‘drunkenness’, gambling and general high spirits were always in evidence amongst boxing crowds, the widespread belief in the sport being characterised by ‘disorder’ and violence in the crowd has been somewhat overstated. Despite a rowdy

¹⁴⁷ Goldman, *East End*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁸ Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ *Boxing*, 18 December 1909; Samuel, *East End Underworld*, p. 182.

minority, the vast majority of fight fans behaved with ‘civility and good order’.¹⁵⁰ This also seems to be true with regards to audiences at Jewish small halls in the capital, where ‘disorder’ was not uncommon, but where the eagerness and knowledge of the crowd and high quality of the boxing was widely acknowledged. One member of the National Sporting Club, the self-appointed ‘respectable’ controlling body of the sport from the 1890s to the late 1920s, claimed in 1914 that he had regularly taken fellow NSC members to the Judæans club where ‘they have one and all come away delighted and amazed at the skill and vigour with which the boys fight their battles’.¹⁵¹ Likewise, five years earlier, a correspondent for *Boxing* praised the organisation and efficiency at Wonderland, where ‘no-one who has ever visited the place can even insinuate that he did not receive plentiful value for money. There is scarcely a dull moment, there is always a long programme and there are no waits between the items’.¹⁵²

Although ‘Jewish’ boxing halls were often held in relatively high regard by the British boxing establishment, this was not the case within the Jewish elites. As Berkowitz has noted, ‘respectable society’ made their ‘disgust of such premises well-known and sought to stamp out Jewish misconduct’.¹⁵³ When Jewish promoter Harry Jacobs opened Paragon Hall in East London in 1911, for instance, the ‘respectable inhabitants were loud in their complaint’. As well as informing the London County Council that they believed the Hall was holding ‘the most disgusting operations they had ever seen’, Jewish and non-Jewish

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, ‘Round the London Ring’, p. 152.

¹⁵¹ *Boxing*, 28 November 1914.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 18 September 1909.

¹⁵³ Berkowitz, ‘Jewish Blood-Sport’, p. 76.

residents in the area complained of ‘being unable to leave their doors open owing to the crowds in the vicinity of the halls where the performances were going on’.¹⁵⁴ In 1935, two disgruntled members of the Devonshire Club, opened in 1931 by Jewish promoter Jack Solomons, complained to the LCC that the Club had become a ‘low gambling hell, drinking den and in fact a place where men and women congregate for immoral arrangements and meetings’.¹⁵⁵

The greatest indignation from ‘respectable’ Jewish society was reserved for Premierland, by far the largest and most well-known of all the ‘Jewish’ boxing venues.¹⁵⁶ Concerns were raised by local residents during the planning stages for the hall in 1911 and focused on the potentially negative effects the venue’s opening would have on the local population. One correspondent to the LCC claimed that Premierland ‘would attract into the neighbourhood an undesirable element that may prove very troublesome and raise much annoyance’. Similarly, concerns were also raised that local schoolchildren, the majority of them Jewish, would stay at home on the days that boxing was held to protect their own safety. Although not explicitly acknowledged, local residents would have been concerned that the same

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Taylor, ‘Round the London Ring’, p. 151.

¹⁵⁶ With both the Judæans and Wonderland closing in the period before and during the Great War, the post-war years saw the rise of Premierland as the principal ‘Jewish’ boxing hall. Weeks after Wonderland’s destruction by fire in somewhat mysterious circumstances in 1911, Harry Jacobs took on the lease of a warehouse owned by Fairclough’s butchers on Back Church Lane, Whitechapel ‘for the purpose of holding boxing competitions and showing cinema pictures’. Premierland opened in January 1912 and between that date and its closure in the winter of 1930/31, with a string of Jewish owners and managers after Jacobs’ bankruptcy in 1914, it came to be regarded as one of Britain’s principal boxing arenas alongside the Albert Hall and the Ring in Blackfriars. Interestingly, Premierland also became something of a political and social focal point for the Jewish community, with protest meetings, political debates and Jewish union meetings regularly being held there during the First World War and 1920s. See *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 October 1916, 5 November 1920; Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, p. 44; Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 19; LMA GLC/AR/BR/07/410, Letter from Henry Smith to Superintending Architect, London County Council, 13 July 1911.

schoolchildren might be tempted into the arena to watch one of the four promotions held each week.¹⁵⁷

Despite these concerns, Premierland opened in 1912, but went on to gain a notable degree of notoriety amongst both Jewish and Gentile society in the East End. Contemporary reports suggest that crowd violence, gambling and dangerous levels of overcrowding were all relatively commonplace. One regular Jewish visitor to the hall throughout the 1920s later noted: ‘first of all the place was packed to the rafters. For sixpence you just stood on a football terrace, on steps. Some spectators were most ingenious, they climbed onto the top rafters and hung there’.¹⁵⁸ Before long, the hall began to attract the attention of the authorities who, in the late 1920s, were beginning to take the issues of gambling and crowd safety in the small-hall boxing environment more seriously.¹⁵⁹ Investigations into Premierland by both the LCC and the Metropolitan Police were initiated as a direct result of correspondence from ‘respectable’ elements of Anglo-Jewish society. In 1928, Mr Cohen, from Bow, East London (a self-labelled ‘well known person’ in the East End), complained that Premierland was a ‘hot-bed of vice, for in addition to the serious overcrowding the place is a miniature race-course’. As well as noting the prevalence of gambling in the arena, he added that ‘in the event of a panic, stampede etc I am sure it will result in a great loss of life and serious injury...[as] spectators...are packed in like sardines’.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ LMA GLC/AR/BR/07/410, Letter to London County Council, 8 September 1911.

¹⁵⁸ Harding, *Jack ‘Kid’ Berg*, p. 46

¹⁵⁹ Taylor, ‘Round the London Ring’, p. 153.

¹⁶⁰ NA MEPO/2/2215, Letter from Mr S Cohen to Commissioner of Police, 8 December 1928.

Resultant enquiries into the Hall found management guilty of turning a blind eye to illegal gambling within the arena and discovered that overcrowding was considerable, with great potential for a serious incident in the event of a fire or false alarm. The Police's belief that Jews were pre-disposed to gambling, and the widespread anti-Semitic idea that Jews were a 'panicky race', made the problems at the arena seem more severe than at similar non-Jewish halls.¹⁶¹ As Taylor has shown, investigations into Premierland and other London arenas resulted in a tightening of health and safety rules concerning the staging of boxing from 1930 onwards. Together with growing pressure from a Sabbatarian Lobby, which led to a ban on Sunday boxing being introduced in 1935, these tighter rules resulted in the permanent closure of several small-halls across London – including Premierland in 1931.¹⁶²

The closure of Premierland, which would have brought great satisfaction to 'respectable' elements of East End Jewry, had a significant negative impact on Jewish professional boxing. No longer did those Jews who were interested in watching and gambling on the sport have a large hall within walking distance of their homes in the East End. Likewise, Jewish boxers lost a 'home' hall where they were guaranteed a favourable reception and opportunities unavailable to them in venues outside of the East End. Although Jewish boxers remained prominent in the sport during the 1930s (mainly boxers who had begun their careers in the amateur ranks or before Premierland's closure in 1931), many complained that the absence of a Jewish hall had had a negative impact on their career

¹⁶¹ NA MEPO/2/2215, Police Report 'H' Division, 27 December 1928; WH Campbell, 'Premises used for Boxing Exhibitions', 9 January 1929.

¹⁶² Taylor, 'Round the London Ring', pp. 153-154; *Boxing, Racing and Football*, 7 January 1931.

progression.¹⁶³ Effectively, the end of Premierland marked the symbolic start of a period of inexorable decline for Jewish prize-fighting in the modern era. Together with Jewish social mobility, economic improvement and cultural changes during the 1940s, joined with the gradual decline of ‘small-halls’ and the arrival of fresh immigrants into the sport from the 1950s onwards, Jewish direct involvement in the professional ring was eventually consigned to the history books.¹⁶⁴

There were a small number of Jewish boxers who achieved national and international success in the post-World War Two period. Lew Lazar, for instance, challenged for the British and European Welterweight and Middleweight titles during the 1950s, whilst his brother Harry was also a relatively successful middleweight.¹⁶⁵ Jewish involvement in the business and promotion of the sport continued well into the 1960s and beyond, however. Jack Solomons became a well-known international promoter during the 1960s, staging famous fights with boxers such as Sugar Ray Robinson and Cassius Clay.¹⁶⁶

Despite Jewish boxing’s decline in the post-World War Two period, it is evident that the sport had a clear impact on communal cohesion in the early part of the twentieth century. Jewish involvement and interest in the sport concerned the Jewish elites and ‘respectable’

¹⁶³ Hyman Barnett ‘Harry’ Mizler, the most successful Jewish boxer of the mid-1930s, was said to have suffered during his early career because the closure of the various Jewish halls put him at a disadvantage to the previous generation of Jewish boxers. Harry, who was born in 1913 and was British Lightweight Champion in 1934, later claimed he suffered because there was no hall or arena where he could fight in front of large numbers of partisan Jewish fans or fight against fellow Jewish boxers on a weekly basis. *Boxing News*, 3 January 1952, 10 January 1952.

¹⁶⁴ Green, *Social History*, p. 310; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p. 367; Shipley, ‘Boxing’, p. 103-104. Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 May 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends*, pp. 59-60.

Jewry greatly, in as much as it demonstrated a lack of respect for both communal authority and cultural and social solidarity on the part of a significant section of the population. Aware of this, Jewish leaders tried to minimise the lure of the professional ring for amateur boxers and also voiced concerns over, and worked to undermine, the various ‘Jewish’ boxing small-halls that opened in the East End at this time. Despite these efforts, however, it is clear that Jews were still ‘drifting’ away from their elders in mind, body and spirit. In effect, Jewish interest in the sport represented a clear point where the socio-cultural ‘fissuring’ of the community was occurring and where second generation Jews were leaving their elders and ‘respectable’ Jewish society behind.

It is evident that, during the first part of the twentieth century, British Jews made a significant impact on professional boxing. Jews carved out careers in the sport at all levels, both inside and outside of the ring, and also became a considerable portion of the large crowds who watched boxing on a weekly basis in ‘small-halls’, arenas and stadiums. Jewish participation in the sport, as acknowledged at the time, helped raised professional boxing’s profile both nationally and internationally, whilst English Jewish boxers also achieved considerable successes across the country and beyond. Effectively, the history of British boxing in the first part of the twentieth century is incomplete without addressing Jewish participation, such was their involvement and effect on the sport at this time.

Significantly, however, whilst British Jews had a considerable impact on the sport, boxing also exerted a social and cultural effect on Anglo-Jewry as well. The decision of scores of young Jews to either enter the ring or watch the sport exerted both a clear undermining

influence on the maintenance of Jewish immigrant ethnicity and culture and on the preservation of communal unity. More than any other sport, mainly due to the visibility and successes of Jews, professional boxing became linked to contemporary notions and discourses surrounding a 'split' or 'social chasm' within the community. It was seen, and disliked, by many within the Jewish population as a factor in the growing 'drift' of the younger generation.

On the one hand, Jewish involvement in the sport evidently caused considerable friction between second generation Jews and their immigrant parents. As seen with the examples of 'Kid' Lewis and 'Kid' Berg, professional boxing was intensely disliked by first generation parents. They viewed their sons' decision to enter the prize-ring as an affront to their cultural and religious sensibilities and as a challenge to the preservation of immigrant culture. As it transpired, their fears were accurate. In one sense, Jewish success in the sport aided social mobility and a physical departure from the immigrant milieu. Yet boxing was also factor in the creation of a new, secularised British-Jewish identity for many second-generation Jews, where ethnic pride, without an interest in Jewish religion or culture, became an important facet of their new identity.

Similarly, whilst the sport evidently affected the relationship between first and second generation immigrants, it was also a factor in the increasing social and cultural distance between young Jews and the Jewish elites. The sport was an undermining influence on communal cohesion and on the 'solidarity' of Anglo-Jewry as a whole. Second generation Jewish immigrant involvement in the 'disreputable' sport symbolised and contributed to the

growing 'split' within the community and was a cause of considerable anxiety for communal leaders and 'respectable' Jews. Much to their 'disgust', a significant section of the community was becoming increasingly interested in indigenous leisure pastimes and enthusiastic consumers of seemingly unsuitable sporting culture. Attempts were made to prevent boxing's impact on the 'drift' of the younger generation but in many ways the damage to communal unity was already done. Through boxing, many Jews had physically, emotionally and culturally detached from their birth community.

In essence, professional boxing played an important role in both the destruction and construction of Jewish ethnicity. On the one hand, interest in the sport impacted on immigrant culture and ethnicity and also on communal cohesion – argued by some historians of Anglo-Jewry to be an important facet of Jewish ethnicity generally. Similarly, the sport also symbolised the formation of new forms of hybridised English-Jewish identities, with a secular outlook on Jewishness mainly in evidence. Second-generation Jews involved, either directly or indirectly, in the sport were clearly less interested in the culture and pastimes of their parents. They were also much less concerned with obeying the authority of community elites than either the Jewish establishment or 'respectable' Jewry desired. Effectively, Jewish boxers and Jewish boxing fans were the embodiment of the new English-Jewish second generation, many of whom were more interested in indigenous leisure and sport than in maintaining or preserving immigrant ethnicity or communal solidarity.

Creating a 'New Jew'? Sport and Maccabi Great Britain, 1934-1970

Whilst sport was evidently a factor in the general erosion of Jewish identity during the early twentieth century, certain Jewish sports organisations believed that they could play a role in promoting and maintaining a 'traditional' form of Jewish ethnicity. Whilst indications are that physical recreation undermined Jewish religious observance and communal cohesion, it was viewed by some within the British Maccabi movement as a means of helping to promote 'Jewishness' amongst an increasingly secularised and integrated community. As well as revitalising Jewish physique, the British arm of the worldwide Maccabi movement believed that it could hasten a Jewish spiritual and cultural renaissance within Anglo-Jewry and combat the clear undermining of Jewish identity occurring since the early twentieth century. However, whilst leaders of British Maccabi may have initially believed that sport, Zionism and cultural and religious education could strengthen Jewish bodies, communal unity and individual Jewish identities, it was largely unsuccessful in its attempts to create a 'new type of Jew and Jewess' within Anglo-Jewry.¹⁶⁷ Although the movement facilitated opportunities for sport and socialising for thousands of British Jews, for various reasons it did not promote Zionism effectively as a 'unifying force' nor instigate an 'inner revolution' in terms of Jewish religion and culture.

To understand the ideology and development of British Maccabi, it is important to examine the movement's wider roots and its close links to Zionism. In the late nineteenth and early

¹⁶⁷ *East London Advertiser*, 23 February 1935.

twentieth century, the notion of political Zionism underwent a significant resurgence, with advocates of Jewish nationalism becoming increasingly vociferous, and drawing growing support, in their calls for the establishment of a Jewish nation-state.¹⁶⁸ Alongside promoting the idea of a new Jewish homeland, which Zionist leaders felt was needed due to the ‘failure’ of Jewish Emancipation, many leading Zionist thinkers were also increasingly vocal in their belief in the wider need for Jewish ‘renewal’ – arguing that Jews would need to be stronger, in body, mind and spirit, in order to ensure the success of the Zionist dream.¹⁶⁹

One of the most powerful advocates for Jewish physical ‘regeneration’ in order to aid the Zionist cause was the Hungarian Jewish physician, social critic, author and Zionist leader, Max Nordau (1849-1923). In a series of books, articles and speeches in the 1890s and 1900s, Nordau outlined his view that *shtetl* and Diaspora life had led to a physical ‘degeneration’ of the Jewish population worldwide. He argued that unless this was consciously and pro-actively rectified, the Zionist project would be rendered futile.¹⁷⁰ As George Mosse has noted, Nordau advocated physical recreation – but not necessarily sport – amongst Jews in order to established a trend of ‘Muskal Judentum’ [Muscular Judaism]

¹⁶⁸ For a comprehensive history of political Zionism at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, see Walter Laqueur, *The History of Zionism* (London, 2003), pp. 84-136.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 162-171. Leading exponents of the notion of ‘practical Zionism’, which encompassed these wider views on Zionism, were Ahad Ha’am (1856-1927) and Martin Buber (1868-1965). Ha’am, in particular, was critical of what he saw as Thomas Herzl’s promotion of a purely political form of Zionism. He believed that Jewish nationalism should be more than just a drive towards the foundation of a Jewish nation-state and called for a ‘deeper attachment to national life’ and a concentration on ‘Jewish culture, of its language and literature, of education and the diffusion of Jewish knowledge’.

¹⁷⁰ Todd Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (Abingdon, 2007), pp. 1-3.

which would help to practically and ideologically support and facilitate the creation of a Jewish nation-state.¹⁷¹

There was a strong response to Nordau's appeals for 'Muscular Judaism' amongst the worldwide Jewish community. From the late nineteenth century onwards, a number of Zionist-oriented gymnastics and sports clubs were founded across Central Europe, Palestine, America and Asia. Many adopted names with reference to Jewish physicality and strength, such as Berlin Bar Cochba, which was founded in 1898.¹⁷² As well as support for Zionism, another catalyst in the foundation of many of clubs was anti-Semitism and the exclusion of many Jewish athletes from German, Austrian and Slavonic sport and gymnastic organisations. By 1914 there were over 100 Jewish sports clubs in existence and at the 1921 Zionist Congress held at Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia, the Maccabi World Union was formed in order to administer and expand the largest section of all the various Zionist sports organisations. Although there were other factions of the Jewish nationalist sports movement (Hapoel, for instance, was both socialist and leftist in its support for Zionism), Maccabi was the largest. It attracted 150,000 members worldwide by 1934 and nearly 175,000 members by the start of the Second World War.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ George Mosse, 'Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27, 4, 1992, pp. 567-570. Mosse notes that Nordau did not feel that sport was as important as gymnastics for the Zionist cause, as the former 'was not specifically designed to perfect the human body'. He also condemned football as 'rough and devoid of spiritual substance'.

¹⁷² Simon Bar Cochba was a Jewish warrior in ancient times who led a Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire in 132AD.

¹⁷³ On the history of the Maccabi World Union, see Arthur Hanak, 'The Historical Background of the Creation of the Maccabi World Union' in Simri, *Physical Education and Sport*, pp. 149-152.

Despite the growth of Zionist sports clubs worldwide, there was generally marginal British interest in Maccabi for most of the early twentieth century. A small number of Zionist-oriented sports organisations – such as London and Glasgow Bar Cochba - were founded by German and Austrian immigrants in the 1920s, yet there was little impetus within Britain for a much larger movement based around Nordau's calls for 'Muscular Judaism'.¹⁷⁴ During the 1930s, however, interest in establishing a British arm of the Maccabi movement grew amongst high-profile British Zionists involved with the organisation on an international level. Lord Alfred Melchett (1868-1930), founder of Imperial Chemical Industries, was Honorary President of the Maccabi World Union from 1921 until his death, when the position was taken over by his only son, Lord Henry Melchett (1898-1949). Both were keen for Anglo-Jewry and the Jews of the British Empire to increase their involvement in Maccabi - a movement which the latter felt had essentially 'British' aims i.e. the promotion of team-spirit, sportsmanship and discipline. Through his intervention, Maccabi clubs were founded in Australia, Canada and South Africa and in March 1934 the British Maccabi Association (BMA) was created.¹⁷⁵

From this year through to the 1960s, the British arm of the Maccabi movement underwent a significant growth amongst Anglo-Jewry. During this period, over thirty Maccabi clubs were founded across the country in both large and small Jewish settlements. By 1963, the movement had grown to over 6,000 members – easily dwarfing the number active within

¹⁷⁴ Michael Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement in Great Britain in 1934 - 1948' (unpublished University College, London MA Thesis, 2001), p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 6; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1934. The arrival of large numbers of refugee Jews who had been involved in Maccabi clubs in Europe, and the relocation of the Maccabi World Union headquarters from Berlin to London in 1935, also in order to flee Hitler, also gave British Maccabi significant impetus during its foundation and early years.

the contemporary Jewish youth club movement and the Jewish Lads' Brigade.¹⁷⁶ As Bunt had noted, although initially constituted to cater for over-18s – a group which had become increasingly critical of the Association for Jewish Youth for failing to do more for older Jews interested in sport – Maccabi gradually increased the number of junior members from the 1940s onwards.¹⁷⁷

Despite its rise, and Maccabi's wider significance in terms of its clear relationship towards European Jewry and the history of political Zionism, British Maccabi has received little academic attention.¹⁷⁸ This is surprising, given the size and geographic spread of the organisation across Great Britain in the period from its foundation in 1934 through to the 1960s. It is also a significant omission from the historiography because Maccabi leaders espoused the notion that their organisation could play a clear role in combating supposed physical, social and spiritual decay – key debates and concerns prevalent within early twentieth century Anglo-Jewry. On the one hand, British Maccabi leaders argued that they could expand on the opportunities for physical recreation and thus further improve the strength and well-being of their largely British-born membership. As well as this, however, it was also believed that Maccabi could act as a vehicle for reinforcing communal cohesion,

¹⁷⁶ LMA 4286/03/01/005, Minutes of the Maccabi National Executive Committee, 18 October 1964; Kadish, *'A Good Jew'*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁷ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, pp. 174-175.

¹⁷⁸ Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement' looks at the organisation's sporting programme, approach to Zionism and cultural and religious initiatives during its first fourteen years in existence. The Maccabi movement is also mentioned briefly in other works focusing on aspects of provision for Anglo-Jewish youth. See, for instance, Kadish, *'A Good Jew'*, pp. 115-121; Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, 174-177. European Maccabi has, however, recently begun to attract the attention of various scholars interested in Jewish sport. See, for instance, Anat Helman, 'Zionism, Politics, Hedonism: Sports in Inter-War Tel Aviv' in Kugelmass, *Jews, Sports and the Rites of Citizenship*; Diethelm Blecking, 'Jews and Sports in Poland before the Second World War', in Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Sporting Life*, pp. 17-36; Jack Jacobs, 'The Politics of Jewish Sports Movement in Interwar Poland' in Brenner and Reuvani, *Emancipation through Muscles*.

through promoting Zionism, and reinvigorating Jewish culture and religion, by means of a broad non-sporting programme of ‘spiritual’ activities and education. British Maccabi, in effect, believed it could create a ‘New Jew’ within Anglo-Jewry – in body, mind and spirit – and work against the weakening of Jewish identity occurring at this time.

Evidence suggests that Maccabi was largely unsuccessful in this mission. Whilst the movement did expand sporting provision and act as a social centre for thousands of Jews within Britain at this time, it is apparent that it was largely unsuccessful in its efforts away from the gymnasium, football pitch or running track. Unsurprisingly, given the fact that Maccabi was first and foremost a sports organisation, it could not effectively fight against wider trends of increasing social detachment and secularisation in the manner originally envisaged. On the one hand, the movement was constrained by internal divisions and the general apathy of many leaders and members towards Zionism and cultural and religious programmes – the tools which were supposedly meant to create communal cohesion and revitalise interest and concern for Jewish religion and culture. In other ways, however, the domestic and international context also proved a limiting factor on Maccabi’s ambitions.

Although linked to a worldwide movement with lofty and idealistic ambitions for Jewish ‘renewal’, British Maccabi achieved little outside of the sporting sphere during this period. Whilst it was established at a time of clear social, communal and spiritual upheaval, both for international Jewry and the British Jewish community, Maccabi could do little other than facilitate opportunities for sport and provide a meeting place for Jews to mix and socialise. Although Maccabi was a sports organisation which claimed to be able to tackle

non-sporting issues, the movement did not prevent the general drift of younger Jews away from their community, religion and culture. In short, British Maccabi did little to reverse trends which had been negatively impacting on Anglo-Jewry for much of the first half of the twentieth century.

‘Muscular Judaism’ and Sport

Given the centrality of physical recreation to Maccabi in its international context, it is unsurprising that the main effort of the British arm of the movement was focused on sport. Despite the evident importance of ‘Muscular Judaism’ to worldwide Maccabi, and to the overall political Zionist project, British Maccabi did not publicly promote this element of its work as a direct means of aiding the creation of a Jewish homeland. Reflecting the wider reticence towards linking the organisation to Jewish nationalism – discussed below – Zionism was not consciously highlighted, in either a national or local context, as a motive underpinning the British Maccabi sporting programmes. In contrast to Europe and America, sport was not promoted as a way of practically supporting and developing the dream of a Jewish nation nor a means of physical preparation for *aliyah* [migration to Israel].¹⁷⁹

In British Maccabi, Zionism was not overtly evident in the organisation’s promotion of sport. In a 1935 press release concerning the foundation of the organisation, it was claimed

¹⁷⁹ Levine, *Ellis Island*, pp. 264-265 notes that interest in sport in American Maccabi clubs, especially after 1948, was inextricably linked to creating strong Jews to help in the physical and structural development of Israel. Likewise, Helman, ‘Zionism’, p. 99 demonstrates that Maccabi clubs in Palestine in the 1930s felt strongly that ‘sport was...curing the Jewish body, educating the young generation into national discipline and preparing it for any national calling’.

that Maccabi would imbue ‘an eagerness for invigorating physical recreation’ and ‘[create] a desire for emulation of the achievement of leading athletes in the various realms of international sport’.¹⁸⁰ National and local leaders also reasoned that sport was important as an aid to developing the physical health of the Jewish community. In 1951, Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie (at the time Vice-President of British Maccabi) claimed that ‘Maccabi enriches Jewish life by providing opportunities for personal physical betterment’.¹⁸¹ Pierre Gildesgame (1903-1981), prominent administrator of British, European and subsequently, World Maccabi from the 1930s onwards, argued that each Maccabi club should use sport to ‘raise the standard of their [the members’] physical health and sporting performance’.¹⁸²

As well as a general focus on physical wellbeing, other similarities to the reasons behind the sporting programme of the Anglo-Jewish youth movement can also be identified.¹⁸³ Many national and local Maccabi leaders, for example, espoused physical recreation for its wider effects on the mentality and character of its members. As one of the British movement’s post-war leaders, Ken Gradon (1919-2002), commented, sport was important to the movement as it created ‘team spirit and solidarity’ which were both ‘essential for the improvement of our social and communal structure’.¹⁸⁴ In 1937, the leaders of Maccabi Association, London (MAL), a club based in Bloomsbury, noted their club’s promotion of

¹⁸⁰ *East London Advertiser*, 23 February 1935.

¹⁸¹ [T]yne and [W]ear [A]rchive [S]ervices S/MAC/6, *Souvenir Programme for the Opening of Maccabi House*, Windsor Crescent, Newcastle (Newcastle, 1951), p. 13.

¹⁸² LMA 4286/03/07/010, Pierre Gildesgame, *Maccabi: Past and Present* (Leicester, 1976). On Gildesgame more generally, see Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends*, p. 226; *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 March 1981

¹⁸³ For the motives behind the Anglo-Jewish youth movement’s sporting programme, see pp. 44-79.

¹⁸⁴ LMA 4286/03/07/020, Ken Gradon, *What is Maccabi?* (1976), p. 8. Gradon was born in 1919 in Germany and was originally called Kurt Gradenwitz, before escaping to Britain as a refugee in the 1930s. He played a crucial administrative role in British and European Maccabi in the post-World War Two period. See, Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends*, p. 229.

sport was designed to create ‘the highest qualities of discipline, morality and sportsmanship’ and ‘promote habits of punctuality, order and method’.¹⁸⁵

As well as having important physical and psychological effects, sport was also believed to be a useful means of combating anti-Semitism. As the very first sentence of the original *Maccabi Code*, published in 1936, notes, members should ‘follow the ideal of Judas Maccabeus by proving yourself physically and morally courageous and fearless, both on and off the playing field’. Showing sporting courage would show non-Jews that Jews were strong and willing to defend themselves against racism and discrimination.¹⁸⁶

The form and structure of Maccabi’s national and local sporting programme also closely paralleled the Anglo-Jewish youth club movement. Individual Maccabi clubs across the country dedicated the majority of their financial and manpower resources to providing regular sessions in as broad a range of sports as possible. In this respect, Newcastle Maccabi, founded in 1935, was typical – running sections in ‘football, rugby, tennis, table tennis, badminton, swimming, cycling, physical training, wrestling and boxing’.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, at both a national and local level, competitions and tournaments in various sports were organised on a regular basis. From 1936, Maccabi ran a national football competition,

¹⁸⁵ LMA 4286/03/07/014, Maccabi Association, London, ‘Commemorative Brochure for the opening of Maccabi House’ (London, 1937), p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ TWAS S/MAC/2, *The Maccabi Code* (London, 1936). See below, pp. 338-340, for a broader discussion on Maccabi’s attitude towards combating racism.

¹⁸⁷ TWAS S/MAC/1, ‘Constitution of the Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Maccabi Association’ (Newcastle, 1935), p. 2.

which split into Northern (1938) and Southern (1946) Leagues in the years immediately before and after the Second World War.¹⁸⁸

Unlike the JAA and the AJY, however, British Maccabi could also offer its members opportunities to engage in international competition against other Jews. From 1932 onwards, the tri-centennial Maccabiah Games was convened in Tel-Aviv by the World Maccabi Union. The ‘Jewish Olympics’ were designed to be an international showcase for Jewish physicality and sportsmanship, with national associations invited to send representative teams to compete both for the honour of their country and the wider Jewish community.¹⁸⁹ In 1929 Yosef Yekutieli, head of Maccabi in Palestine, claimed that the Maccabiah would help

the development of Jewish culture – both physical and spiritual, and the presentation of that culture to the Jewish people and to the whole world; the development of Jewish sport in the world and the emphasis of the idea that Jewish sporting athletes were not just part of their home countries but were part of the Jewish people as a whole; the emphasizing of the fact that Eretz Yisrael is the centre of the Jewish world; and finally, the strengthening of the Maccabi movement.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ David Dee, “Your Religion is Football” Soccer and the Jewish Community in London, 1900-1970’, (unpublished De Montfort University MA thesis, 2007), pp. 49-51.

¹⁸⁹ On the Maccabiah, see Yair Galily, ‘The Contribution of the Maccabiah Games to the Development of Sport in the State of Israel’, *Sport in Society*, 12, 8, 2009, pp. 1028-1037; Moshe Sashon and Barbara Schrodt, ‘The Maccabi Sports Movement and the Establishment of the Maccabiah Games, 1932’, *Sport History Review*, 16, 1, 1985, pp. 67-90; George Eisen, ‘The Maccabiah Games: A History of the Jewish Olympics’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 1979).

¹⁹⁰ Jewish Agency for Israel, ‘The Story of Sport in Israel’, Chapter 6: ‘Rule Britannia! The British Influence and the Maccabiah Games’. Found at <http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Eye+on+Israel/Sport+in+Israel/Rule+Britannia+The+British+Influence+and+the+Maccabiah+Games.html> (Accessed 23 March 2010)

In Britain, selection for the Maccabiah was labelled as the ultimate aim for every Maccabi member. Participation in the Jewish Olympics was used as an incentive to drive the very best Maccabi athletes to higher standards of performance, whilst British entry into the Maccabiah was also used as a propaganda opportunity to raise awareness of Maccabi within British Jewish society.¹⁹¹

One aspect of Maccabi ideology was to try and produce sportsmen and women of elite quality. This, the organisation's national and international leadership believed, would help raise the movement's wider profile and aid the wider aim of creating 'Muscle Jews'. For some British Maccabi members, competition in the Maccabiah proved a useful stepping stone to further sporting success at the elite level. Tennis player Angela Buxton (1934-), winner of Wimbledon Ladies doubles in 1956, was a gold medallist at the 1953 Maccabiah, while 1960 Olympic Gold medallist fencer Allan Jay (1931-) won six golds in total at the 1950 and 1953 Jewish Olympics.¹⁹² Elsewhere within British Maccabi, there were many other successful international Jewish athletes. MAL, for instance, was the base for Fred Oberlander (1911-1996), an Austrian Jewish refugee and international champion wrestler, as well as Ben Helfgott (1930-), weightlifter and British Olympic team captain in 1956.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ See, for instance, *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 March 1935, 1 September 1935; Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', p. 8; LMA 4286/03/07/010, Gildesgame, *Maccabi: Past and Present*, p. 6.

¹⁹² Joseph Hoffman, *Ten Great Maccabians: A History of Maccabi for Young People* (London, 1981), p. 13; Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends*, pp. 71, 174.

¹⁹³ Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', p. 8. On Helfgott, see Joseph Finklestone, *Ben Helfgott: From Victim to Champion* (London, 2002). Provincial Maccabi clubs also produced several sportsmen who went on to achieve significant success. See, for example, former Glasgow Maccabi members Monty McMillan, an international table tennis player in the 1950s, or Brian Coussin, who later played professional football in the Israeli League. *Jewish Echo*, 19 October 1990.

Although Maccabi leaders may have highlighted international success as a vindication of their organisation's sporting efforts and ideology, the movement's wider sporting achievements were also considerable. Only a small number of the British Maccabi members had the opportunity to take up sport at the highest level and sporting standards amongst the rank-and-file membership were generally very low – a fact frequently highlighted, and lamented, by members of the National Executive Committee.¹⁹⁴ Despite this, however, Maccabi was a major provider of sport and sporting competition for the Jewish community during the period between 1934 and the 1960s. As Bunt has noted, the movement was clearly 'most successful' in the sporting sphere, where it helped to provide opportunities for Jews to engage in a wide variety of physical recreations in small and large Jewish communities across Great Britain.¹⁹⁵

Despite the general sporting success of the movement, there were several factors which limited Maccabi's efforts in this sphere of their programme. Whilst sporting activities may have been widely offered, there was often no guarantee that individual Maccabi clubs could offer anything but rudimentary facilities, equipment or coaching. Financial constraints were a significant factor in this respect, especially in the years before the 1950s, when Maccabi began to receive larger amounts of international and domestic funding.¹⁹⁶ During the mid to late 1930s, the BMA executive was run 'by officials in an entirely honorary capacity' and

¹⁹⁴ See for instance, LMA 4286/03/01/003, NEC Minutes, 18 December 1955, 5 May 1954.

¹⁹⁵ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 177.

¹⁹⁶ Financial assistance from the Maccabi World Union increased steadily in the post-War period, whereas it wasn't until the foundation of the 'Sportsmen's Century Club' in 1959 that significant British finance was forthcoming. The club's members, largely English-Jewish philanthropists and businessmen, made annual donations to the British Maccabi Association, and other Jewish charities, from this year onwards. In 1967, the Club donated over £8000 to the BMA. See LMA.4286/03/10/001, Sportsmen's Century Club minutes.

there were little or no financial resources available for the sporting programmes of affiliated clubs.¹⁹⁷ Problems with central funding for physical recreation continued well into the 1950s, with individual clubs left to provide whatever sport they could on an initial *ad hoc* basis, often with minimal finance.¹⁹⁸

Linked in to national and local financial constraints, Maccabi sport also suffered due to a clear disparity between larger London clubs and much smaller groups in Jewish provincial settlements. For example, MAL, founded in the 1920s by middle-class German and Austrian immigrants, was the ‘flagship’ British Maccabi club and benefited from the generous and considerable funding of West End Jewry. In 1937, MAL opened Compayne House, a purpose built facility in Camden, replete with comprehensive indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and professional sports instructors.¹⁹⁹ Membership of MAL ran into several thousand and in 1962 Compayne House was labelled ‘an ideal youth centre’ by Lord Aberdare (1919-2005), Conservative Peer.²⁰⁰

In contrast, sporting provision in the provinces and in small London clubs could often be extremely rudimentary – as highlighted by the British Maccabi sports director in 1948.²⁰¹ For example, Glasgow Maccabi, which started life as Glasgow Bar Cochba in 1929 and affiliated to the BMA in 1935, enjoyed a great deal of communal support in the post WW2 period, but during its early days it existed and worked along extremely simplistic lines. In

¹⁹⁷ See for instance, TWAS S/MAC/2, Letter from British Maccabi Organisations of Jewish Sports Organisations to Newcastle Maccabi, 19 October 1935.

¹⁹⁸ LMA 4286/03/01/003, NEC Minutes, 5 May 1954.

¹⁹⁹ LMA 4286/03/07/014, MAL, ‘Commemorative Brochure’, p. 8.

²⁰⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 November 1962.

²⁰¹ LMA 4286/03/01/002, NEC Minutes, 11 October 1948.

contrast to MAL, Glasgow's first premises were based in the canteen of a local tailoring factory where 'the members had to clear away the canteen equipment before they could commence their gymnastics. After they had finished their sessions, they had to put the room back in order for the following day'.²⁰²

Another limiting factor on the success of the movement's sporting programme could often be the members themselves. Evidence suggests that over time sport gradually lost some of its centrality within the movement as more members began to see the club more as an opportunity for socialising with friends than for playing sport – facilities for which were becoming much more widely available, especially in the post-World War Two era.²⁰³ Even during the movement's earliest period, many Maccabi members saw attendance at their local club as an important source of entertainment and a way of keeping in touch with fellow local Jews.²⁰⁴ After the opening of Compayne House in 1937, MAL leaders noted that the most popular club activity was Sunday evening dancing and voiced concerns that 'many members had joined simply in order to frequent a pleasant social club and had absolutely no intention of joining the numerous activities on offer'.²⁰⁵ Likewise, similar anxieties were reported elsewhere in Maccabi clubs in the capital during the 1940s.²⁰⁶ In 1945, the national Maccabi sports director noted that a visit to Brixton Maccabi 'in order to give a demonstration of sporting activities' was markedly unsuccessful as 'not more than

²⁰² [S]cottish [J]ewish [A]rchives [C]entre Glasgow Maccabi 'Souvenir Brochure to celebrate the opening of the New Gymnasium at May Terrace, Glasgow' (Glasgow, 1968), p. 9.

²⁰³ See, for instance, Tony Mason and Dick Holt, *Sport in Britain: 1945-2000* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 148-152 which notes that post-war public provision for sport vastly increased from the 1950s onwards.

²⁰⁴ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 177.

²⁰⁵ Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', p. 8.

²⁰⁶ For example, see LMA 4286/03/01/001, NEC Minutes, 13 December 1943 which noted that South London Maccabi, founded in Tooting in 1935, was fast becoming nothing but a 'glorified palais-de-dance'.

12 members from Brixton turned up, none of whom showed any interest in the events of the evening and seemed anxious for the termination of the function so that they could dance to the radiogram'.²⁰⁷

A similar picture was evident in the provinces in the 1940s and 1950s. Seemingly, increasing numbers were fast becoming ignorant of the wider Maccabi national and international ideology and engaging with the organisation on their own terms - not for wider 'Jewish' sporting goals, but purely for their own enjoyment. In 1947, the Chairman of Newcastle Maccabi implored members to become more deeply involved in the sporting activities on offer and admonished the growing number who joined the club for its social functions: 'it is the unanimous decision of the Maccabi Council that there is no intention whatsoever of allowing the club to be run as a Palais-de-Dance and the Council fervently stress that the members without exception, belong to and take an active interest in one or more sections'.²⁰⁸ Interviews conducted with members of Leicester Maccabi (founded in 1945), from the late 1940s and 1950s generally demonstrate that sport was often a less important reason for membership than having the opportunity to meet with friends.²⁰⁹

Whilst it is clear that Maccabi sporting ideology became less prominent in the post-war period, the organisation still played an important socio-cultural role. In the 1970s, Maccabi was criticised for allowing members to ignore physical recreation and 'become primarily

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 2 May 1945.

²⁰⁸ TWAS S/MAC/3/2, *Maccabi News*, 4, 1947, p. 8.

²⁰⁹ Rosalind Adam, *Jewish Voices: Memories of Leicester in the 1940s and 1950s* (Leicester, 2009), pp. 66-74.

interested in the social life' of the movement.²¹⁰ However, the movement was still positively regarded by members as a means of creating some form of community and unity – especially important in smaller provincial Jewish settlements. As one Leicester Maccabi member commented, 'Maccabi was hugely important in keeping the Jewish youth together' and fostered a significant feeling of ethnic cohesion at a time when the local Jewish population was very small and geographically widespread.²¹¹

This sense of community imbued by Maccabi membership was even more important in areas which had seen considerable Jewish social and geographic mobility. This is what happened in Glasgow in the 1930s and 1940s, as increasingly affluent second and third generation Jewish immigrants left the East End and moved to the suburbs.²¹² Mirroring this trend, Glasgow Maccabi moved from the Gorbals to the Giffnock area in the early 1960s, where membership grew significantly and sporting and cultural sections were very well attended. Indications are that in Glasgow, local Jews viewed Maccabi as an important source of communal cohesion and togetherness at a time when the Jewish population was becoming increasingly divided, in terms of class, geography and identity.²¹³

²¹⁰ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 177.

²¹¹ Adam, *Jewish Voices*, p. 66.

²¹² Ben Braber, *Jews in Glasgow, 1879-1939: Immigration and Integration* (London, 2007), Chapter 7: 'Change and Continuity'.

²¹³ SJAC, Lionel Davidson, 'Potted History of Glasgow Maccabi', pp. 1-3.

Zionism

Evidently, in the post-World War Two period, Maccabi was seen to be playing an important role in creating a sense of community – especially in the provinces. Significantly, such a role had been envisaged for the movement during its earliest days. Yet the founders of the British Maccabi movement did not necessarily aim to create a renewed sense of Jewish unity simply through allowing the movement to become a social centre. In a reflection of its European roots, it was hoped that Jewish nationalism could be promoted - independent of sport - within British Maccabi as a way of drawing members together and helping create a sense of solidarity and unity amongst the wider population.

Within Western and British society, leaders of the Zionist movement believed that Jewish nationalism would act as a means of creating Jewish cohesion and strengthening Jewish religious and cultural identity. In Britain, as well as campaigning for the establishment of a Jewish homeland, it was felt that support for Zionism as a whole could do ‘an incalculable service to Judaism by retaining within the fold...a considerable section of the class-conscious proletariat, whose bonds with the Jewish faith could no longer be maintained on religious grounds and had in practice been sundered’.²¹⁴ If large numbers of Jews subscribed to the notion of political Zionism, it was argued, then the growing cultural and social separation of modern Jewish society could effectively be combated. As Berkowitz has noted, one of the original Zionist goals was ‘unifying Jews in support of the national home in Palestine and radically changing the modern Jewish condition’. In effect, support

²¹⁴ Paul Goodman, *Zionism in England: 1899-1949* (London, 1949), pp. 47, 58

for a Jewish homeland could be a ‘basis for local and international Jewish solidarity and sociability’.²¹⁵

Leaders of the Maccabi movement, both internationally and within Britain, also seemingly subscribed to this idea. They believed that Jewish nationalism could be promoted amongst increasingly assimilated and secular Jews as a means of creating communal and ethnic cohesion. The original Maccabi code in Britain, for instance, claimed that ‘the future of the Jewish people is now universally identified with that of Palestine as a national home’ and added ‘it is a Maccabi duty to work for the acknowledged Jewish national institutions and to assist them in their efforts for the development of Eretz-Israel’.²¹⁶ In effect, it was hoped that the British variant of Maccabi would ‘bring the Zionist enthusiasm of Eastern and Central European Jewry to Great Britain and shake up the inertia and complacency of Anglo-Jewry’.²¹⁷

In Continental European and Israeli Maccabi clubs, strong links with the Zionist movement and its objectives were maintained. As both Helman and Jacobs have noted, although many Zionist-oriented sports organisations were founded during the early twentieth century, Maccabi was generally seen as the ‘unofficial sports organisation of the whole Zionist movement’ – mainly due to its largely non-political nature.²¹⁸ Whilst European Maccabi organisations displayed varying degrees of ideological and practical support for Jewish

²¹⁵ Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project: 1914-1933* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 196.

²¹⁶ TWAS S/MAC/2, *The Maccabi Code*.

²¹⁷ Rosen, ‘The Maccabi Movement’, p. 8.

²¹⁸ Helman, ‘Zionism’, p. 101; Jacobs, ‘The Politics of Jewish Sports’, pp. 93-94.

nationalism, the conviction was generally strong that the Zionist aims and goals were a central driving force of the movement's wider programme and ideology.²¹⁹

Despite the evident strength of support for political Zionism in European Maccabi, Jewish nationalism was not effectively viewed or employed within British Maccabi as a unifying socio-cultural force. Although in the modern context British Maccabi maintains strong links to Israel, from its foundation well into the 1960s interest in the notion of a Jewish homeland was generally on the margins of the organisation.²²⁰ In the 1970s, Ken Gradon commented that 'at no time did Maccabi adopt or preach a political Zionist doctrine'.²²¹ Within British Maccabi 'there was no concerted effort to implement a Zionist programme'. In effect, Maccabi in Britain 'was not the rallying cry for...Jewish nationalism as it was in Europe' and could not be used effectively as a way of combating growing social and cultural detachment of younger sections of Anglo-Jewry.²²²

Several factors can be highlighted to explain this. Firstly, and most significantly, the national leadership of the British Maccabi Association across much of the period from the 1930s through to the 1950s did not want the movement to openly espouse or promote support for Jewish nationalism. Some leaders adopted this attitude because they did not want Maccabi to develop a 'political' nature and enter into the highly charged British

²¹⁹ Helman, 'Zionism', p. 99.

²²⁰ The current, official Maccabi GB website claims 'We aim to deliver a broad range of Sporting, Educational and Social events for the whole of the Jewish community with the ethos of Jewish continuity and the centrality of Israel as our primary motivation.' <http://www.maccabigb.org/about.html> (Accessed 24 March 2010).

²²¹ LMA 4286/03/07/020, Gradon, *What is Maccabi?*, p. 8.

²²² Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', p. 11.

debates and discourses surrounding the future of Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s. Some also felt that being seen to be politically active would have gone against the grain of the largely a-political nature of British sport.²²³ Pierre Gildesgame commented in 1976 that British Maccabi was not, and had not been, Zionist and that he believed that an outwardly pro-Zionist stance could act as discouragement for large numbers of potential members.²²⁴

The effect of this reticence regarding Zionism amongst the higher echelons of the movement was that no strong line on promoting Jewish nationalism was developed or advocated until well into the 1950s. During its first years in existence, British Maccabi's links to political Zionism in its European context were not mentioned in press releases or interviews with Maccabi leaders.²²⁵ During the 1940s, a time of obvious significance for Jewish nationalism, there was a marked ambivalence towards the emerging Jewish nation-state. In fact, the creation of Israel in 1948 generally passed by without any significant acknowledgement or celebration at the national or local level.²²⁶ Evidence from National Executive meetings throughout the 1940s and early 1950s suggests there was a clear reticence from British Maccabi leaders to outwardly support the newly-created Jewish homeland – even in the face of pressure from the Maccabi World Union.²²⁷

²²³ LMA 4286/03/07/020, Gradon, *What is Maccabi?*, p. 9. Gradon noted that he was against outwardly espousing or supporting political Zionism because 'teenagers, who constitute the majority of the movement, should not be allowed to become involved in any political controversy'. See also LMA 4286/003/01/002, Minutes of the Maccabi National Executive Committee, 21 March 1950 where one leader noted his belief that the organisation was a 'non-political youth movement' and should not enter into 'dangerous' political debates.

²²⁴ LMA 4286/003/01/002, NEC Minutes, 21 March 1950.

²²⁵ See for instance, *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 August 1935; *East London Advertiser*, 23 February 1935.

²²⁶ Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', p. 15.

²²⁷ See, for example, LMA 4286/03/01/002, NEC Minutes, 10 June 1947 when it was noted that the Maccabi World Union had pressurised British Maccabi to force all members to purchase the shekel and financially support the idea of Jewish nationalism. After weeks of deliberations and calls against this within the NEC, the Committee reluctantly gave in to MWU demands and made shekel purchase obligatory for members. It noted,

As well as an aversion towards political Zionism within the movement's leadership, there are also some indications that the rank-and-file membership was also ambivalent towards Jewish nationalism. Although there is some evidence of well supported Zionist-influenced activities and campaigning in some provincial Maccabi clubs, many members displayed a lack of interest in Zionism and were unmoved by the idea of a Jewish nation-state.²²⁸ In 1947, efforts were made, on the recommendation of British Maccabi President Selig Brodetsky, to begin a national programme of 'Zionist education' in all Maccabi clubs on one evening a week. The response was generally lukewarm and by the time that Israel was founded the following year many of the sessions had been abandoned due to lack of support.²²⁹

An important factor in this lack of interest amongst Maccabi members was the emergence of a plethora of other Zionist youth organisations within Britain from the 1930s onwards. As Bunt has noted, young British-born or Central European refugee Jews 'wishing to express an interest in Israel through membership of a Zionist youth group' were faced with a 'difficult, often bewildering choice'. By the late 1940s, there were nearly a dozen Zionist youth groups active within Britain – all of which took a much more publicly pro-Zionist stance than Maccabi.²³⁰ Largest amongst these was Habonim [the builders], an organisation closely based on the Scout movement, which was founded in 1929 by Wellesley Aron

pointedly, however, that 'while it is recognised that the shekel grants rights of franchise and participation in Congress elections, Maccabi Union has no intention of exercising these rights'.

²²⁸ Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', p. 15; *Jewish Echo*, 4 October 1939. Glasgow Maccabi, for instance, had very active Zionist sections throughout the 1930s.

²²⁹ LMA 4286/03/01/002, NEC Minutes, 15 July 1947, 15 December 1947, 11 October 1948.

²³⁰ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, p. 178.

(1901-1988), a ‘radical, secular, socialist Zionist’.²³¹ By 1939, Habonim had grown to over 4000 members – twice as many as the contemporary membership of the Jewish Lads’ Brigade.²³²

In Habonim, and smaller youth organisations such as Beter (founded 1938), Young Poale Zion [workers of Zion] (1938), Hashomer Hatzair [Young Guard] (1939) and B’nai Akiva [Sons of Rabbi Akiva] (1939), Zionism was a much more central element than in the programme and work of Maccabi.²³³ All had regular and well-supported sessions and initiatives concerning Zionist education, Jewish history and culture and many actively promoted the use of Hebrew. Whilst they did not ignore sport, their focus on physical recreation was generally marginal. Effectively, in comparison to these organisations, Maccabi would have held relatively little appeal for young Jews interested in learning more about, or actively supporting, political Zionism.²³⁴

There are also wider issues to consider as to why Maccabi failed to promote Zionism more vigorously for its ‘unifying’ effects. For example, Berkowitz has claimed that all Western Zionist youth organisations were ‘wedded to their national contexts’ and ‘displayed characteristics of acculturation to Diaspora existence that were, or would later become, emblematic of Zionist youth in general’.²³⁵ In effect, whilst there were more staunchly pro-

²³¹ On Aron more generally, see Helen Silman-Cheong, *Wellesley Aron: A Rebel with a Cause* (London, 1992).

²³² On Habonim, see Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, pp. 103-108.

²³³ On the history of Poale Zion in England, see Gideon Shimoni, ‘Poale Zion: A Zionist Transplant in Britain, 1905-1945’, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 2, 1986, pp. 227-261.

²³⁴ On Zionist youth organisations, see Kadish, ‘*A Good Jew*’, pp. 120-122.

²³⁵ Berkowitz, *Western Jewry*, pp. 148, 160.

Zionist British youth organisations in existence at the same time, Maccabi was not unusual in a wider context in displaying some reticence towards the promotion of Jewish nationalism – especially within a Diaspora where the perceived ‘need’ for a Jewish homeland was seemingly less pressing than in Continental European Jewry.²³⁶

The wider communal ‘split’ over Zionism within Britain is also reflected within Maccabi. As Cohen has shown with regards to early twentieth century British Zionism, no clear consensus over political Zionism existed or emerged within Anglo-Jewry. Indeed, many ‘assimilationists’ were staunchly anti-Zionist at this time and Jewish nationalism was a significant ‘cause of...friction’ within the community. In essence, the indecision concerning Zionism within British Maccabi reflected wider Jewish society, where a small minority were openly for and against a Jewish homeland and the vast majority ‘remained persistently non-partisan’.²³⁷

Due to these internal and external factors, during its early years British Maccabi failed to formulate a strong Zionist programme. On many occasions, it also proved unwilling to outwardly promote or support the notion of Jewish nationalism. The result of this was that the British arm of the organisation, which in its international context had pledged to use political Zionism to re-invigorate Jewish identity, was unable and unwilling to utilise Jewish nationalism as a rallying cry for an attempt to renew Jewish ethnic solidarity. In other more committed British Zionist youth organisations, the notion of a Jewish homeland

²³⁶ Rosen, ‘The Maccabi Movement’, p. 13.

²³⁷ Stuart Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews: The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895-1920* (New Jersey, 1982), pp. 13, 317.

was a more central feature. Within Maccabi, instead of ‘unifying Jews’ in support of a national Jewish home, the approach towards Jewish nationalism simply reflected the indecision and lack of conviction that characterised British attitudes to political Zionism.

Creating an ‘Inner Revolution’?

When the British Maccabi Association was established, its leaders were vocal in their belief that its efforts would not focus solely on the physical rejuvenation of its membership. Indeed, many of those who founded the British arm of the movement stated that they felt Maccabi could play a pivotal role in the spiritual and cultural renewal of Anglo-Jewry more generally. In 1936, for instance, BMA President Lord Melchett declared that the Association would help instigate an ‘inner revolution...among the younger people and in a new generation’.²³⁸ A year later, one press release declared that British Maccabi would help establish a ‘link between Jewish spiritual and physical culture’.²³⁹ As Pierre Gildesgame noted in 1976, the early motivation was to ‘develop within Jewish youth, of both sexes, an understanding for the spiritual values of the Jewish faith and a better appreciation of the Jewish cultural and national heritage’.²⁴⁰

BMA leaders argued that such a programme was needed because of the ‘spiritual’ ineffectiveness of youth organisations patronised by the Anglo-Jewish establishment. As previously noted, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, youth organisations under the aegis of

²³⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 February 1936.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* 21 May 1935.

²⁴⁰ LMA 4286/03/07/010, Gildesgame, *Maccabi: Past and Present*, p. 1.

the JAA and the AJY were vocally condemned by sections of the community for their apparent neglect of Jewish culture and religion in favour of sport. BMA leaders entered this debate, arguing that Maccabi presented an alternative to the AJY which would take its responsibility for the spiritual health of its membership much more seriously. In 1934, the first BMA Chairman, Dr Lawrence Jacobs, criticised what he saw as a ‘vague and unregulated urge for participation in sport on the part of the young Jew’ which had been promoted by the Anglo-Jewish youth movement.²⁴¹ One year later, Jacobs’ successor, Colonel JH Levey, claimed that Maccabi was ‘a movement of tomorrow and totally different in character from other Jewish bodies...[because] the Maccabi had not sacrificed spiritual and cultural values to a sole devotion to sport’.²⁴²

So how would British Maccabi achieve this ‘inner revolution’? Maccabi leaders argued that the ‘introduction of a cultural and educational programme’ would take place which would be designed to ‘foster within the ranks of our youth the principles of good citizenship as well as a kinship with their fellow Jews’.²⁴³ Within the constitution of Maccabi Association, London, it was noted that efforts would be made to ‘stimulate...a deep interest in all that is best in Jewish culture, literature, ideals and history’ through a regular cultural education programme.²⁴⁴ National leaders hoped that Maccabi clubs would emulate MAL and begin holding regular lectures, debates, essay contests and other activities related to religious education, as well as demonstrating a more observant attitude in terms of opening

²⁴¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 August 1934.

²⁴² *Ibid.* 9 August 1935.

²⁴³ LMA 4286/03/07/010, Gildesgame, *Maccabi*.

²⁴⁴ LMA 4286/03/07/014, MAL, ‘Commemorative Brochure’.

hours, religious services and Kosher food. All this, they argued, would help to provide the link between physical and spiritual culture which had been missing within Anglo-Jewish youth organisations.²⁴⁵

Despite this initial enthusiasm, it is clear that Maccabi's efforts in cultural and religious matters failed. Rosen suggests that the organisation during the period from the 1930s to the 1960s was generally 'religiously undemanding' and 'neglected the spiritual side of Judaism'.²⁴⁶ Bunt noted that the organisation experienced significant 'difficulties' in its promotion of 'cultural and religious activities' and the average member at this time was 'largely unmoved' by the Maccabi's non-sporting programme.²⁴⁷ Within the movement itself, there was a clear awareness from the early 1950s onwards that efforts in spiritual matters had been unsuccessful. In 1950, the National Executive Committee complained of the generally 'haphazard' approach taken within many clubs towards 'cultural activities'.²⁴⁸ Eight years later, Pierre Gildesgame commented that 'cultural activities have been appallingly neglected' and said that he 'wanted to see clubs pursuing a policy of Youth Education, true to Maccabi's aims and objects and not just providing a means of escape and badly planned entertainment'.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Rosen, 'The Maccabi Movement', pp. 8-10.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 11, 17.

²⁴⁷ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, pp. 175-176.

²⁴⁸ LMA 4286/03/01/002, NEC Minutes, 21 March 1950.

²⁴⁹ LMA 4286/03/01/003, NEC Minutes, 12 October 1958. Outside observers of British Maccabi also criticised it for its lack of non-sporting content. In 1963, a report from the Ministry of Education concerning an application for an education grant noted that Maccabi's request would be unsuccessful. This was partly due to low national membership numbers, but the report also suggested that the fact there was a 'marked lack of cultural activity' had severely hindered the application. See LMA 4286/03/01/005, NEC Minutes, 7 April 1963.

A number of reasons account for Maccabi's failure in the 'cultural and religious sphere'. A lack of direction and consensus from the national leadership was perhaps most significant. Although the idea of propagating an 'inner revolution' by means of religious and cultural education was prominent during its early years, no national programme or initiative was developed to help drive change across the whole Maccabi movement. In addition, the National Executive did not provide a clear and strong lead when faced with important religious issues – as seen with the lengthy and protracted debate over Saturday sport during the 1940s. In 1943, the issue of whether or not Maccabi clubs should be organising sporting activities on the Sabbath arose within the National Executive Committee. Some within the national leadership argued that Saturday sport should be allowed as this was pivotal in Maccabi's primary mission of increasing interest in sport amongst the membership. Others believed that the movement had a duty to appear publicly observant on religious matters, claiming that 'Saturday...should be treated as a day of rest' and, as such, no Maccabi sport played. The result of the lengthy debate over several months was a confused compromise which was largely unsatisfactory to both camps within the movement's leadership. In a letter circulated across the movement, Pierre Gildesgame stated that clubs would be implored not to arrange sport on a Saturday, but it was noted that 'the Executive Committee propose to take no action if Saturday sport did take place'.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ LMA 4286/03/01/001, NEC Minutes, 20 December 1943, 14 February 1944, 15 July 1947, 25 November 1947. The Saturday sport debate continued during the rest of the 1940s and was never properly resolved. Indeed, many clubs simply ignored the directive from the NEC and continued to play Saturday sport throughout the whole decade.

Without a clear and consistent lead from above on cultural and religious matters individual clubs were effectively free to follow whatever course on ‘spiritual’ matters that they saw fit. As it transpired, many chose simply to ignore non-sporting activities altogether. One of the largest provincial clubs, Manchester Maccabi, consistently ignored pleas from the National Executive during the 1940s to be more religiously observant and expand its cultural education programme. In 1967, the club was threatened with disaffiliation due to the leadership’s complete reluctance to organise any non-sporting activities.²⁵¹ Likewise, in 1954 Birmingham Maccabi was criticised for its decision to cease all activities apart from rugby, cricket and football. In 1959 the club was thrown out of British Maccabi as it was ‘now functioning purely as a rugby club’.²⁵²

The examples of Birmingham and Manchester Maccabi demonstrate another significant hurdle with regards to cultural and religious activities – the apathy generally prevalent within the rank-and-file membership towards anything but sport and socialising.²⁵³ From the 1930s through to the 1960s, there are many indications that the average member displayed a significant lack of interest in non-sporting activities – something which could also be reflected in Maccabi clubs outside of Britain.²⁵⁴ In 1947, for example, the Chairman

²⁵¹ LMA 4286/03/01/005, NEC Minutes, 21 March 1967.

²⁵² LMA 4286/03/01/002, NEC Minutes, 10 October 1954, 5 May 1959.

²⁵³ This was not the case with all British Maccabi clubs. Glasgow Maccabi, for instance, developed a thriving cultural and religious education programme from the 1950s onwards. When the club moved premises to the Giffnock suburbs from the Gorbals area of inner city Glasgow in 1968, it prided itself on its observant attitude towards religious matters and its well attended lectures, debates and discussions on cultural and spiritual matters. See SJAC, Davidson, ‘Potted History’, pp. 1-3.

²⁵⁴ Helman claims that cultural programmes were often ignored by members of Maccabi clubs in Palestine during the 1930s as well. Maccabi Tel-Aviv, for example, became more reminiscent of a simple social club at this time, with regular music and ‘singing and dancing well into scandalous hours of the night’. Helman, ‘Zionism’, p. 101.

of Newcastle Maccabi pleaded with members to take a more active role in cultural activities – most of which were generally ‘sparsely attended’.²⁵⁵ Evidence from members of Leicester Maccabi during the 1940s and 1950s also shows cultural activities were generally not eagerly anticipated. Marilyn Aarons, for instance, noted that ‘we used to have cultural programmes on a Sunday evening which terrified me in case I had to say anything. I later found out that the boy who organised these evenings was just as scared in case no one said anything’.²⁵⁶

In its attempt to instigate an ‘inner revolution’ amongst Anglo-Jewish youth, British Maccabi was clearly unsuccessful. Initiatives aimed at promoting Jewish culture, history and religion within the movement were generally poorly devised, structured and managed – both at a national and local level. Not only were these programmes organised in an *ad hoc* manner, with little direction or management from the central administration, indications are that they were often unwanted by many Maccabi clubs and members. Although British Maccabi leaders may have initially believed that their organisation stood in contrast to the Anglo-Jewish youth movement in terms of its attitude and approach to non-sporting activities, it seems that it also yielded to the demands of its largely assimilated and secularised membership – many of whom remained apathetic towards all Maccabi activities and initiatives other than sport and socialising.

²⁵⁵ TWAS S/MAC/3/2, *Maccabi News*, 4, 1947.

²⁵⁶ Adam, *Jewish Voices*, p. 72.

Evidently, in the period between the mid-1930s and the 1960s, the British Maccabi movement was unsuccessful in its self-proclaimed mission to create a 'New Jew'. Whilst the organisation's early leadership may have believed, and promoted, the idea that the movement could act as a bulwark against the erosion of Jewish ethnicity, Maccabi could do little to reverse deep-rooted socio-cultural trends towards Jewish disunity and secularisation. Indications are that, in many ways, the early advocates of British Maccabi were naïve in their belief that a sports movement rooted in a different Jewish context could be imported and used to protect and strengthen Anglo-Jewish identity.

This is not to say that the organisation is of little historical significance. Maccabi's clear achievements in the sporting sphere alone make it worthy of academic attention. Although physical recreation was not promoted in line with the movement's original Zionist-oriented ideology, British Maccabi was still a major provider of sport for a significant proportion of the British Jewish population. In a limited way, British Maccabi contributed to a national and international growth of 'Muscular Judaism' and a wider Jewish physical 'renaissance'. Within Britain, the growth of the movement and its large geographic base should be seen as another indication of the growing appetite for sport amongst British-born sections of the Anglo-Jewry – a trend which was so often at the cost of spiritual and cultural 'Jewishness'.

Despite its notable sporting significance, it is worth remembering that there were clear limitations on this element of British Maccabi's programme. In one sense, organisational and financial pressures evidently exerted a negative effect on the movement's sporting efforts. Yet there are also indications that sport suffered due to the attitude of sections of

the organisation's membership – many of whom began to ignore sport in favour of viewing membership of Maccabi increasingly in terms of the opportunities for socialising that it offered.

It is away from sport, however, where the clearest failings of British Maccabi can be identified. For example, although evidence suggests that the movement provided an important sense of community during the early post-war period, it was envisaged at British Maccabi's foundation that it would play a much more active role in creating cohesion amongst the population. The belief was that Zionism, the original driving ideology behind Maccabi in its international context, could be used to help unite the membership and create a much-needed sense of Jewish solidarity. However, due to the reticence and apathy of both leaders and members, and the wider lack of Anglo-Jewish agreement over Jewish nationalism more generally, Zionism was not positioned as centrally within the movement as it was elsewhere. In essence, the 'unifying' effect of Maccabi was limited to creating a mutual desire for sport and/or socialising rather than through developing a wider consensus over support for a Jewish homeland.

Evidence also suggests that British Maccabi could do little to instigate an 'inner revolution' amongst the increasingly secularised Anglo-Jewish community. The movement was initially positioned as a defender of Jewish identity and a force for the renewal of interest in Jewish religion and culture. However, indications are that this element of its programme lacked direction, focus and support at all levels of the movement and, resultantly, Maccabi did not instigate a spiritual 'renewal' amongst its members. In many ways, this is not

surprising, given the naivety of the belief that a movement based so clearly on sport could have anything less than a marginal impact on deep-rooted and powerful socio-cultural trends. It is also apparent that efforts at cultural and religious education were clearly hampered due to the centrality of sport in the minds of many leaders and many within the rank-and-file membership.

In short, in the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, Maccabi in the British environment did not strengthen or protect Jewish identity to anywhere near the extent predicted. Given its evident prioritisation of physical recreation, its successes were, unsurprisingly, generally limited to the within the sporting sphere. Although it initially claimed to be able to create ‘a new type of Jew and Jewess’, evidence shows that British Maccabi was both unrealistic and idealistic in its belief that the movement could have a significant impact on changing social, cultural and religious constitution and identity of Anglo-Jewry.

Conclusions – Sport and Ethnicity

Evidently, Jewish interest in British sport had a significant impact on the ethnicity and identity of the Anglo-Jewish population. During the period from the late Victorian era through to the 1960s, Jewish direct and indirect involvement in physical recreation played an important role in the undermining of Jewish immigrant identity and culture and in the construction of new secularised forms of English-Jewishness. Whilst sport exacerbated the socio-cultural ‘drift’ of the second and third generation, and helped Jews move physically,

culturally and spiritually closer to mainstream society, it also provided an avenue in which Jews could ‘redefine’ themselves in the eyes of their familial and communal elders, as well as their Jewish and Gentile peers.

Within the trend for growing secularity amongst the Jewish population during the early twentieth century, sport was a significant factor in the decreasing concern for religion amongst the young generation. More specifically, sport also impacted negatively on observance of the Jewish Sabbath – a key aspect of Jewish religious identity. Jewish involvement and interest in sport seemingly undermined both adherence and respect for the rest day. Whilst their parents and religious leaders may have exhibited concern at these Jews’ apparent religious laxity, it seems that many Jews increasingly believed that Saturday was a day for play, rather than rest or prayer. Whilst it was not the case that every British Jew was desecrating the Sabbath in favour of sport, many were increasingly found in the sports stadium or on the sports field, rather than in Synagogue, on a Saturday.

Jewish involvement in sport also impacted on the community’s ethnicity in a wider sense. With an examination of professional boxing, it becomes clear that physical recreation also proved a factor in the decreasing unity and solidarity of the community. Against the wishes, beliefs and culture of their elders, a significant number of second generation Jews took to the professional boxing ring. High-profile boxers such as ‘Kid’ Lewis and ‘Kid’ Berg, and the evident interest in watching and gambling on the ‘unrespectable’ sport of boxing, demonstrated a wider detachment and ‘drift’ of the younger immigrant generation away

from the immigrant community and the Jewish establishment. Through boxing, we can see both the formation and expression of secularised, English-Jewish identities.

An examination of the history of British Maccabi between the mid 1930s and the 1960s shows that a belief existed amongst certain sections of the Anglo-Jewish sporting community that physical recreation could prevent this growing detachment and ‘drift’. Alongside their main sports programme, early Maccabi leaders felt that a scheme for the promotion of Zionism and religious and cultural education could reverse the blows dealt by sport to religious identity and communal cohesion. In their attempts to create a ‘new type of Jew’, however, the movement was markedly unsuccessful. Although this can be partly explained by reticence over Jewish nationalism and cultural and spiritual education amongst leaders and members, the clear prioritisation of sport within Maccabi rendered wider efforts at preserving and promoting Jewish ethnicity ineffectual. In short, Maccabi achieved success in the sporting and social spheres only, doing little to affect powerful socio-cultural trends already within motion with Anglo-Jewry,

If scholars of Anglo-Jewry wish to further understand the complex transformations and changes which occurred with regards to Jewish ethnicity in the early twentieth century, then sport evidently requires greater attention. An analysis of sport’s role in the erosion and redefinition of ‘Jewishness’ within the second and third generation immigrant community illustrates that physical recreation exerted a powerful effect on the way that Jews formed their own identities. An analysis of sport also reveals much about the tension which existed over religion and culture between the younger Jews and their familial and communal elders.

In essence, sport was not just a simple recreational activity for a significant section of the Jewish community of Britain during this period. Interest in sport went to the core of changes occurring in Jewish ethnicity and was a major tenet of the social, spiritual and cultural constitution of 'English-Jewishness' between the 1890s and the 1960s.

Sport and anti-Semitism

The theme where the split between the ‘Whig’ and ‘New’ schools of Anglo-Jewish historiography is most apparent is with regards to anti-Semitism. Many of those writing in the ‘Whig’ vein of British Jewish history have generally downplayed the importance of hostility towards Jews to the point where anti-Semitism is portrayed as a marginal phenomenon within British society. As Endelman has noted, scholars writing in the ‘Whig’ vein of Anglo-Jewish history have often stressed the community’s ‘good fortune, its freedom from mob violence and state discrimination, its uneventful acculturation and integration’, whilst ignoring instances where Anglo-Jewry faced hostility and discrimination.¹

The work of these ‘historical apologetics’ often stressed the openness and liberalism of England (especially in contrast to Europe) in their work, inferring that discrimination directed towards Jews was uncommon and ‘un-British’.² For instance, Cecil Roth’s *History of the Jews of England* is often highlighted by recent historians of Anglo-Jewry for its general lack of reference to anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish sentiment. Instead, Roth talked of a ‘gradual acceptance’ of Jews and emphasised Jewish ‘freedom’ within British society in the period from the twelfth century through to Jewish Emancipation in the Victorian

¹ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 4.

² Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. liii.

Era.³ More modern scholarship produced in a ‘Neo-Rothian’ vein also portrays the modern Jewish experience in an overly-positive manner. Rubinstein, for instance, has written of the Anglo-Jewish ‘success story’ and claims that the history of Jews in Britain is ‘astonishingly free of hostility’. He has argued that ‘institutional and cultural forces’ have help to ‘restrict anti-Semitism to the fringes’ and that ‘outbreaks of anti-Semitism...almost always diminish and disappear very quickly’.⁴

Writers within the ‘New’ school have worked to ‘undermine the upbeat, filiopietistic reading of Anglo-Jewish history’ associated with the ‘Whig’ interpretation of Anglo-Jewish life.⁵ Their research has shown that hostility towards Anglo-Jewry has been prevalent since medieval times, an era when the small Jewish community were subjected to allegations of ritual murder and ‘blood libels’.⁶ Significant research has been conducted on anti-Semitism in a more modern context. In this respect, two important publications, Holmes’ seminal *Anti-Semitism in British Society* and Lebzelter’s *Political Anti-Semitism in England*, emerged in the 1970s. Although these two publications took different approaches and formed contrasting conclusions on the nature of British anti-Semitism, together they demonstrated that ‘anti-Semitic tension was present in Britain and the expression of hostile attitudes towards Jews was not uncommon between 1876 and 1939’.⁷ Kushner has shown that anti-Semitic hostility was also prominent during the Second World War and its

³ Roth, *A History of the Jews*, p. 270.

⁴ Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews*, pp. 2, 8-9.

⁵ Todd Endelman, ‘Jews, Aliens and Other Outsiders in British History’, *Historical Journal*, 37, 1994, pp. 959-969.

⁶ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 220; Gisela Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England: 1918-1939* (London, 1978).

immediate aftermath.⁸ Recent research has also illustrated that anti-Semitism in the ‘contemporary period’ since the 1960s was ‘somewhat intense in expression and has acquired a distinctive political character’.⁹

The body of scholarship on British anti-Semitism has generally focused its attention on ‘organised’ and ‘social’ forms of hostility.¹⁰ The former encompasses the political forms of racism propagated by groups and organisations hostile towards the Jewish community such as the British Union of Fascists or the Britons. The latter deals with everyday hostility towards Jews and the so-called ‘anti-Semitism of exclusion’ which saw Jews discriminated against in their employment, housing, and in their attempts to join various private leisure and social clubs and organisations.¹¹ Both modes of anti-Semitism have been prominent, to varying degrees, throughout the period between the 1890s and the 1960s – illustrating that hostility directed towards Jews has taken on many forms and has occurred in many different social, cultural, political and economic milieus during modern Anglo-Jewish history.¹²

⁸ Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989); Tony Kushner, ‘Anti-Semitism and Austerity: The August 1947 Riots’ in Panikos Panayi (Ed), *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, 1996); Kushner, *We Europeans*.

⁹ Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, pp. lvii-lviii. See also, Chapter 6: ‘Contemporary Secular Anti-Zionisms’.

¹⁰ There has also been discussion amongst scholars of Anglo-Jewry concerning another form of anti-Semitism, the so-called ‘anti-Semitism of tolerance’. In an article published in 1985, renowned scholar of Manchester Jewry, Bill Williams, put forward the idea that racism towards Jews could not solely be explained by referring to the failure of British liberalism. He claimed that the nature of liberalism itself, and the demands that it placed on Jewish ‘conformity to the values and manners of bourgeois English society’, were also a ‘driving force of British racism’. See Williams, ‘The anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, p. 94.

¹¹ Tony Kushner, ‘The Impact of British Anti-Semitism: 1918-1945’ in Cesarani, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, p. 201.

¹² Panayi, *An Immigration History*, pp. 231-236.

Outside of Britain, some attention has been paid to the relationship between ‘organised’ and ‘social’ forms of anti-Semitism and Jewish involvement in sport. With relation to the former, John’s article on ‘Anti-Semitism in Austrian Sports between the Wars’ showed how Austrian Jews interested in physical recreation often faced hostility and anti-Jewish sentiment from non-Jewish political groups and student fraternities.¹³ Similarly, much research has been conducted on the link between ‘social’ anti-Semitism and sport in its international context. For instance, in his essay on American-Jewish country clubs in the 1920s, Levine demonstrates that discrimination towards German Jews was prevalent within the middle-class sporting and social club environment.¹⁴ Likewise, Eisen has shown that discrimination towards Jewish sportsmen was prominent within student duelling fraternities and gymnastics societies in Central and Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Such was the strength and depth of this anti-Semitism that Jews were forced to create ‘parallel institutions’ to enable them to engage in physical recreation free of discrimination.¹⁵

Within the literature on British anti-Semitism, there is a limited focus on the links between sport and various forms of discrimination against Jews. For instance, Lebzelter briefly discusses the relationship between middle-class sporting anti-Semitism within her

¹³ John, ‘Anti-Semitism’, in Reuvani and Brenner, *Emancipation through Muscles*, pp. 119-141.

¹⁴ Peter Levine, ‘Our Crowd at Play’ The Elite Jewish Country Club in the 1920s’ in Riess, *Sports and the American Jew*, pp. 162-168.

¹⁵See George Eisen, ‘Jewish History and the Ideology of Modern Sport: Approaches and Interpretations’, *Journal of Sport History*, 25, 3, 1998, p. 507; George Eisen, ‘Jews and Sport: A Century of Retrospect’, *Journal of Sport History*, 26, 2, 1999, p. 236.

examination of ‘social discrimination’ against Jews during the interwar period.¹⁶ Within recent research conducted on the links between anti-Semitism and British fascism during the 1930s, some attention has been given to the role of sport within the ideology espoused by the British Union of Fascists. Significantly, these discussions have often concentrated more on the broader relationship between the BUF and physical recreation, rather than focussing wholly on the element of their anti-Semitic programme and propaganda espoused regarding sport.¹⁷

Whilst this limited body of research has offered an insight into the links between British anti-Semitism and the sporting world, this chapter will provide a much more comprehensive discussion of ‘sporting’ hostility directed towards Jews between the 1890s and the 1960s. It will illustrate that some of the most powerful and virulent forms and expressions of anti-Jewish sentiment were located within the sphere of British sport. Not only were Jews attacked by right-wing organisations for being ‘foreign’ in their sporting outlook and demeanour, they were also summarily and comprehensively excluded from the middle-class sporting environment due to their ethnicity. Importantly, however, sport was not just a setting in which Jews experienced hostility, it was also a site where they felt they could actively respond to anti-Semitism both within sport and in wider society. This chapter will demonstrate that sport must be viewed more comprehensively in order to

¹⁶ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, pp. 32-34. Kushner has examined the links between British sporting rhetoric and the exclusive ‘clubland’ ideology in his examination of Government attitudes towards internment during 1940. Tony Kushner, ‘Clubland, Cricket Tests and Alien Internment, 1939-1940’, in David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (Eds), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1993), pp. 79-102.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Tony Collins, ‘Return to Manhood: The Cult of Masculinity and the British Union of Fascists’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 16, 4, 1999; Michael A Spurr, ‘Playing for Fascism’: Sportsmanship, anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37, 4, 2003.

ascertain a deeper understanding of the complex way in which the nature of anti-Semitism developed, and the way in which hostility has been expressed and challenged within British society.

An analysis of the 'organised' variety of anti-Semitism promoted by the British Union of Fascists will show the clear reliance on sport and sporting ideology in propaganda attempts to demonstrate Jewish 'foreignness'. Between 1935 and 1939, the BUF tried to create a clear link between long-standing anti-Semitic notions of Jewish 'difference' and Jewish 'power' and the sporting world. Efforts at creating the negative image of the 'sporting Jew' were designed to emphasise the innate 'Britishness' of the BUF and further the policy of using the Jewish community as a political scapegoat. References to the Jewish 'impact' on the sporting world were consciously designed to propagate the idea that the Jewish community presented a threat to nation's sporting, and by extension, social, cultural, economic and political character and well-being.

Sport was also a prominent avenue in which forms of 'social' anti-Semitism were expressed. Throughout most of the modern history of Anglo-Jewry, Jews involved and interested in middle-class sports such as tennis, squash and badminton have encountered considerable discrimination from the non-Jewish sporting community. This middle-class, 'social' anti-Semitism was especially evident within golf, a sport linked closely to British 'bourgeois' society and which has generally been characterised by an innately 'exclusive' private club environment. As well as facing prejudice from the golfing press, Jewish golfers found their opportunities for membership at these clubs limited due to powerful, and

geographically widespread, anti-Semitism – forcing them to create ‘parallel institutions’ to allow them to play the sport free of discrimination. An analysis of Jewish golfing anti-Semitism demonstrates that, whilst Jewish exponents of the game may have been as respectable in their sporting and social outlook as their non-Jewish peers, their presence was regarded as a clear ‘threat’ to the sport. Discriminating against Jews within golf, it was argued, was a way of protecting the pastime from the supposedly harmful and deleterious effect of Jewish involvement.

Whilst ‘organised’ and ‘social’ forms of anti-Semitism have been closely linked to the British sporting environment, it is also the case that sport has seen a retort to discrimination by sections of the Jewish community. This is evident within the world of middle-class sport, where Jews were forced to found their own institutions to enable them to indulge their sporting passions without facing anti-Semitism. However, mirroring wider Jewish working-class and immigrant trends for an ‘assertive’ response to racism, it is also the case that the sporting milieu saw Jews using their participation in sport as a way of challenging and combating anti-Semitism. Not only did Jews involved in the sporting world work, both consciously and un-consciously, to correct stereotypes and respond to sporting ‘bigotry’. Many Jewish organisations also felt that efforts in the sporting sphere could help to challenge and undermine anti-Semitism during its peaks in the 1930s and the early post-Second World War period. The impact of this sporting ‘responses’ to ‘organised’ and ‘social’ anti-Semitism may have been minimal. Yet evidence from the sporting world suggests that many Jews felt sufficiently confident and assertive in their view that physical recreation was an important means of responding to discrimination.

Anti-Semitism was much more prevalent and powerful within the milieu of British sport than the extant historiography suggests. Jews involved in British sport encountered a strong exclusionary form of discrimination, whilst were also subjected to hostility and bigotry from many different sources due to their alleged racial ‘difference’. Not only was sport an environment in which anti-Jewish sentiment was both shaped and expressed, it was also a milieu in which Jews formed responses to anti-Semitism and discrimination. On the one hand, physical recreation provided a vehicle for perceptions of Jews as ‘outsiders’ to be both reinforced and conveyed. Yet it was also true that Jewish sporting participation, in a limited way, worked against and undermined anti-Semitism both inside and outside of the sporting world. In short, an historical investigation of the sporting world sheds new light on the way that Jews were subjected to racism by the wider community and the manner in which Jews dealt with the anti-Semitism that they faced.

The British Union of Fascists and the ‘Sporting Jew’, 1935-1939.

Since the late Victorian era, there has been a clear trend for ‘organised group hostility’ towards the Jewish community.¹⁸ Whilst anti-Jewish violence was not uncommon, the majority of these organisations expressed their anti-Semitic ideology in the form of written and verbal propaganda. Significantly, within the anti-Semitic ideology of one of the largest and most well-known groups hostile to the Jewish community, the British Union of Fascists

¹⁸ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 89.

(BUF), sport came to assume a prominent position. From 1935 through to 1939, the BUF's two main publications, *The Blackshirt* and *Action*, contained numerous anti-Semitic references to the supposed negative effect of Jewish involvement in British sport.

These sporting expressions of BUF ideology were designed to highlight and reinforce ideas of hidden Jewish power and influence and alleged Jewish racial, social and cultural difference – what Kushner has labelled ‘the two clearest features of modern British anti-Semitism’ since the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ However, by trying to create the spectre of a Jewish ‘other’ within the realm of British physical recreation, the BUF sought to establish the idea that Jews were a ‘threat’ to the nation’s sporting and cultural character and well-being – a danger, which the BUF claimed, they were best placed to combat. In effect, the BUF’s sporting anti-Semitism was used as a propaganda tool to create popular and political support for the organisation.

Organised forms of anti-Semitism have been evident within Britain since the 1900s. One of the earliest examples can be seen with the British Brothers’ League, which was active in the period from 1901 to 1905. The League was a loosely constituted movement which wanted to ‘draw together in one solid group’ all who opposed Jewish immigration and to agitate for restrictive legislation.²⁰ The League attacked immigrant patriotism and blamed ‘aliens’ for the growing socio-economic problems evident in the East End of London. Although many of its leaders, including several prominent Conservative East End MPs, tried to steer the

¹⁹ Kushner, *Persistence*, p. 9.

²⁰ Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (London, 1972), pp. 69-72.

League away from an openly anti-Semitic stance, ‘this was not completely successful’. As Holmes has noted, a strong and thinly veiled anti-Jewish sentiment existed amongst the movement’s higher echelons, whilst there were many instances of rank-and-file members espousing crude anti-Semitic hostility and carrying out violence against Jewish immigrants.²¹

During the Great War, several British right-wing writers and organisations demonstrated considerable hostility towards German Jews.²² Between the First and Second World Wars, anti-Semitism became a central component of the ideology and propaganda of several British Fascist groups. Although, as Linehan has noted, ‘there is no necessary or natural correlation’ between British fascism and anti-Jewish sentiment, it is evident that many right-wing organisations in existence during the interwar years incorporated anti-Semitism into their verbal and written propaganda.²³ The Britons, for example, formed in 1918, became known for publishing ‘virulent anti-Semitic propaganda’ which propagated notions of Jewish influence and cultural aloofness.²⁴ Similarly, the Imperial Fascist League, founded in 1928, espoused a ‘doctrine of racial anti-Semitism’. With the impetus of their staunchly anti-Semitic leader, Arnold Leese (1878-1956), the IFL promoted ideas of Jewish

²¹ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 89-96.

²² Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (Oxford, 1991), Chapter 6: ‘Anti-German Sentiment: Spy-Fever, Anti-Alienism and the Hidden Hand’.

²³ Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester, 2000), Chapter 7: ‘British Fascism and anti-Semitism’. Linehan notes that there were some right-wing organisations active during the 1930s who rejected anti-Semitism outright, such as the United Empire Fascist Party, and others whose leadership were known to be pro-Jewish, such as the Unity Band.

²⁴ Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts to the National Front* (London, 2006), p. 44; Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, Chapter 9: ‘*The Protocols* and the Britons’; Gisela Lebzelter, ‘Henry Hamilton Beamish and the Britons: Champions of Anti-Semitism’ in Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow (Eds), *British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Interwar Britain* (London, 1980), pp. 41-56.

ritual murder, biological racism and the supposed Jewish ‘Hidden Hand’ and campaigned for the expulsion of Jews from British shores.²⁵ Some right-wing groups, such as the British Fascisti, only became outwardly anti-Semitic many years after their foundation, whilst others, such as the Nordic League and the Right Club, were ‘intensely pro-Hitlerite and anti-Jewish’ throughout their entire existence’.²⁶

Amongst the ideology of the only Fascist ‘organisation with any pretension to significance’ at this time, anti-Semitism also came to assume a prominent position.²⁷ In 1932, estranged former Labour MP, Oswald Mosley, formed the British Union of Fascists after the failure of his New Party in the 1931 General Election. It has been argued that Mosley was ‘not at first regarded as unfriendly to Jewish interests’, although by the mid 1930s he had become well-known for his sharply anti-Semitic views.²⁸ Up until the BUF were banned by Government order in 1940, the organisation espoused an openly anti-Semitic party line in which ‘Jews were portrayed as undermining and dominating Britain in their own interest’.

²⁵ John Morell, ‘Arnold Leese and the Imperial Fascist League: The Impact of Racial Fascism’ in Lunn and Thurlow, *Ibid.* pp. 57-75; Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, Chapter 4: ‘Imperial Fascist League’.

²⁶ Linehan, *British Fascism*, p. 195; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, pp. 51-57. On the Right Club, see Richard Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism, 1939-1940* (London, 1998). Linehan notes that there were several other, minor, Fascist groups active in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s who promoted an anti-Semitic ideology. These included the National Fascisti, the National Workers’ Party, the British Empire Party and the Militant Christian Patriots. Linehan, *British Fascism*, pp. 194-196.

²⁷ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, p. 61.

²⁸ Martin Pugh, *‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts!’ Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2006), p. 218. Although there is evidence from speeches in late 1933 that Mosley held anti-Semitic views, the symbolic shift in Mosley’s public attitude against the Jewish community is generally regarded to have come in 1934. During speeches given at the Albert Hall, London and Belle Vue, Manchester in that year, Mosley roundly attacked the negative effect that ‘big’ and ‘little’ Jews were having on British politics, economics, society and culture.

During the mid to late 1930s, the party zealously pursued the Jewish ‘issue’ as a means of political progress.²⁹

Reflecting the large body of writing on the BUF, multiple historiographical viewpoints on the origins, nature and extent of the organisation’s anti-Semitism have been developed.³⁰

Whilst some historians of the movement have argued that the BUF’s decision to commence a virulently anti-Semitic campaign was due to political opportunism, others have sought to use Freudian theory to claim that the party’s anti-Jewish stance was due to the individual psychology of many of the movement’s leaders.³¹ In his biography of Oswald Mosley, Skidelsky argues that the BUF’s turn to anti-Semitism was a direct response to increasing levels of anti-Fascist activity originating from the Jewish community.³²

Other historians believe that the anti-Semitism of the party is much more deeply rooted and linked inextricably to the wider social, economic and political context. Holmes, for example, claims that the BUF’s anti-Jewish ideology emerged out of the dire domestic socio-economic atmosphere of the late 1920s and early 1930s and tapped into an ‘anti-Semitic folk memory’ which had existed since the British Brothers’ League agitation in the

²⁹ Colin Holmes, ‘Anti-Semitism and the BUF’ in Lunn and Thurlow, *British Fascism*, p. 115.

³⁰ For an overview of this historiography, see Linehan, *British Fascism*, pp. 187-193. On the history of the BUF see *inter alia*, Pugh, ‘Hurrah’; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, Chapter 3: ‘The BUF and British Society: 1932-1939’; Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain* (London, 1972); DS Lewis, *Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley, Fascism and British Society: 1931-1981* (Manchester, 1987); Thomas Linehan, *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex, 1933-1940* (London, 1996).

³¹ Robert Benewick, *Political Violence and Public Order* (London, 1969), p. 151; William Mandle, *Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists* (London, 1968), pp. 22-23.

³² Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London, 1981), pp. 385-410.

early 1900s.³³ Cheyette claims that both Mosley and his organisation drew from existing ‘discourses’ of anti-Semitism prevalent in wider society and culture – notions and beliefs which helped form and shape the party’s ideology and propaganda to an increasingly hostile stance towards Anglo-Jewry.³⁴

Whatever its cause or character, it is evident that the main thrust of the BUF’s anti-Semitic propaganda and campaigning generally ran along two distinct but not wholly unrelated lines – both of which reflected long-standing notions propagated by organisations hostile to the Jewish community. Firstly, the BUF sought to promote the idea of a Jewish ‘Hidden Hand’ and advance the myth that the Jewish community had a disproportionate amount of influence at the highest echelons of politics, business and finance. This idea of ‘Jewish power’ was a ‘major obsessive theme’ of Mosley’s speeches during the mid-1930s, reflecting beliefs in the existence of an ‘overpowering Jewish internationalism’ which had its roots in the late nineteenth century. Mosley’s BUF attempted to position itself in the public consciousness as a bulwark against this supposed ‘international usury’ and as a grouping willing to challenge supposed Jewish hegemony and domination to protect British interests.³⁵

Secondly, the BUF attempted to demonstrate through their propaganda that Jews were completely racially ‘distinct’ from the British. It was argued that Jews lacked the ability,

³³ Holmes, ‘Anti-Semitism and the BUF’, p. 128.

³⁴ Bryan Cheyette, ‘Hilaire Belloc and the Marconi Scandal: A Reassessment of the Interactionist Model of Racial Hatred’ in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (Eds), *The Politics of Marginality: Race, the Radical Right and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1990), pp. 131-142.

³⁵ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 143, 177-178.

desire or characteristics necessary to fully integrate and become active and contributing citizens to both British society and the British Empire. The presence of Jewish aliens on British shores was claimed to be undermining social, cultural and political stability, development and cohesion - with Jews being viewed as an 'anti-national element'. As Lebzelter has highlighted, the idea of racial, physical and cultural Jewish 'otherness' was a major strand of BUF propaganda which 'categorically denied that Jews could add a valuable contribution to British life, that they could effectively assimilate or that they could ever be completely absorbed'.³⁶

Whilst the majority of BUF propaganda focused on the Jewish impact on British politics, business, economics and culture, sport was also an arena of British life regularly addressed by party publications. In a reflection of the party's obsession with sporting ideology and the public school ethos surrounding masculinity, sport formed a prominent strand of the party's anti-Semitism.³⁷ By utilising physical recreation as a means of portraying Jews in a negative light, the BUF hoped to construct a 'counter-image of the Sporting Jew' which would contrast unfavourably against the sportsmanlike, athletic and psychologically upright Briton, which the BUF leadership itself felt its party symbolised. By highlighting areas where Jewish power and authority seemed disproportionately strong in the sporting world, and using sporting 'examples' of Jewish otherness and supposed racial difference, the BUF worked to further define Jews as a social, physical and cultural 'other' – an outsider group

³⁶ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 95.

³⁷ Collins, 'Return to Manhood', p. 145. Collins claims that the BUF were 'consciously and aggressively masculine', using sporting participation and rhetoric within their written and verbal propaganda as ways of improving the real and perceived strength and virility of the Fascist movement in Britain.

which the BUF, as the self-labelled epitome of Britishness and sportsmanship, were willing to oppose.³⁸

The main vehicles for the BUF's anti-Semitic sporting ideology were the party's two major publications, *The Blackshirt* and *Action*. The first of these was aimed at a more working-class audience and attracted a readership reported to be around 23,000. *Action* was introduced in 1936 in an attempt to attract a 'more educated' readership and 'read more like a normal newspaper' covering themes and topics such as politics, the arts, film, women's issues and physical recreation. *Action* was believed to have attracted more than 25,000 readers at its peak. Both of these publications included occasional columns with specific anti-Semitic reference to sport, whilst virulently racist regular correspondents such as AK Chesterton, Clement Bruning and AG Findley all sporadically covered sporting issues linked to Jewish participants.³⁹

Two key themes dominated the BUF's racist discussions surrounding Jews and sport. Firstly, these publications maintained that Jewish 'control' of the administration, finance and management of both elite and amateur sport was having a harmful effect on British participation. BUF propaganda argued that the 'Hidden Hand', which many anti-Semites believed dominated international and national politics, economic and business, stretched markedly into the world of British sport. Secondly, they also regularly argued that Jews lacked a sporting attitude and had no true understanding of the ethos pervading British

³⁸ Spurr, 'Playing for Fascism', pp. 362, 375.

³⁹ Pugh, 'Hurrah', p. 220.

sport. It was maintained that this was further evidence of the inherent racial difference and distinct alien and ‘foreign’ outlook of the British Jewish community. In effect, through their propaganda, the party manipulated well-established right-wing mythology and ideology to project the notion of Jewish sporting ‘difference’ in a bid to further strengthen their wider anti-Semitic programme.

The ‘Hidden Hand’ in British Sport

The anti-Semitic notion of an international Jewish ‘Hidden Hand’ or conspiracy is long-established. Whilst ‘the persistent myth of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy’ is the ‘theme that figures most prominently in anti-Semitic propaganda’ of the interwar period, a ‘fear’ of Jewish national and international domination became increasingly prevalent in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁰ In the years between the Russian Revolution and the start of the Second World War, however, ‘conspiratorial anti-Semitism’ gained some popular support, with the idea of an international Jewish scheme to dominate global politics, finance and business being propagated by extreme right-wing groups. In Britain in 1920, mainstream newspapers such as *The Times* gave serious consideration to the Russian forgery of a Jewish plot for world domination entitled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* - a book, almost certainly written by Tsarist secret police, first published in 1903. Even when the book was discovered to be fake, a hard-core right-wing element continued to believe that a

⁴⁰ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 13.

Jewish ‘Hidden Hand’ existed at the highest echelons of British society, plotting for the takeover of the country and the subjugation of non-Jewish citizens.⁴¹

By the 1920s, the idea of a Jewish ‘Hidden Hand’ had gained a noticeable level of popular support. Whilst, as Kushner has highlighted, the general public gave the suggestion of a Jewish conspiracy little or no credence, ‘concern over Jewish power in society...did not disappear in inter-war Britain’. Numerous Fascist and right-wing groups, including the BUF, perpetuated the idea that Jewish influence was disproportionately strong in many areas of life in Britain. A minority believed that Jewish influence, in politics and finance especially, would be used for ethnic rather than national interests and would only prove damaging to Britain in the long-term.⁴²

Within the anti-Semitic propaganda of the BUF, the ‘theme of Jewish power’ figured prominently. At the party’s September 1934 rally at Belle Vue, Manchester, Mosley ‘launched into an indictment of Jewish influence’ and bemoaned the power held by ‘Jewish money’: ‘What they call today the will of the people is nothing but the organised corruption of the Press, cinema and Parliament, which is called democracy but which is ruled by alien finance’.⁴³ This notion of a ‘Hidden Hand’ was a recurring theme in the party’s propaganda right up to the Government action taken against them in June 1940. On several occasions, local and national BUF leaders tried to position themselves in the public psyche as the

⁴¹ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 202.

⁴² Kushner, ‘British Anti-Semitism’, p. 194; Pugh, *Hurrah*, p. 215. See also Kushner, *We Europeans?*, pp. 209-210, which highlights that notions of Jewish power and influence were also present within Britain during the Second World War.

⁴³ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 176-178.

defenders of Britain against this apparent Jewish ‘conspiracy’. This primarily involved promoting the idea that the BUF would fight against ‘organised Jewry representing an unclean, alien influence in our national and imperial life’.⁴⁴

In BUF propaganda, sport came to play a significant role in instilling the idea that Jewish influence was exerting a negative effect across British society. By propagating the notion that Jewish power extended to the world of sport, that so sacred a British institution, the BUF hoped to demonstrate to its members and supporters that the Jewish conspiracy threatened Britain’s cultural, as well as political and economic, wellbeing. This notion was all the more powerful, given the pervading belief during the early twentieth century in the apolitical, amateur, public school ethos of British sporting administration and participation.⁴⁵

One of the first examples of the BUF utilising sport to reinforce the idea of a Jewish ‘Hidden Hand’ came in 1935. In December of that year, an international football match between England and Germany was held at White Hart Lane, ground of Tottenham Hotspur FC – a club who had a significant Jewish fan base. In the lead up to the match, party publications claimed that Jewish Tottenham fans were ‘dictating’ to the FA that the game should be cancelled. *The Blackshirt* reported that the TUC, labelled by the BUF as the ‘pawns of Jewry’, were being forced by the Jewish elites to write to the Government to

⁴⁴ For more background on the growth of the notion of ‘Jewish power’ see Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, Chapter 5 ‘Our New Masters?’ and Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, Chapter 1 ‘The Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy’.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Holt, *Sport and the British*, Chapter 2 ‘Amateurism and the Victorians’.

exert pressure on them to prohibit the game taking place.⁴⁶ One week after the match, renowned anti-Semite and BUF organiser, AK Chesterton, celebrated the failure of the Jewish elites in their attempts to stop the game and undermine sporting and diplomatic relations between the two nations. Chesterton went on to note that ‘as they controlled and cornered everything else in Britain, the Jews naturally saw no reason why they should not control and corner British sport as well’.⁴⁷

Alongside notions of national sporting ‘power’, the BUF also contested that Jewish influence extended to the vast network of small, local sporting and athletic clubs. They argued that Jewish power on a local sporting level was leading to ‘British’ athletes being effectively excluded from participation or hampered in their training. In 1936 the party’s Manchester correspondent, Jack Kinsey, reported that in recent years he had ‘found sport practically barred to him’ due to the influence of Jews in local athletic clubs. Even more offensive for the BUF, who believed strongly in the public-school ideology surrounding physical recreation, was that not only were Jews barring non-Jewish participation, but they were also taking the contemptible line of mixing sport with politics. Kinsey claimed that Jews had taken over his local club for use by the Communist Party’s British Workers’ Sports Federation and that he had been asked to leave the club because he had told them he was unwilling to support the ‘Red’ cause. He went on to claim:

This is but one instance in the career of but one sportsman. Throughout the country, such things are a daily occurrence. Sports clubs, even when not controlled by Jews, are permeated with

⁴⁶ *The Blackshirt*, 1 November 1935, 6 December 1935.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 13 December 1935.

brothers of their race and sycophantic ‘Reds’ and the lot of British sportsmen, already made difficult by the indifference of the Government, is made doubly so by the influence of the Jew.⁴⁸

The BUF were also particularly vociferous in their claim that horse-racing was suffering, both in sporting and gambling terms, at the hands of ‘alien tricksters’. In 1938, *Action* claimed that Jewish involvement in the business of the sport, from the ownership of the horses down to the trackside betting, was dominated by members of the Jewish community. These ‘aliens’, *Action* argued, had little interest in the sporting contest on show and were driven by purely financial motivations. The correspondent likened Jewish interest in the sport to having a parasitic effect and that ‘whenever large sums of money change hands with any frequency – there, battenning like carrion on the pickings that may be found, are the most degraded specimens of an alien race’. The article called on the horse-racing authorities to ‘protect’ the sport from further Jewish interference:

If the pastime is going to be again worthy of its proud title ‘The Sport of Kings’ those responsible for its welfare should take immediate steps to wipe out the rottenness attracting to its name... The stewards of the Jockey Club have full authority to ‘warn off’ any owner, trainer or jockey who contravenes their rules. Let this be extended to eliminate the bad odour that aliens and crooks have brought into a great sport.⁴⁹

The vast majority of BUF propaganda concerning a sporting ‘Hidden Hand’ was reserved for professional boxing. As Jewish involvement in the sport was both nationally and internationally prominent at this time, it proved a natural target for propaganda designed to

⁴⁸ Ibid. 5 September 1936.

⁴⁹ *Action*, 4 June 1938.

strengthen the notion of Jewish sporting power and influence. Significantly, boxing was also targeted because of the special relevance the sport attained within the BUF. As Collins has noted, the BUF's organisers held boxing in extremely high esteem ('it was boxing which was exalted as a sport above all others') and actively promoted the sport amongst BUF members. Regular columns were printed in *Action* concerning boxing technique, whilst multiple local and national competitions were held to help increase interest in the sport amongst BUF supporters.⁵⁰

Promoting boxing obviously had a 'practical relevance' within the party (especially when faced with physical attacks from anti-fascists), but it was also believed to be one way of showing the 'innate masculinity' of the party and demonstrating the 'physical superiority' of the Anglo-Saxon race to the wider community. Mosley himself had been a schoolboy boxing champion and the BUF is said to have also attracted well-known supporters from within the professional world such as Joe Beckett (a former British Heavyweight champion), Len Harvey (former British Heavy, Light-Heavy and Middleweight champion) and Jewish boxer Ted 'Kid' Lewis. Indeed, for the BUF, 'more than any other, the sport was seen as a means of asserting the superiority of British manhood'.⁵¹

The fact that British boxing had many successful Jewish prize-fighters within its ranks would have been a cause for concern for BUF leaders. The way they worked to undermine this clear contradiction of their own ideology was to claim that professional boxing was

⁵⁰ Collins, 'Return to Manhood', pp. 156-158.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 157.

controlled by a Jewish ‘racket’ and therefore just another aspect of the international ‘Hidden Hand’ then supposedly in existence. On the one hand, party publications focused on Jewish involvement in the business of the sport, claiming that ‘alien’ managers and promoters were abusing the sport and ignoring its core values simply for financial gain. In 1936 *Action* claimed that ‘the fistic art has most certainly ceased to exist as a reasonable sport and, except for the amateurs, it has developed into a rather unhealthy racket’. The article went on to suggest that real control of the sport lay not in the hands of the impotent British Boxing Board of Control but with ‘Jewish racketeers’. They ‘scandalously underpay young or unknown fighters’ who are ‘ruined both physically and morally by these leeches who spin wonderful stories of success to follow if the lad will only put himself in their hands’.⁵²

Regular *Action* columnists also contributed articles about the negative effect of Jewish influence on the sport. In an article entitled ‘Jewish Boxing Racket’, Clement Bruning tapped into anti-Semitic stereotypes and suggested that ‘for the sport he cares little, but for the money he cares a great deal. First class professional boxing involves large sums of money and is naturally controlled almost entirely by Jews’. The article also claimed that Jewish influence extended into the international administration of the sport – something which apparently explained why the German boxer Max Schmeling found it difficult to challenge for world titles in the late 1930s. This kind of unfair and un-sporting action, Bruning contended, would only offend the principles of the sportsmanlike Briton, who would be deeply insulted by the Jewish use of sport for political gain. He argued ‘whatever

⁵² *Action*, 21 February 1936.

British people think of National Socialism, anti-Semitism is bound to grow through this Jewish attempt to turn this fine sport, a product of Britain, into a Yiddish medium for revenge against Germany'.⁵³

Particular Jewish businessmen involved in boxing also came in for attention from the BUF's anti-Semitic publications. Jack Solomons, the well known Jewish boxing promoter and manager from the 1930s through to the 1970s, was attacked by *The Blackshirt* in 1937 for the 'victimisation of boxers' at his Devonshire Club in East London. The criticism focused on the instance of taking 'seconds money', where the club provided trainers to stand in the boxer's corner during the fight, and said that Solomons was taking extortionate amounts from his boxers' pay packets.⁵⁴ Although this was a regular practice at the time, it seems that the BUF believed that Jewish promoters were the worst culprits of this deduction from an already underpaid boxer's earnings.⁵⁵ The conclusion of the newspaper was that the evidence suggested that Jewish 'businessmen' were ruining the sport for their own financial gain:

Up to the beginning of the present century, boxing was one of the finest sports in the world. The purses were small but the men were big. This country was then the world's boxing centre...once the Jewish promoter enters the world of sport it ceases to be a world of sport and becomes a world of business. Often it becomes a world of discreditable business.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid. 10 July 1937.

⁵⁴ Seemingly, much of the BUF discussion was drawn directly from the campaign mounted by the National Union of Boxers against the Devonshire Club during 1937. In March of that year, NUB officials criticised Solomons over the issue of 'seconds' money and the club was picketed on several occasions. Significantly, the Union staunchly defended itself against allegations that it had singled out Solomons due to 'anti-Jewish bias' and it was noted that the organisation had also raised the issue with several other non-Jewish clubs and promoters. See Matthew Taylor, 'Boxers United: Trade Unionism in British Boxing in the 1930s', *Sport in History*, 29, 3, 2009, pp. 467-468.

⁵⁵ *The Blackshirt*, 27 March 1937, 10 July 1937.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 4 September 1937.

By 1939, the BUF's attacks on Jewish involvement in boxing had become even more vociferous. Their concept of a Jewish conspiracy ruling over the sport was voiced in an increasingly aggressive and virulent tone. In January, *Action* published an article entitled 'Alien Stranglehold on Boxing: A Sport No Longer' reportedly written by a 'prominent boxer who for obvious reasons must remain anonymous'. The correspondent claimed Jewish promoters and agents were exploiting 'British youth' for 'easy money' by dealing in 'male flesh and blood'. It was noted that, compared to the lowest non-skilled workers, boxers were extremely underpaid. The explanation given for this was the 'deductions' forcibly taken from their wages by exploitative Jews – the 'lice of the ring' – and the article hinted that those wanting to stand up for their own interests would struggle to succeed against the Jewish element ruling the sport. This was because 'crooked promoters and managers work hand in hand in the evil business. If a boxer has the courage to refuse to pay the illegal deductions they ask for he finds himself without engagements, not at one or two halls but up and down the country'. The BUF claimed that the simple answer to this problem was for the 'racketeer...Jew' to be 'removed from control of the sport'.⁵⁷

The notion of a sporting 'Hidden Hand' was also propagated by prominent former BUF personalities during wartime. Although the organisation was banned by Government order in 1940, some of its previous leaders, such as William Joyce, continued to promote the idea that Jewish power and influence had command over British physical recreation. Joyce, who

⁵⁷ *Action*, 7 January 1939

was propaganda director for the BUF between 1934 and 1937, moved to Germany in 1939 and adopted the personality of Lord Haw Haw for English-language Nazi war broadcasts. He was eventually hanged in January 1946 for treason.⁵⁸ In one radio message in December 1939, Joyce described the Jewish Lads' Brigade as the 'greatest of Jewish sports organisations' and suggested that it was 'in control of British sport'.⁵⁹ Likewise, in 1942, another message attacked the Maccabi Association London and its Chairman, Pierre Gildesgame, for their influence on British sport and noted that the club and Gildesgame himself had been placed on Gestapo black-lists.⁶⁰

The 'Unsporting' Jew

As well as emphasising the notion of a 'Hidden Hand', BUF sporting propaganda also promoted the idea that Jews were foreign and could never be integrated into the British mainstream. Evidence suggests that the BUF tried to demonstrate that Jews held a different sporting mentality in an attempt to convey the notion that the Jewish community lacked the ability and desire to assimilate into the wider non-Jewish population. Whilst controlling sport and exploiting it for financial gain was in itself distinctly 'un-British', the BUF also contended that Jewish sportsmen themselves lacked any real awareness or concern for wider principles of fair play and sportsmanship – the inference being that without this Jews would always remain as outsiders in British society.

⁵⁸ For an overview of Joyce's life, see Mary Kenny, *Germany Calling: A Personal Biography of William Joyce* (Dublin, 2003).

⁵⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 December 1939.

⁶⁰ LMA 4286/03/07/020, *The MAL Story*, p. 13.

In a similar vein to their discussions of Jewish sporting ‘power’, the party’s notion of ‘unsporting’ Jews also arose out of the wider anti-Semitic ideology espoused by the organisation. At the infamous BUF rally held at the Albert Hall in October 1934, Mosley launched an anti-Semitic tirade complaining about the effects of ‘big Jews’ on British society, politics and business and ‘little Jews’ who represented an undermining influence to the nation’s cultural and racial wellbeing. Whilst Mosley believed that it was the former who constituted the ‘real danger’ to the country, he also attacked the rank-and-file Jewish citizen for their apparent intrinsic dissimilarity to British people and for destabilising the British racial stock. These ‘little people who can hardly speak English at all’ appalled Mosley because, in his eyes, they had no appreciation or respect of the wider culture and society.⁶¹

Over subsequent years, the party used their propaganda to repeatedly reinforce the idea that ‘Jews were mentally and morally different’ to the British. The BUF repeatedly contrasted the Jewish community’s foreignness and ‘oriental’ origins to the British ‘Nordic’ stock, which had produced pioneers and ‘Empire builders’ throughout modern history. As Lebzelter has noted, ‘Jews were not only seen as an eternally foreign and inferior element whose religion, ethics and instincts were anathema to Europeans, but an innate aggressiveness was attributed to them which allegedly distinguished them as a singular peril threatening the very existence of the nation’.⁶² Holmes asserts that the BUF’s tactics

⁶¹ Quoted in Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain* (London, 1961), p. 127.

⁶² Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 96.

of highlighting the foreignness of the Jewish community in Britain was their attempt to make their own radical political programme and ideology seem to be more acceptable and palatable.⁶³

The party also used sport to pursue their line of argument concerning supposed inherent Jewish racial and cultural difference. As with the 'Hidden Hand' concept, the party utilised sport as a propaganda vehicle to promote the notion that Jews were an 'alien' element within British society and that their presence undermined the preservation of British character and culture. As Spurr has commented, the BUF wanted to advance the view that 'Jews were alien because of their alleged failure to value games and sports in the same manner as the local population'. The BUF argued that without a sporting mentality similar to the non-Jewish population, Jews would continue to represent a danger to British racial, social and cultural integrity and cohesion.⁶⁴

This particular argument was of special significance to the organisation as it went to the core of its political ideology. As Collins has shown, the party promoted a 'militaristic masculinity' that had its roots firmly in the sphere of nineteenth century private education. Physical, moral and psychological well-being were promoted as the cornerstones of BUF philosophy and 'the BUF's politics...[were] the ethos of public school masculinity as a political programme'. The portrayal of Jews as 'un-British' and 'un-sporting' not only tied into wider notions of Jewish difference, but also contrasted sharply with the self-image

⁶³ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 189.

⁶⁴ Spurr, 'Playing for Fascism', p. 375.

promoted by the BUF. In effect, by claiming that Jews were ‘alien’ in their sporting outlook, the inference was that the BUF were innately and proudly British in their attitude to physical recreation and their wider approach to politics.⁶⁵

One of the first and most comprehensive attacks on the Jewish ‘sporting’ mentality appeared in *Action* in March 1936, in an article focusing on the growing Jewish support for Tottenham Hotspur FC. The correspondent, AG Findlay, linked increasing instances of heckling and ‘barracking’ from the White Hart Lane crowd to Jewish supporters and commented that crowd unrest was ‘part of a logical sequel to the permeation of the sport of Nordic peoples by races foreign to them who are incapable of understanding the psychology of the Northerners of Europe’. The rest of the article sought to further emphasise that the Jewish mindset lay at odds to the mental character of the British. Findlay argued that the example of Jewish Tottenham fans showed that they lacked any appreciation of the notion of fair play and sportsmanship. Findlay commented that Jewish sports fans ‘cannot understand the meaning of a “good loser”’ because ‘their mentality is exactly the same in business as in sport – to win at any price and to hell with the other fellow’.⁶⁶

For the BUF, this was further evidence that Jews’ inherent racial differences meant that they could never fully assimilate into British society. Because Jews could not apparently appreciate sport in the British ‘way’, support was allegedly given to the anti-Semitic

⁶⁵ Collins, ‘Return to Manhood’, pp. 145-146.

⁶⁶ *Action*, 19 March 1936.

argument that their ‘difference’ would prove a block to full integration. As the ‘Hebrew’ race struggled to appreciate the core values of British sport, they could not, according to Findlay, hope to be accepted by the British mainstream. Sport, both in terms of participation and the way it was viewed by Jews, provided one of the clearest examples of all of the racial divisions between the ‘Nordic’ and Jewish races:

Here lies the crux of the matter; the sporting make-up of the Nordic races is as far apart from that of the Slavonic and other peoples as the Poles. In the first case, we look upon our games as something to enjoy, to keep bodily fit and treat them just as games. In the other way they are treated partly as business with the ‘heads I win, tails you lose’ motto. It does not matter how much time and money we ‘Britishers’ spend in trying to make other people adopt our mentality to athletics or game of any description, we cannot alter their racial characteristics.⁶⁷

The BUF claimed it was further vindicated in these views when the Jewish community itself appeared to be questioning the behaviour of Jewish football fans. In 1937, *The Blackshirt* reprinted a letter from the *Jewish Chronicle* from an ‘Anglicised’ Jew concerning Jewish Tottenham fans. Mr Henry, from North West London, noted that ‘hundreds of people’ around him at a recent game were of Jewish origin and complained that ‘abusive language, freely mixed with phrases in Yiddish and all uttered in raucous voices in the presence of so many people, can only tend to create the impression that these dreadful specimens are representative of Jewry’. The correspondent from *The Blackshirt* simply commented that the ‘loud mouthed creatures’ referred to in the letter were ‘typical flowers of Judah’s youth’.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *The Blackshirt*, 18 September 1937.

The BUF felt that Jewish sporting ‘difference’ was most evident and abhorrent when ‘aliens’ tried to introduce a political angle into sporting events and arrangements. In 1938, *Action* reported that a German police football team had been invited to play a team from the Brighton and Hove police force. Whereas, when the British team visited Germany the year before they were ‘given a reception indicative of the German desire for friendship with Britain’, on the occasion of the return fixture the German side met with animosity from a crowd of protestors – *Action* noting that ‘these visiting sportsmen were grossly insulted by a shouting, gesticulating Jewish crowd which greeted the visitors with the “Red Flag” and cries of “Get back to Germany”’. This unsportsmanlike reception underlined the lack of Jewish comprehension of the ‘sporting attitude’ of the British and provided additional evidence of the racial otherness of the Jewish community: ‘This is not the first time that aliens in Britain have attempted to drag their political and racial questions into the sporting arena; by doing so they are increasing the animosity which all true sportsmen must feel towards their kind’.⁶⁹

Alongside football, the other sport most often pinpointed for showing the clear lack of a sportsmanlike attitude amongst the Jewish community was golf. In 1937, it was reported that German golf courses had introduced a ban on non-Aryans playing at courses frequented by golfers of Aryan stock. *Action* claimed that courses with Jewish golfers in Britain ‘will turn longing eyes to those fortunate German courses which can legally ban Jews’. Seemingly, the lack of sportsmanship and fair play demonstrated by the vast

⁶⁹ *Action*, 27 August 1938.

majority of Jewish exponents of the game was a cause for concern and a growing source of resentment:

Thousands of British golfers who are not anti-Semitic for any reason, become rapidly so when they play on courses where Jews in front of them hold them up and will not let them through; where Jews behind them drive into them without apology; and where Jews on adjoining fairways pull and slice into them without apology and where Jews are loud and offensive in the club houses.⁷⁰

The BUF's answer to this problem, and to help prevent Jews from polluting this distinctly 'British' game with 'foreign' behaviour and attitudes, was simple - use the secret machinery of the golf clubs to block Jewish participation.⁷¹ In 1939, *Action* reported on the 'blackballing' of 'wealthy Jews' in Scottish golf in a celebratory tone, claiming that the 'summary rejection of Jewish applications to well-known golfing circles' was widespread, even when the Jewish golfers in question were 'impeccable' in both 'business and private life'. As well as rejoicing in this blow against Jewish financial 'muscle', the article claimed that Jewish golfers were hardly 'sporting' in their lifestyles or demeanour and were therefore unworthy of the reward of golf-club membership. It was claimed that 'first-class golfing circles' in London were 'plagued by flashy [Jewish] sportsmen and their friends who monopolise the clubhouse and ostentatiously parade their wealth, causing much heart-burning among other members'. Not only were Jews in complete ignorance of the spirit and

⁷⁰ Ibid. 6 February 1937.

⁷¹ This is what happened, although there is no evidence to suggest that British golf clubs did this out of support of right-wing groups such as the BUF. See below, pp. 282-322.

etiquette of golf on the course, therefore, but the BUF claimed that their actions off of it were hardly similar to that of a ‘respectable’ British golf enthusiast.⁷²

Although the British Union of Fascists experienced little electoral success, and existed mainly on the margins of the British political mainstream, it is important not to understate the effect that the party’s presence had on the Jewish community. Whilst many historians of British Fascism have tended to understate the impact of organised anti-Semitism on Jewish society, it would be incorrect to believe that campaigns mounted by groups such as the BUF did not exert a negative effect. As Kushner has noted, whilst Mosley may have remained a political outsider figure, his organisation and ideology was at least partly responsible for creating anti-Jewish violence and a physical and psychological ‘fear’ of attack amongst the Jewish working classes during the 1930s. The kind of ‘extremist anti-Semitism’ promoted by the BUF was an ‘innovative’ and ‘reinforcing factor in hostility to Jews’ during the majority of this decade.⁷³

Likewise, it is also important not to underestimate the influence that BUF propaganda and campaigning had on reinforcing popular anti-Semitism. For example, one poll conducted in November 1939 claimed that 17% of those interviewed believed Jewish influence had played a role in drawing the world closer to military conflict. Given their political and popular failure, the BUF’s actions alone cannot account for nearly one in five people holding anti-Semitic views concerning the reasons for going to war. However, their anti-

⁷² *Action*, 24 June 1939.

⁷³ Kushner, ‘British Anti-Semitism’, pp. 193.

Semitic propaganda, in a limited way, ‘helped to maintain the fear of Jewish influence’ that was already evident within Britain.⁷⁴ Likewise, as Pugh has noted, the party’s anti-Semitic campaign also both reflected and reinforced ‘a ubiquitous racist view of the supposed flaws and characteristics of Jewish people that existed in contemporary popular culture’.⁷⁵

It is significant, therefore, to note the considerable emphasis placed on sport in the BUF’s propaganda and the role that this would have played in consolidating various long-standing anti-Semitic beliefs and myths. The overall aim of the party’s sporting anti-Semitism was to strengthen racist beliefs regarding the ‘Hidden Hand’ conspiracy and the supposed racial distinctiveness and lack of assimilatory potential of the Jewish community. By using ‘examples’ of Jewish sporting dominance or iniquitous behaviour, the party aimed to instil the idea that the Jewish community’s deleterious effect on British society spread beyond the spheres most commonly associated with Jewish influence and activity. The supposedly negative Jewish effect evident within politics, business and popular culture, the BUF argued, was also prevalent within British sport – an area of life which impacted more immediately and frequently on the average Briton and where Jewish influence and lack of fair play was even more offensive to British sensibilities.

Put succinctly, sport, and the ideology and rhetoric surrounding it, was used by the BUF as one way of helping to define the Jewish community as an ‘other - an ‘alien’ element - within British society. By using sport as a means of reinforcing and promoting popular

⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 193-194.

⁷⁵ Pugh, ‘Hurrah’, p. 215.

Jewish stereotypes and mythology, the party sought to place the Jewish community in physical, moral and psychological opposition to the masculine, fair and sporting Fascist. Jewish involvement and influence in physical recreation also provided a point of reference against which the BUF could establish themselves in a positive light. As Spurr has noted, by using sport to ‘degrade and marginalise Jews’ the BUF aimed to show ‘themselves as Britons by demonstrating their conformity with the specifically English manifestation of the sporting ethos and its associated notions of morality, masculinity and Britishness’.⁷⁶

‘There is no Discrimination Here, but the Committee Never Elects Jews’:

Anti-Semitism and Golf

It is clear that sport was an important aspect of the anti-Semitic ideology and propaganda of the largest and most influential Fascist group in Britain during the 1930s. As well as being significant in this organised, political form of discrimination against Jews, sport also became an arena for social, non-organised expressions of anti-Semitism during the twentieth century. Several scholars of Anglo-Jewry have used the term ‘anti-Semitism of exclusion’ to highlight a trend for discrimination of Jews in their everyday lives which existed alongside organised, right-wing/Fascist expressions of racism.⁷⁷ It has been argued that British Jews faced considerable ‘economic and social discrimination’ in the early part

⁷⁶ Spurr, ‘Playing for Fascism’, p. 375.

⁷⁷ Kushner, ‘British Anti-Semitism’, p. 201; Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. 379.

of the twentieth century which negatively affected their opportunities and experiences with regards to employment, housing, education, travel, access to services and leisure.⁷⁸

Alongside discrimination in these environments, Jews also faced significant levels of anti-Semitic prejudice in their sporting lives. This was especially apparent with regards to the traditionally 'exclusive' middle-class sporting environments of tennis, squash, badminton, rugby union and, most significantly, golf. From the late nineteenth century through to the 1960s, scores of Jews across Britain faced an 'anti-Semitism of exclusion' within golf and experienced a powerful level of discrimination from the golfing press, authorities and individual golf clubs. Such was the nature and extent of this discrimination, Jews interested in golf were forced to create 'parallel institutions' of their own to enable them to play in an environment free of anti-Semitism.⁷⁹

The wider social and occupational discrimination of Jews, of which golfing anti-Semitism in the twentieth century was one component, was not limited to this time period - having been prominent in various forms throughout modern Anglo-Jewish history.⁸⁰ However, this type of non-organised anti-Semitism intensified and became more apparent in the period from the end of the First World War onwards, as larger numbers of Jews moved out of the immigrant milieu and came into greater contact with the Gentile population. As Kushner has noted, 'increasing Jewish mobility' in the period after 1918 meant that 'contact with the

⁷⁸ Kushner, 'British Anti-Semitism'. p. 200; Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 204; Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 32.

⁷⁹ Eisen, 'Jewish History', p. 507; Eisen, 'Jews and Sport', p. 236.

⁸⁰ See for example, Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 270-271.

non-Jewish world could no longer be avoided', with the result being that these Jews met increasing levels of 'hostility' from the wider community.⁸¹

Whilst Jews faced discrimination from the indigenous working classes, it could be argued that 'the most serious anti-Semitism was located amongst the lower middle-classes'.⁸² The reaction of this section of British society to what they saw as a Jewish 'invasion' was 'defamation', 'whispering', 'sniggering' and occupational, educational and social discrimination in a variety of different environments.⁸³ For example, openly discriminatory job adverts against Jews were regularly placed in the pages of 'respectable newspapers' during the 1920s and 1930s, whilst Jews also 'faced discrimination from estate agents and hostility from neighbours' when moving house. There are numerous examples of Jews being banned from restaurants, hotels and boarding houses at this time, whilst several colleges and public schools introduced quotas for Jewish pupils. Jews were also refused insurance policies due to their apparently 'high-risk' status and also found 'formal and informal barriers' in place when trying to enter the 'various professions'.⁸⁴ As Endelman has noted, 'whilst this kind of racism was not systematic...it was common enough that few Jews could have avoided it altogether or been unaware of its existence'.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Kushner, 'British Anti-Semitism', pp. 200-201.

⁸² Kushner, *The Persistence*, p. 96. For working-class anti-Semitism see Endelman, *Radical Assimilation*, p. 193.

⁸³ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 199.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Kushner, 'British Anti-Semitism', pp. 200-201; Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 204; Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, pp. 32-33.

⁸⁵ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 199.

Jews entering into the middle classes between the 1900s and the 1960s also faced considerable discrimination in their leisure choices. This was especially true when they attempted to enter the inherently exclusive milieu of British ‘club-land’, which closely ‘represented the hierarchical structure of society and bourgeois class-consciousness’.⁸⁶ One typical example can be seen with regards to a large motoring club in Middlesbrough, which in 1933 was found to have introduced a quota for Jewish members.⁸⁷ Jews faced similar situations across the country in other social and leisure clubs where, as Lebzelter has noted, ‘usually there was no rationale behind such a policy except for an intuitive dislike of people who might have achieved wealth and social status but still carried the stigma of being different’.⁸⁸

This form of ‘anti-Semitism of exclusion’ was especially strong and visible with regards to middle-class sports clubs.⁸⁹ During the period from the 1890s through to the 1960s, there are numerous examples of Jews being openly or secretly discriminated against due to their religious background and finding their entrance into these organisations blocked due to anti-Semitic membership policies. In the 1940s and 1950s Jews living in Birmingham found it impossible to join local tennis and squash clubs due to anti-Semitism and responded by forming their own organisations.⁹⁰ As a young player, Angela Buxton, future Wimbledon doubles winner, was barred from the Cumberland Club in North London

⁸⁶ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 33.

⁸⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 December 1933.

⁸⁸ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 33.

⁸⁹ As Kushner has shown, it was this kind of ‘clubland’ discrimination which partly accounted for Governmental attitudes towards refugees and internment during the Second World War. Kushner, ‘Clubland’, pp. 79-101.

⁹⁰ Correspondence of author with Michael Leek, 8 August 2009.

because of her Jewish background.⁹¹ In Sunderland, local middle-class Jews were forced to form the ‘Sunderland Jewish Badminton Club’ because of anti-Semitism in local sporting clubs.⁹² In a reflection of similar trends in America, the middle-class British sporting environment responded to an ‘invasion’ of outsiders with discriminatory membership policies to limit Jewish involvement.⁹³

Anti-Semitism against Jewish sportsmen and women also prevalent in British golf - which, as Lowerson has noted, was ‘*the elite game for the urban...middle classes*’.⁹⁴ Jewish interest in the sport emerged during the late nineteenth century as an increasing number of courses were opened in suburban areas, making the sport much more accessible for Jews mainly living in urban areas at this time.⁹⁵ By the 1900s, an increasing number of adverts for golf holidays, courses and equipment began to be printed in the *Jewish Chronicle*, which in 1912 declared that there were an ‘ever-increasing’ number of golfers amongst the Jewish community.⁹⁶ During this decade, a number of English Jews, such as Albert Goldsmid and Edward Sassoon, became prominent in golfing circles, whilst Jews also began to experience some success at the elite level of the sport.⁹⁷ In 1908, EA Lassen, a

⁹¹ Bruce Schoenfeld, *The Match, Althea Gibson and Angela Buxton: How Two Outsiders – One Black, the Other Jewish – Forged a Friendship and Made Sports History* (New York, 2004), p. 38.

⁹² TWAS SX113/1, Constitution of the Sunderland Jewish Badminton Club, 1954.

⁹³ Eisen, ‘Jewish History’, p. 501.

⁹⁴ Lowerson, *Sport*, p. 130.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey Cousins, *Golf in Britain: A Social History from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (London, 1975), p. 139.

⁹⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 July 1908, 26 July 1912.

⁹⁷ For Goldsmid, see *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 October 1903. For Sassoon, see *Golf Illustrated*, 10 July 1908.

merchant and Old Rugbeian born in Bradford in 1876, won the coveted British Amateur Championship at Royal Sandwich.⁹⁸

Whilst ‘Anglicised’ and integrated Jews were often readily accepted by golf clubs and the golfing community, Jewish golfers from lower down the social scale often faced considerable anti-Semitism.⁹⁹ Whilst the sport has traditionally been associated with an exclusive attitude towards participation (female and artisan golfers both experienced prejudice at various points in the sport’s history), one of the ‘most powerful’ strands of discrimination within golf was directed towards Jews.¹⁰⁰ In a reflection of similar trends in the United States and Australia, Jewish golfers in Britain faced considerable hostility from the golfing press, golfing establishment and individual clubs across the whole period from the late Victorian era through to the 1960s.¹⁰¹ Golfing anti-Semitism was not only prevalent over a considerable period of time and geographically widespread (affecting every sizeable

⁹⁸ *Golf Illustrated*, 12 June 1908, 19 June 1908; *The Times*, 30 May 1908; *Bradford Daily Argus*, 29 May 1908, 3 June 1908.

⁹⁹ Cousins noted in 1975 that the Royal and Ancient, the traditional governing body of the sport, ‘has several Jewish members’, whilst both the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society also had several members throughout their history. Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 142. Another English Jew who became firmly embedded in the English golfing establishment was Lionel Leonard Cohen (1888-1973), a respected judge. Cohen, who was a skilled golfer, was a member of no less than nine different golf clubs throughout his life and achieved the ‘crowning glory’ of captaincy of the Royal and Ancient. Seemingly, for those Jews much higher up the social scale and much more familiar and integrated in the ‘club’ environment, golf was altogether more accessible. Wilberforce, ‘Cohen, Lionel Leonard’.

¹⁰⁰ Lowerson, *Sport*, p. 22. For prejudice within the sport towards female golfers, see Jane George, ‘An Excellent Means of Combining Fresh Air, Exercise and Society’: Females on the Fairways, 1890-1914’, *Sport in History*, 29, 3, 2009, pp. 333-353.

¹⁰¹ Levine has shown that during the 1920s and 1930s many Jewish immigrants found their entry into American golf clubs blocked due to their religious background. Levine, ‘Our Crowd at Play’, pp. 162-168. Likewise, Tatz has highlighted that similarly anti-Semitic membership policies were adopted by Australian golf clubs in the period from the early twentieth century through to the 1950s. Colin Tatz, *A Course of History: Monash Country Club: 1931-2001* (Sydney, 2002), p. 28.

Jewish community in Great Britain), but it originated from both individuals and organisations involved in the sport.¹⁰²

Anti-Semitism was a significant aspect of the experience of golf for scores of Jews from the 1890s through to the 1960s. Whether this came in the form of ‘casually virulent’ cartoons published in *Golf Illustrated*, ambivalence towards anti-Semitism on the part of the English Golf Union or, most importantly, discriminatory membership policies and attitudes from individual golf clubs, Jewish golfers faced a considerable level of hostility due to their religious background and the perceived ‘threat’ that they posed to this quintessentially British leisure pursuit. Across the country, Jewish men and women interested in the sport regularly found themselves the target of a non-organised, social form of anti-Semitism. Discrimination against them was often based on crude racist stereotypes and beliefs which had the effect of preventing the entry and acceptance of hundreds of Jews into the British golfing community.

Whilst golf has seen significant levels of anti-Semitism, it is also a sport in which Jews have actively responded to racism and discrimination through sporting means. Unwilling to allow anti-Semitism to prevent their enjoyment of the sport and access to the social and business opportunities it also offered, Jewish golfers strove to create their own ‘parallel institutions’ - clubs and courses which, symbolically, remained open to all non-Jewish golfers, regardless of race or creed. By opening their own clubs and pursuing an ‘integrationist’ membership policy, Jews protected their own sporting interests in the face

¹⁰² Lowerson, *Sport*, p. 22.

of a non-organised form of anti-Semitism that seriously affected their social and sporting lives. Effectively, the discrimination against Jewish golfers led to the separate development of Jewish golf and the creation of ‘parallel institutions’.

An examination of golf during this period highlights that the ‘anti-Semitism of exclusion’ faced by Jews in their social and occupational lives clearly extended into the world of British sport. In the distinctly British, middle-class milieu of golf, Jews were subjected to anti-Semitism based on their alleged ‘difference’ and the threat that they were believed to pose to the nature of the sport more generally and to the character of individual clubs. In response to this discrimination, Jews founded their own organisations and clubs which symbolically remained open to outsiders. Although this ensured that Jewish golfers could play without the fear of discrimination, the result of anti-Semitism within British golf was that a clear split along racial lines had been created.

‘Flashy’ Jews? Anti-Semitism in British Golf

As early as the 1890s, when it has been suggested that Jewish interest in golf first began to emerge, Jews interested in joining local golf clubs encountered considerable anti-Semitism. In the May 1894 issue of *Golf* (a weekly journal which was absorbed into *Golf Illustrated* in 1899) a letter was published from a regular correspondent entitled ‘The Exclusion of Jews from Golf Clubs’. ‘Fair Play’ asked ‘Sir, I am sure it would be interesting to know what the golfing fraternity thinks of a Manchester Golf Club that excludes all Jews from membership’. The author believed that this seemed an affront to efforts by local Jewish

philanthropists to help the non-Jewish population of the city. He noted his surprise at the discrimination against Jewish golfers when ‘the trustees of a Jew (the late David Lewis [a leading retail pioneer in the late nineteenth century]) have last week presented £70,000 to the Manchester Southern Hospital’. No further discussion of the letter was published in the newspaper.¹⁰³

Similar accounts of discrimination against Jewish golfers also emerged elsewhere in the golfing press during the pre-1914 period. In February 1911, a letter concerning the ‘qualification for membership of a golf club’ was published in *Golf Illustrated*, a newspaper founded in 1899 containing news on the ‘Royal and Ancient game’. The letter, which detailed one Jewish golfer’s attempts to become a member of a ‘club not nearly so high in the golfing firmament’ was written by a regular correspondent to the newspaper named ‘Truth’. He noted that

I am told what this club was. He [*Truth’s* Jewish friend] was asked to withdraw his name and for no other reason, so far as he can gather, save that the candidate was of the Jewish persuasion. I have no doubt that the nominee did not lose socially by his failure to join such a club. Christianity supplies plenty of bounders. And these Christian men, whilst thanking themselves that they are as not as other men, probably forgot that if there had been no Jews there would be no Christians.¹⁰⁴

Despite the publication of this letter, *Golf Illustrated* often itself demonstrated a ‘casually virulent’ form of anti-Semitism towards Jewish golfers in the period before the First World War.¹⁰⁵ At a time when increasing numbers of Jews were being drawn to the sport, the

¹⁰³ *Golf*, 11 May 1884.

¹⁰⁴ *Golf Illustrated*, 17 February 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Collins, ‘Jews’, p. 147.

newspaper began to publish a series of cartoons and fictional stories depicting Jewish players as foreign, 'flashy' and unsporting. The first cartoon was printed in 1910 and touched on notions of Jewish 'mistrust' by depicting two Jewish golfers named 'Ikey Junior' and 'Ikey Senior' talking in broken English.¹⁰⁶ The last cartoon was published in October 1912, a large imposing front-cover image of a swarthy, rotund Jewish golfer wearing a fur-lined coat and a large piece of jewellery around his neck. The golfer's clubs were dwarfed by the man's frame, insinuating, together with the passive nature of his face and his pound-sign emblazoned cap, a lack of sporting interest on his part, whilst also tapping into popular mythology about the Jewish money 'obsession' and 'ostentatious' behaviour.¹⁰⁷

Effectively, the cartoons were aimed at underlining the physical and psychological difference of the 'stereotyped' Jewish immigrant golfer; a 'sportsman' whose appearance and personal conception of British sport were distinctly 'foreign' and at odds with the British enthusiast. The visual message of the cartoons was reinforced on several occasions by sporadic written pieces about fictional Jewish golfers. These short written sketches depicted the Jewish golfing approach as being overly competitive and alluded to ideas about a Jewish 'win-at-all-costs' mentality which supposedly characterised their dealings in the fields of business and trade.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Golf Illustrated*, 4 February 1910.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 25 October 1912. For other anti-Semitic cartoons see, *Golf Illustrated*, 11 February 1910, 15 April 1910, 6 May 1910.

¹⁰⁸ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 19-21.



Figure 1 - Cartoon from *Golf Illustrated*, 4 February 1910.

These articles worked to emphasise the notion that the Jewish sporting attitude was completely 'alien' to the prevailing British sporting ethos of the time. For example, in 1910 an article entitled 'A Keen Match' was published, depicting a game between two Jewish golfers who spoke in broken English named Isaacs and Levy:

They were looking for a ball in the rough:
 ISAACS (suddenly finding one): Vat pall are you playing Levy?
 LEVY: Vat is dat?
 ISAACS: A Colonel.

LEVY: Dat is so! It is a Colonel I blay!
 ISAACS (affecting closer scrutiny of the ball): Sorry ole shap, put I see dis is a Challenger!
 LEVY: Ah, of course, I remember now – I but down a Challenger at de last dee, tidn't I poy?!

CADDY: Yus
 LEVY: Now den Isaacs!
 ISAACS (again looking at the ball): But I mistake. Dis is a Craigbank, so I keep him.
 PLAYER (hurrying up from the other side of the hedge): Excuse me, Sir, but I think that is my ball. I pulled horribly from the seventh. It's a Kite with a purple mark – yes, that's it! Thanks very much!
 LEVY: Dat done you one Isaacs!
 ISAACS (looking at his watch): As ofer fife minutes 'ave gone since you bekun de 'unt I claim de 'ole. Cheer up old poy!
 LEVY (to his caddy): When he get in de rough, shust leaf 'im alone and time him to de segund. 'Ere is my cold vatch – you ear poy?
 CADDY: Yus.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, a small piece about a fictional character named 'Isaacstein' claimed that the Jewish golfer often took two clubs to measure penalty shots, one short one for his opponents and one long one for himself, in order to gain an advantage.¹¹⁰

Sentiments such as these were not confined just to the golfing press. In 1924, the *Daily Mirror* ran an article entitled 'The Winning Hazard', documenting a fictional match play game between two golfers named 'Abrahams' and 'Cohen' which the latter had won by tricking his opponent into forfeiting the match. Ironically, this 'example' of un-sporting Jewish behaviour was published on the same day as reports of the victory of the English Jewish sprinter, 'the old Cantab' Harold Abrahams, in the 1924 Olympic Games 100 metres.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Golf Illustrated*, 2 September 1910.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 9 September 1910.

¹¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, 9 July 1924.

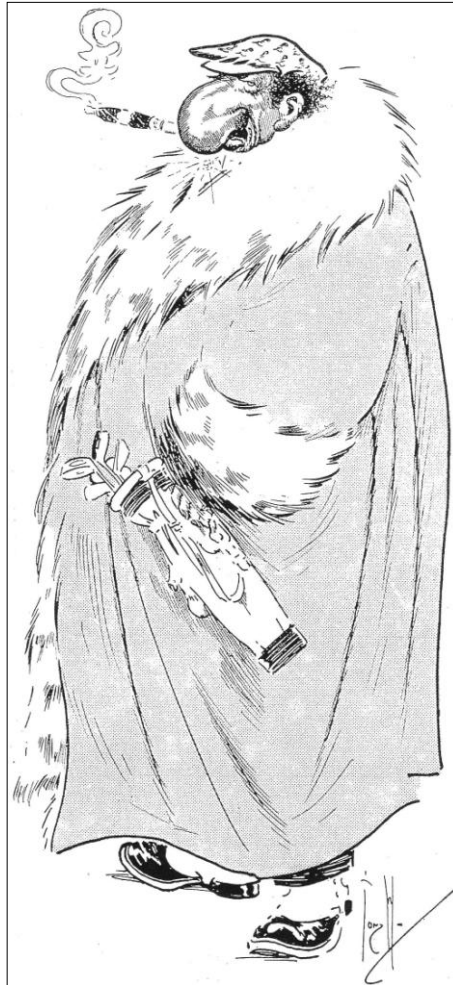


Figure 2 - Cartoon from *Golf Illustrated*, 25 October 1912

Whilst this form of anti-Semitism towards Jewish golfers seems to disappear in the period following the First World War, discrimination against Jews by golf clubs became much more prevalent in the post-1918 period. Seemingly, this racism is linked with socio-economic change occurring within Anglo-Jewry from this point onwards. During the interwar years, greater numbers of second and third generation Jews left the original urban areas of immigrant settlement behind and experienced considerable 'residential and

economic mobility'.¹¹² Similarly, in the period following the Second World War, Anglo-Jewry became much more dispersed across Britain. From the late 1940s, 'suburbanisation...accelerated' as a result of evacuation, destruction caused by the War, the expansion of secondary and tertiary education and a general increase in affluence. As is reflected with other Western Jewish populations, between 1945 and the mid 1960s Anglo-Jewry became increasingly 'middle-class in character'.¹¹³

It was inevitable that the growing Jewish middle-classes – many of them second, third and fourth generation immigrants – would become interested in golf; a sport so closely connected to this social class within Britain. However, as these Jews moved closer in physical, social, cultural, economic and sporting terms to their non-Jewish peers, they experienced a considerable level of hostility. Part of this broader trend for 'social' discrimination is evident within golf. From the 1920s through to the 1960s, many socially mobile Jews faced considerable racism from golf clubs, especially when seeking membership of these organisations. Whilst not all clubs banned Jewish applicants, evidence suggests that a wide variety of methods of discrimination were used by many organisations. A diverse mix of reasons were given for excluding and attacking the Jewish golfer – many of which drew inspiration from traditional stereotypes surrounding the Jewish population and an irrational belief in the un-sporting nature of the Jewish immigrant.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Endelman, *The Jews*, pp. 198-201.

¹¹³ Ernest Krausz, 'The Economic and Social Structure of Anglo-Jewry' in Gould and Esh, *Jewish Life in Modern Britain*, p. 31.

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Richard Holt, 'Golf and the English Suburb: Class and Gender in a London Club, c1890-c1960', *The Sports Historian*, 18, 1, 1998, p. 82. Holt notes that in 1950 the Club Captain of the Stanmore Golf Club, located in North London, minuted his opinion that 'a candidate shall not be refused election merely because of his Race'. Holt concedes, however, that the 'reason for widening access seems to have less

On occasion, discrimination against Jewish golfers could be openly and freely admitted to by clubs seeking to prevent Jewish golfers from becoming members of their institutions. In 1960, the *Jewish Chronicle* undertook an ‘exhaustive investigation’ into anti-Semitism in the sport which looked at racism in golf on a national level. Over the course of a number of months, the newspaper published its findings in a series of special reports which demonstrated that Jewish golfers across Britain were experiencing unconcealed discrimination and racism on a frequent basis when attempting to join private clubs. One Jewish golfer claimed that after being informed of vacancies for membership at Hampstead Golf Club and subsequently applying, he was openly told that ‘there is no discrimination here, but the Committee never elects Jews’.¹¹⁵

Even in clubs where Jews ‘figured prominently’ amongst both the membership and the club’s Committee, it could sometimes be the case that anti-Semitic membership policies could be openly introduced. This is what reportedly occurred in one club in Yorkshire, which was founded by a number of local businessmen, including several ‘prominent Jews’, in the early twentieth century and attracted a number of Jewish members. In 1915, the club’s Committee informed current Jewish members ‘not to nominate any more members of their faith’. After a backlash by the Jewish members the resolution was eventually

to do with changing social attitudes after the horrors of Nazism than the immediate financial needs of the Club’. He claimed that the Captain’s statement demonstrated the club’s need for new membership after the Second World War led to a considerable drop in the number on the organisation’s rolls. Endelman, *The Jews*, pp. 198-201.

¹¹⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 March 1960.

withdrawn and a number of Jews were invited to take up positions in office at the club as a result.¹¹⁶

Whilst it was generally rare that clubs would admit to anti-Semitic attitudes, there were indeed a number of occasions where Jewish golfers were openly refused membership because of their faith. In 1960, the *Hendon Times* interviewed a German Jewish golfer who had reportedly been refused membership by a number of local golf clubs because of his religion. The golfer, who claimed he had failed in applications to 10 different clubs over a three year period, noted that ‘one Secretary had the audacity to agree with me that if I had been a German Gentile I would have been admitted’.¹¹⁷

Although some adopted openly anti-Semitic membership policies, most golf clubs used much more secretive and concealed means of discrimination against Jews. One of the most common selection methods used by ‘private’ institutions to ensure that prospective members were agreeable to the majority was the ‘blackball’ system – a method of election using a ballot which allowed individuals to voice their concern, anonymously, over the suitability of potential members and veto their membership. In self-perpetuating private institutions, such as the Freemasons, guilds and private sports clubs, such systems were used to ensure that prospective members were ‘acceptable’ to the majority. The ‘blackball’ was believed to be a vital means in ensuring that the ethos and exclusivity of the club was maintained. Obviously, as votes of this kind were secret, they often proved a significant

¹¹⁶ *Yorkshire Post*, 23 April 1923 quoted in Ted Hyman, *A History of Moor Allerton Golf Club* (Moor Allerton, 2001), p. 6.

¹¹⁷ *Hendon Times*, 1 April 1960.

hurdle for Jewish golfers seeking membership of clubs to overcome, as the prejudice of a minority could effectively prevent the will of the majority being carried out.

There are numerous examples where Jewish golfers suffered from the ‘blackball’ system, even when the clubs they were applying to already had a number of Jewish members. In 1948, it was noted that two Jewish golfers applied for membership of one golf club on Merseyside and were subsequently blackballed, despite the fact that the Club already had a small number of Jewish members.¹¹⁸ Similarly, in the 1950s, Michael Leek, an ex-officer in the British Army during World War Two, sought membership at a club in Worcestershire, where his father and uncles were long standing members and financial donors. Despite his evident suitability, Michael’s application was initially rejected due to a single ‘blackball’, for no other apparent reason than his religious background:

When I came out of the army, he [Michael’s father Eric] wanted me to join North Worcester, so I went up and was interviewed by them. In those days, clubs used to operate a secret blackball system. I was blackballed. Just come out of the army, I was a fine, upstanding, public school lieutenant in the army and I was blackballed. Why? Because I was Jewish, although he [Eric Leek] had been in the club for years. He kicked up a hell of a fuss about it and eventually they found out who it was who blackballed me and he was asked to resign from the club and eventually I became a member.¹¹⁹

Whilst the ‘blackball’ may have been one such method used to keep Jewish numbers limited, some clubs instigated a more formal quota system for non-Jewish members. On occasion, such quotas were freely admitted and discussed, but for the large part they were

¹¹⁸ Geoff Swift, ‘Are You Made Up?’ *The Story of a Golf Club: Lee Park Golf Club, 1954-2004* (Liverpool, 2004), p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Interview with author, 29 July 2009

kept secret from potential Jewish members. In 1960, the *Hendon Times* discovered that anti-Semitic membership policies were relatively widespread at a number of golf clubs in the north London area. Spurred on by their interview with a German Jewish golfer who had experienced discrimination first-hand, the newspaper launched its own investigation into anti-Semitism in several local clubs and found that quota systems were in widespread use. At the Finchley Golf Club, it was claimed that there was an ‘unwritten rule’ that only a few Jews could be admitted. When questioned by the reporter, the Hendon Golf Club freely acknowledged a quota system was in place for Jewish golfers: ‘we do accept them, but only in certain numbers’.¹²⁰

Further evidence of quota systems being used with regards to Jewish golfers emerged at a conference concerning ‘Anti-Semitism and Racial Incitement’ held in March 1960. One speaker, the Bishop of Southwark, Dr Mervin Stockwood (1913-1995), claimed that he had received evidence to indicate that quota systems were in use at a number of clubs in and around Greater London. He recounted a letter he had received from Mr Moss Kaye, a Jewish golfer from Edgware, who claimed he had approached the Bushey Hall Golf Club in Hertfordshire after seeing a notice in the club asking for new members, but was told ‘sorry, we have a quota for Jews and it is full’.¹²¹ Similar sentiments towards female Jewish golfers were also uncovered with regards to Hendon Golf Club and Highgate Golf Club in North

¹²⁰ *The Hendon Times*, 1 April 1960. It was noted in the *Jewish Chronicle* that Hendon had a 5% cap on Jewish members. *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 March 1960.

¹²¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 March 1960.

London. On applying to one golf club, a female Jewish golfer was ‘told by the Secretary that if Jews were accepted there would be no room for ordinary people’¹²²

For the vast majority of Jewish golfers who faced discrimination when seeking membership at private clubs, it was often the case that a wall of silence was encountered from the institutions concerned. The typical scenario can be seen by again referring to the experiences of the German Jewish golfer recounted in the *Hendon Times* in 1960. In the article, the golfer discussed his experiences when applying for membership at the Mill Hill Golf Club in North London. After meeting the committee on two separate occasions and then speaking to the club captain on the matter, the golfer heard no more concerning his application. Despite writing to the club twice in the following months, the golfer received no reply. Similar situations occurred when the golfer applied to clubs in the Rickmansworth, Highgate and Pinner areas.¹²³

This situation is also reflected in the experiences of golfers in provincial Jewish communities. In the 1930s, Sydney Lea was encouraged by his two non-Jewish friends to apply for membership at the Heaton Park Golf Club, Manchester. Despite Sydney’s reservations - aware of the situation facing Jewish golfers around the country, he reportedly said ‘they won’t have me, I’m Jewish’ - he applied and was seconded by his two friends. Several months went by without hearing from the club, until a chance meeting with the captain led one of Sydney’s friends to raise the matter:

¹²² Ibid. 18 March 1960; Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 140.

¹²³ *Hendon Times*, 1 April 1960.

So the Captain came along and we were all stood there talking, the three of us, the two Whittaker brothers, and he called them. Tom Whittaker said 'What's this? You've not let Syd know, he's not had his card to join the club'. So he looked at me, this Captain, and said 'Why don't you join the Whitefield Club [a Jewish golf club founded in Manchester in 1932]?' I said 'Do you want a smack in the eye, coz you'll bloody well get it!' So Whittaker the younger one said 'Why ain't you let him know, what you telling him to join another club for? He wants to join here, we're friends'. So the Captain said 'Well, I've not heard from the Committee', I said 'You know quite well what it is, it's because I'm Jewish, they wont take it'.

Sydney's two non-Jewish friends subsequently challenged the Committee on the matter and received no reply, eventually choosing to surrender their membership in protest of the treatment of their friend.¹²⁴

When challenged on their anti-Semitic membership policies, most clubs hid behind the defence that they were private institutions and could refuse any potential member if they felt them 'undesirable' or potentially damaging to their affairs or reputation. This view was supported by the golfing authorities of the time, as evidenced by correspondence between the Council of Christians and Jews and the English Golf Union in 1954. In that year the Council contacted the EGU to protest at reports of anti-Semitism in a club in Blackpool. The Union was implored to do more to combat anti-Semitism, but replied with a curt and dismissive response which stated that the Union would not 'interfere' with the private affairs of affiliated clubs: 'The Union does not assume any moral obligation of the sort you propose as this would involve intrusion into the domestic concerns of the private clubs, many of which are largely social institutions which conduct their affairs much along the

¹²⁴ MJM J309, Interview with Sydney Lea

lines of other social clubs'.¹²⁵ When challenged on the subject by the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1960, the Captain of the EGU, WGL Folkard, claimed he knew nothing of discrimination towards Jews in golf, but defended a club's right to ban Jews by noting 'a golf club is the extension of one's own home, the election of new members is a purely domestic matter'.¹²⁶

There also seemed to be a degree of popular support for golf clubs following discriminatory membership policies. In the immediate aftermath of the *Hendon Times* investigation into local golfing anti-Semitism in 1960, the newspaper received correspondence noting support for the 'right' of private clubs in matters concerning membership. One letter asked, 'surely the members of a club have a right to exclude or to admit anyone they wish to, Jew or Gentile?' Another correspondent defended anti-Semitic discrimination in this way and claimed that Jews were sullyng the spirit of the private club. Jews are wrong, he argued, to believe that they have a natural right to entry to these organisations: 'No one, regardless of his religion, can walk into a members' club and demand admission'.¹²⁷

Due to the secrecy surrounding the application process it is difficult to directly assess the reasons and motivations underpinning this form of anti-Semitism. Certainly, a basic xenophobic and racist fear of 'outsiders' is no doubt partly to blame, but there were some occasions where more specific 'reasons' for discrimination against Jews did emerge. In

¹²⁵ UoSSC MS65, Correspondence between Council of Christians and Jews and English Golf Union, 23 June 1954, 27 July 1954, 23 September 1954.

¹²⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1960.

¹²⁷ *Hendon Times*, 8 April 1960, 22 April 1960. Some Jewish golfers supported the right of private clubs to block entry of Jews. One correspondent to the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1960 claimed 'we may deplore their bigotry and bad manners, but there is nothing more we can or should do about it if we are to preserve our dignity. We cannot compel them to like us or want us'. *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1960.

many instances, stereotypical and racist viewpoints of Jews influenced and informed the decisions of private golf clubs to block, or limit, Jewish members. Many of these beliefs were speculative and narrow-minded and the ‘threat’ that Jewish golfers posed to both the sporting and social element of golf was often irrationally overemphasised. Much focused on the idea that Jews were markedly different in their outlook, attitude and demeanour and clubs supposedly felt the need to discriminate against them in order to prevent the nature of the sport being undermined and harmed both on and off the course.¹²⁸

One charge often levelled against Jewish golfers, and frequently highlighted to explain their exclusion or discrimination by clubs, focused upon their supposed ‘clannishness’. It was argued that allowing one Jewish golfer in or letting current Jewish members freely elect more of their ‘own kind’ was potentially very dangerous for the club, which would soon be ‘overrun’ and changed out of all recognition. In 1923, the *Yorkshire Post* defended golf clubs in their locality against allegations of anti-Semitism in the *Jewish Chronicle*.¹²⁹ Whilst admitting that Jews had experienced difficulties in gaining membership at local clubs, the article felt it was ‘absurd’ to claim that this was because of anti-Semitism, before going on to say:

Like other people, the Jew suffers from the defects of his virtues. One of these virtues is ‘clannishness’ or perhaps a more polite way to put it would be to say that he is intensely loyal to his own folk. When a Jew joins a golf club, he wants all his family and friends to share his pleasure. Consequently, one sees happy family parties wandering around the links, following the matches of their relatives – a delectable enough thing in itself, but when the persons composing this party have no idea of the established usage of the game, it is rather

¹²⁸ Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 140.

¹²⁹ For the article on anti-Semitism in golf clubs in Leeds see *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 April 1923.

apt to be irritating to the serious minded British golfer...It is for definite, distinct and practical reasons such as these that the Jews have not become popular in golf clubs.¹³⁰

Jewish golfers themselves often believed that it was a club's fear of being 'overrun' that partly accounted for the discrimination they experienced. Sol Bennett, playing on Merseyside in the 1940s and 1950s, believed that clubs would purposely limit Jewish numbers 'as they were frightened that we might take over the club'.¹³¹ In Glasgow, Jewish golfers freely admitted that they believed local clubs were concerned they would be 'swamped' by Jews if they didn't practice anti-Semitic membership policies. One Jewish golfer in Glasgow in the post-World War Two period claimed that this was a 'big fear of non-Jews. There is a fear that once they see Jews in numbers, they are going to come in with an alien culture... Non-Jewish clubs are frightened that the Jews will take over'.¹³²

Some organisations argued that they limited numbers of Jewish members to prevent their inherently 'foreign' nature from changing the sporting and non-sporting atmosphere of the club. Such a belief is evidenced in the work of historian Geoffrey Cousins, who claimed that Jewish golfers had 'tastes' that were not conducive to a club's desire to keep costs and expense down. Additionally, he claimed that because 'the Jew is deeply interested in administration and finance' he would not be able to resist the urge to interfere in the business side of the club.¹³³ As Cousins suggested, the average club member often had

¹³⁰ Quoted in Hyman, *A History of Moor Allerton*, p. 7.

¹³¹ Swift, 'Are You Made Up?', p. 4.

¹³² SJAC Interview with Philip Jacobson, 11 May 1989.

¹³³ Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 140.

pragmatic, yet still inherently racist, concerns about Jewish golfers. They feared that allowing Jews who were ‘flashy’ in their tastes and poor patrons of the bar to join their clubs in high numbers, would lead to higher membership fees to cover the shortfall. Evidence in this respect was uncovered by the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1960. Its investigations found that the ‘fear’ of higher subscriptions due to ‘modest’ Jewish drinking habits was common and helped to explain the passive anti-Semitism faced by Jewish golfers when applying for membership at private clubs.¹³⁴

The other factor put forward to ‘explain’ discrimination harked back to *Golf Illustrated*’s anti-Semitic cartoons and stories surrounding the supposedly ‘un-sporting’ nature of the Jewish golfer. Although rarely going into specific details, many clubs claimed that the ‘unsatisfactory behaviour on the golf course’ of Jewish golfers was another reason for their apprehension to admit Jews more freely. Clubs feared that their reputation could be damaged by ‘foreign’ Jews who did not understand the finer nuances of etiquette surrounding the game. For instance, the 1923 *Yorkshire Post* article about anti-Semitism in local clubs claimed that as ‘golf to the Jew is a new game...he has not yet acquired the appreciation of the game that comes instinctively to the ordinary Britisher’. The allegation was that whilst Jews might be able to play the game, they failed to approach it in the right spirit or in the correct ‘sporting’ manner.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 March 1960

¹³⁵ Quoted in Hyman, *A History of Moor Allerton*, p. 7. As we have seen, the alleged ‘un-sporting’ nature of Jews was a recurring theme in the anti-Semitic propaganda of the British Union of Fascists and golf was one sport which did not escape their focus. See above, pp. 278-280.

Despite this ‘evidence’ there seemed to be very little truth in the suggestion that Jewish golfers were any less sporting in their play or in their off-course outlook than the average non-Jewish golfer. Indeed, some sources claimed that Jewish golfers could display a remarkably better attitude than their Gentile counterparts. Cousins has suggested that Jewish golfers were generally very hospitable toward guests and eager contributors to local charitable and philanthropic endeavours linked to their clubs.¹³⁶ One professional golfer commented to the *Jewish Chronicle* that ‘his travels throughout numerous golf clubs had left him of the opinion that Jews were keener members than non-Jews and that they knew more about golfing etiquette’.¹³⁷

‘Parallel Institutions’: The Jewish Response to Anti-Semitism in Golf

Evidently, Jewish golfers faced considerable hostility from the golfing press, establishment and individual golf clubs. This had the effect of limiting these golfers’ ability to become members of many clubs and restricted their opportunities to play the sport in the same manner as their non-Jewish peers. Such discrimination, however, did not pass unnoticed by the wider public and could sometimes have ramifications which went beyond the realms of the sport itself. For instance, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, anti-Semitism at one golf club in North London had a considerable political impact. In the aftermath of the 1957 local council elections, evidence was brought to the public’s attention in the *Hendon Times* concerning the wholesale discrimination of Jews applying to Finchley Golf Club – claims

¹³⁶ Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 140.

¹³⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 March 1960

that were made more controversial by the fact that the club had several Conservative councillors on its board and was partly funded out of local rates.¹³⁸

Local Jewish and non-Jewish voters used the power of the ballot box to protest at the treatment of local Jewish golfers. Over the subsequent decade, the Liberal Party ‘pursued’ this matter and underwent a significant local revival - something which political commentators attributed to a shift in allegiance of the ward’s Jewish population (which was reported as about 20% of the total) because of the actions of the golf club and its links to the Conservative Party. The incident was reported to have seriously affected Jewish voting patterns in the ward, as evidenced by one survey of local Jews which concluded that 66% had switched political allegiance due to the actions of Finchley Golf Club. It has even been suggested that the local Conservative MP, future Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, adopted a consciously pro-Jewish stance after 1964 in order to protect her seat.¹³⁹

Although this episode demonstrates a wider, non-sporting response to anti-Semitism in golf, it did not necessarily help provide Jewish golfers the opportunities and facilities to play the sport free of discrimination.¹⁴⁰ As appeals to the golfing authorities had proved ineffective, and because many Jewish golfers themselves believed it fruitless and ‘bad form’ to question a club’s decision about membership, they were forced to find alternative ways to play the sport – resulting in the formation of several Jewish touring societies and

¹³⁸ *Hendon Times*, 31 May 1957.

¹³⁹ Brian Donoghue, ‘Finchley’ in David Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1964* (London, 1965), pp. 241-253; Alderman, *Modern British*, pp. 336-337.

¹⁴⁰ In 1957, the requirement to state religion was removed from the application forms for membership of the Finchley Golf Club – in theory making it easier for Jewish golfers to become members. See *Hendon Times*, 28 June 1957.

golf clubs. In doing this, Jewish golfers in Britain mirrored a ‘process’ followed by Jews elsewhere in Western society who had been excluded from social and sporting organisations. As Eisen has noted, it was common for Jews in Central Europe, America and Australia from the late nineteenth century onwards to form ‘parallel institutions as a response to blatant discrimination and exclusionary policies’ within non-Jewish organisations.¹⁴¹ Evidently, the decision of British Jews to form their own organisations in golf, and other middle class sports, was not a trend noticeable only within British Jewry.¹⁴²

The first Jewish golf club to open in Britain was the Moor Allerton Golf Club in Yorkshire in 1923. The course, and accompanying facilities for tennis, was built on farm land near the town of Alwoodley, north of Leeds, with funds raised from the local Jewish community. Amongst the 170 original shareholders, communal and lay leaders of Leeds Jewry, as well as numerous prominent Jewish business leaders, were all represented.¹⁴³ The motivation of this group to create their own golf club was clearly driven by anti-Semitism and discrimination experienced by local Jewish golfers in the early twentieth century. The ‘guiding spirit and inspiration’ for forming the club, local cloth merchant and first Chairman of Moor Allerton, Abraham Fraiss, had experienced discrimination at the Garforth Golf Club and in 1922 brought many members of Leeds Jewry together to raise the idea of

¹⁴¹ Eisen, ‘Jews and Sport’, p. 236.

¹⁴² As seen above, British Jews responded to anti-Semitism in a variety of middle-class sports by forming their own ‘parallel institutions’. For instance, in Manchester, the Waterpark Club was founded after a local businessman’s daughters had been refused entry to the Prestwich Tennis Club. Waterpark went on to become an important centre for sport and leisure for Manchester’s Jewish youth. Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, pp. 138-139; *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 February 1927.

¹⁴³ Hyman, *A History of Moor Allerton*, p. 16. Contemporary reports suggested that the first ever ‘Jewish’ golf club was founded in 1916 in Quaker Ridge, New York, United States of America.

forming a Jewish course with additional facilities for tennis. One account of that meeting noted:

He told us that his concern was not particularly for the present generation, but he had felt with trepidation for the next generation. He could see young boys and girls growing up into men and women with no opportunity or outlet for healthy recreation and owing to circumstances which we all well knew, the chances of so many of our Community being banned from golf courses and tennis courts was becoming more than apparent. With fervour, he expressed his views that we had a duty to the next generation to see that this matter was dealt with immediately.¹⁴⁴

The club, which also had a thriving tennis section, had 150 playing members by 1937 - a figure which had expanded to 650 by the time of the 1958 AGM.¹⁴⁵

The second Jewish golf club to open was the Whitefield Club, founded in North Manchester in October 1932. Like Moor Allerton, the course and clubhouse at Whitefield was built with the assistance and finances of the wider Manchester Jewish community. The locally well-known German-Jewish Cassel family, who had made their fortune through construction, were pivotal in bringing together a group of Jewish businessmen to raise money to secure the lease of the land for the course in June 1932. The first nine-holes of the course were formally opened on 30 October 1932, with the other nine finished by June 1933.¹⁴⁶

Like its counterpart in Yorkshire, the formation of Whitefield was firmly driven by anti-Semitism and the desire of a section of Manchester Jewry's golfing community to play their

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 33, 47.

¹⁴⁶ Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, p. 138; *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 January 1936.

sport in a friendly atmosphere.¹⁴⁷ In 1936, the *Jewish Chronicle* printed an article entitled ‘The Whitefield Club: Its Genesis and Progress’, which noted:

Some years ago many reputable and substantial members of the Jewish community found their applications for membership of certain clubs turned down – solely on account of their being Jews. Fortified rather than mortified by their experience, a number of these gentlemen met to discover ways and means of founding a golf club which Jews could join and be proud of, and in which the spirit of sportsmanship in the best sense would be paramount.¹⁴⁸

In smaller provincial Jewish communities, it was often the case that Jewish golfing societies would be formed in order to help local Jews play together and avoid the anti-Semitism and persecution often faced when trying to join private clubs. In 1931, a golf section was formed at the Glasgow Jewish Institute and was followed by societies in Merseyside (1948), Birmingham (1949), Southport (1950), Sheffield (1951), Belfast (1951), Sussex (1952), the North-East (1953), Nottingham (1959) and Blackpool (1963). These groups, which could range from a dozen up to over 100 members, played as touring private societies at local clubs and local municipal courses. Society days, an important source of income for golf clubs, were open to Jewish organisations such as these because they could be hosted without any permanent attachment to the club being created. Regular

¹⁴⁷ Ernest Schlesinger, *Creating Community and Accumulating Social Capital: Jews Associating with other Jews in Manchester* (London, 2003).

¹⁴⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 January 1936. By the end of its first year, Whitefield had a total of 406 members, growing to over 800 during the 1950s. Schlesinger, *Creating Community*.

competitions would be held both within and between individual Jewish societies on a regular basis, meaning that a network of Jewish golfers was built up across the country.¹⁴⁹

Over time, some of the larger societies began to realise that this kind of arrangement was untenable in the long term. As many of these groups grew larger, the idea of raising funds to build or purchase their own clubs became more and more popular. The Glasgow Jewish Institute's golf section, for instance, grew so rapidly during its first five years that the need for privately-controlled golfing facilities quickly became apparent. In 1956, the opportunity to purchase the Bonnyton Moor Golf Club, South of Glasgow, arose and a 'prodigious effort' was made within Glasgow Jewry to raise the necessary finance. On 19 May 1957, the Bonnyton Moor Golf Club was formally re-opened with Jewish owners, an occasion, recounted in the *Glasgow Jewish Echo*, which saw over 700 people in attendance with the clubhouse 'gaily bedecked for the occasion with Union Jacks and Blue and White flags'.¹⁵⁰

Jewish golfing societies located elsewhere gradually became interested in the idea of buying or building their own clubs and having a permanent base. In 1953 the Merseyside Jewish Golfing Society collected together money in order to purchase a farm estate in Netherley. The result of this was that in May 1954 the first six holes of the Lee Park Golf Club were formally opened. The brochure announcing the purchase of the land and, outlining plans for the course, noted that 'the venture, when established, will provide for

¹⁴⁹ Hyman, *A History of Moor Allerton*, p. 112; SJAC Bonnyton Golf Club History brochure: 1957-2007, p. 3; TWAS SX124/2/1, North-Eastern Jewish Golfing Society AGM Minutes, 11 December 1967.

¹⁵⁰ SJAC, Bonnyton History, pp. 2-5.

ourselves and our children a centre where we will be able to meet in an atmosphere entirely free from prejudice'. By 1959, club membership had grown to 428.¹⁵¹

Within a year of the Birmingham Jewish Golfing Society's foundation in 1949 over 100 members had joined, including leading figures from Birmingham Jewry's religious, social and political elites. In September 1950, the idea of finding private facilities was first mooted and gained considerable support within the Society. In the space of one month over £10,000 was raised through the donations of members. Despite the evident desire of the Society to find and purchase a permanent base, the leaders remained 'sensitive' both to the feelings of local non-Jewish golfers and to the potential reception they would receive if they purchased a 'going concern'. Society leaders feared that pursuing the option of buying an established club would cause 'resentment' within the club with 'over 100 members of the Jewish faith suddenly descending on their golf course' and remained keen to purchase land and construct their own course from scratch. In May 1955, with the financial support of members, sections of Birmingham Jewry and several bank loans and overdrafts, the Society purchased the derelict Shirley Park racecourse, before spending a further £11,400 on building the course and clubhouse over the next three years. The first nine holes were opened in June 1958, with the homewards nine completed in November 1958.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Swift, *Are you made up?*, pp. 3-6. [L]iverpool [R]ecord [O]ffice 296JSC/1/7/1, 'Brochure announcing some details of the new Lee Park Golf Club'

¹⁵² Interview with Michael Leek, 28 July 2009. Bill Hiscox, *Shirley Golf Club: The First 40 Years, 1955-1995* (Birmingham, 1995), pp. 36-37.

There were a variety of other means by which Jewish golfers could play the sport in a friendlier and more amenable club environment. It was also the case, especially in the London area, that small groups of Jewish golfers either created clubs on an equal basis with Gentile partners or purchased and took over pre-existing clubs. With the Potters Bar Golf Club in North London, it was reported that a group of Jewish and non-Jewish businessmen came together in 1923 to build the club in order to provide a friendly atmosphere in which Jewish golfers could play. Although Potters Bar was created on an equal basis between Jewish and non-Jewish members, the former soon made up the majority, due mainly to the anti-Semitism prevalent within many North London clubs. By the late 1930s over 85% of the membership was Jewish.¹⁵³

Although not founded by Jews, a number of other clubs in the Greater London region became the home for large numbers of Jewish golfers in the post-World War Two period. Both the Hartsbourne Country Club in Hertfordshire and the Coombe Hill Golf Club, based in Kingston-Upon-Thames, were not originally formed as Jewish clubs, but by the 1960s had effectively become so in that the vast majority of their membership were Jewish golfers. Hartsbourne reportedly had a number of Jews as founder members, but it was not until the 1940s that it came to be regarded in wider golfing circles as a Jewish club. Coombe Hill, however, was purchased by a group of Jewish golfers in 1946 that had been refused admission to other golf clubs in the Surrey region and wanted to play together in a friendly environment free of anti-Semitism.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 November 1937.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 25 March 1960

By the 1960s, a large network of ‘parallel institutions’ was created by the Jewish golfing community in order to allow them to play the sport in an environment free of anti-Semitism. By 1964 there were 11 ‘Jewish’ clubs (either founded or purchased by groups of Jewish golfers) in existence across Great Britain, all of which were located within close proximity of the main Jewish communities and areas of Jewish secondary, suburban settlement. One conservative estimate, taking into account both the membership of clubs and societies, would put the number of Jewish golfers at somewhere between 4000-4500 in 1960. In order to assist with the administration of the large Jewish golfing network, and to arrange matches and competitions between the various organisations, the Association of Jewish Golf Clubs and Societies was formed in 1949.¹⁵⁵

Symbolically, despite the discrimination faced first-hand by many Jewish golfers, all Jewish institutions noted openly that golfers of any colour, race or religion were free to join. Whilst these clubs may have been built, purchased or run by Jews, they all made it clear to the wider public that membership was open to all. The first Jewish club, Moor Allerton, made a resolution to attract non-Jewish golfers and pledged that ‘although its foundation was due to intolerance, membership would be open to all, irrespective of religion’. One source noted that Jewish clubs had a friendly reputation towards outsiders and visitors and applauded the fact that ‘Jewish clubs welcome visitors without introduction and only one has a definite rule requiring introduction by a member at all

¹⁵⁵ Cousins, *Golf In Britain*, p. 142; *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 April 1960.

times'.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Bonnyton Moor Golf Club was advertised as an 'open club...[with] no bar on the grounds of religion, race or colour'.¹⁵⁷

The fact that Jewish clubs were keen to adopt a non-discriminatory stance was a significant retort to the bigotry and anti-Semitism encountered by Jewish golfers in their dealings with 'private' non-Jewish clubs. However, it was also for practical and financial reasons, especially in clubs in the smaller provincial communities, that non-Jewish members were actively sought. The historian and former Captain of Shirley Golf Club in Solihull, William Hiscox, noted that part of the enthusiasm of the original Committee in seeking members outside of the Jewish faith was driven by practical considerations: 'The idea was to open the club to anyone...the Committee knew straight away that they needed new members and basically that they had to be non-Jewish because there weren't enough Jewish members at all to make it a viable project'. The Club's current President, Michael Leek, commented that Birmingham Jewry's relatively small size meant that it was inevitable and financially necessary to actively seek outside members.¹⁵⁸

At those Jewish clubs where non-Jews joined or visited in notable numbers, it was reported that there was a significant level of integration and friendliness.¹⁵⁹ One report in the

¹⁵⁶ Hyman, *A History of Moor Allerton*, p. 16; Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 141.

¹⁵⁷ SJAC, Interview with Philip Jacobson.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with William Hiscox, 28 July 2009; Interview with Michael Leek, 28 July 2009.

¹⁵⁹ In some provincial clubs, despite the conscious policy of openness and inclusiveness, non-Jews did not join in any significant number. The Bonnyton Moor Club, for example, may have publicly stated its desire to attract non-Jewish members, but for largely practical reasons the club initially drew a minimum number of golfers from outside the Jewish community. One member of Bonnyton claimed that the poor condition of the course, joined with the fact that the club was located at a considerable distance from Glasgow, meant that very few non-Jews joined. SJAC, Interview with Philip Jacobson.

Yorkshire Evening News from 1931 claimed that Moor Allerton was ‘one of the most popular of golfing resorts in the Leeds district’ and that non-Jewish visitors to the club abounded, especially at weekends. The draw of a course designed by a renowned architect, kept in excellent condition and easily accessible from Leeds was obvious, the article noted, but visitors were also attracted to the club for the whole-hearted and friendly welcome that they received from the Club committee and members.¹⁶⁰ Lee Park was often referred to locally as the ‘friendly club’, due to the hospitable welcome that visitors and guests received.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Shirley Golf Club has prided itself throughout its history on the level of integration between Jewish and non-Jewish members, a notable number of whom joined the club during its very early days in existence.¹⁶²

Many Jewish clubs attracted non-Jewish members in considerable numbers, testimony in part to their inclusive atmosphere but also indicative of the high quality facilities with which most Jewish clubs were blessed.¹⁶³ In 1937, the Potters Bar Golf Club claimed that 50 from a total of 400 members were non-Jewish, whereas by 1960 Coombe Hill Golf Club reportedly had 25% non-Jewish membership.¹⁶⁴ Numbers of non-Jews in provincial areas, where much smaller Jewish communities were found than in London, could often be much higher. By 1967, for instance, Shirley Golf Club in Solihull was 53% non-Jewish, a figure that rose to 65% by 1974.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ *Yorkshire Evening News*, 21 February 1931.

¹⁶¹ Swift, ‘*Are you made up?*’, p. 33.

¹⁶² Interview with William Hiscox, 28 July 2009. In recent years, concerns have been raised of the decreasing number of Jewish members of the various Jewish golf clubs. *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 August 2010.

¹⁶³ Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 142.

¹⁶⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 November 1937, 25 March 1960.

¹⁶⁵ Hiscox, *Shirley Golf Club*, p. 84.

Despite significant levels of integration, Jewish clubs did not receive an entirely positive reception from both the local population and the wider golfing community. In April 1937, for example, it was reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* that Potters Bar Golf Club had been the target of an attack by local vandals. As well as pouring acid onto the club's greens in the shape of a swastika, the intruders also painted anti-Semitic graffiti on the outside walls of the clubhouse.¹⁶⁶ Some within golfing circles criticised Jewish clubs for apparently catering for the 'flashy' tastes of their members. Cousins has noted that because many Jewish clubs were created from scratch and were furnished with modern facilities, the clubs themselves and the members were viewed by some as overly 'opulent and ostentatious'.¹⁶⁷

As well as being a cause for jealousy on the part of some non-Jewish golfers, it seems that the opening of 'parallel institutions' for golf had the effect of liberalising the membership policies of many local clubs. Seemingly, the irrational 'fear' that many clubs apparently felt concerning being 'taken over' by Jews was lessened if a Jewish club opened in the vicinity.¹⁶⁸ For example, one member of the Bonnyton Moor Golf Club noted that it had become markedly easier for a Jew to join a non-Jewish club after Bonnyton's opening in 1957. He remarked that 'now that there is a Jewish club, non-Jewish clubs are more ready to accept Jews'. He added that 'they know there's no danger of them being swamped...Knowing that there is a Jewish club in the area, they are not worried'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 April 1937.

¹⁶⁷ Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, p. 141.

¹⁶⁸ See, for instance, *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 September 1978; Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, pp. 140-141.

¹⁶⁹ SJAC, Interview with Philip Jacobson.

Despite evidence of a more ‘inclusive’ attitude on the part of some clubs, it is evident that what was effectively created within British golf was a form of sporting apartheid. In effect, Jews were forced to form their own clubs and pursue a line of separate development due to racial discrimination, not through a desire to appease non-Jewish golf clubs or because they were inherently different or ‘foreign’ compared to Gentile golfers. This occurred because a social, embedded and passive form of anti-Semitism in the sport blocked them from freely playing golf in the manner they wanted. Whilst the situation may have changed over time – evidence shows that significant levels of integration of non-Jewish golfers into Jewish clubs has occurred since the 1970s – anecdotal evidence suggests that some vestiges of the discriminatory attitude towards Jewish golfers still remains.¹⁷⁰

Significantly, the separate development of Jewish golf received some support from within the golf community. When he published his history of the sport in 1975, entitled *Golf in Britain: A Social History from the Beginning to the Present Day*, journalist and writer Geoffrey Cousins noted his belief that the creation of ‘parallel institutions’ in this way was a ‘logical and even desirable solution’. In a very thinly veiled anti-Semitic critique on ‘Jews in Golf’, Cousins remarked that ‘some of the differences’ between Jewish and non-Jewish golfers were ‘beyond elimination’. He concluded that the formation of Jewish golf clubs

¹⁷⁰ Shirley Golf Club, for instance, had over 70% non-Jewish membership by the 1970s. Hiscox, *Shirley Golf Club*, p. 84. Likewise, in 2004 Lee Park claimed to have only 25% Jewish membership, whereas Jewish golf clubs in Manchester have recently begun campaigns to recruit young Jewish members due to the severe decline in Jews involved in the club. Swift, *Are you made up?*, p. 33; Schlesinger, *Creating Community*. In the interview with Michael Leek, 28 July 2009, he claimed, without going into specific details, that several current Jewish members of the Shirley Park Golf Club had been refused membership elsewhere and that it seemed anti-Semitic membership policies were still being practised in a number of organisations locally.

and societies was a ‘practical’ step for people with ‘flamboyant and luxurious tastes’ and a ‘different outlook on life, different ideas on running a club and modest drinking habits.’¹⁷¹

Whilst there may have been support for the creation of separate Jewish golf clubs, some within the Jewish community attacked what they felt was a ‘ghetto’ mentality on the part of their co-religionists. It was argued that the formation of Jewish clubs and societies was a pragmatic response to anti-Semitism in the sport, but did nothing to tackle bigotry in the long term. According to one golfer who had experienced discrimination first hand, his fellow Jews were taking an overly apologetic course of action towards racism within the British golfing community. He remarked to the *Hendon Times* in 1960: ‘I could join a predominantly Jewish club – there is one at Potters Bar – but why should I? The ghetto is a thing of the past. Most of my business is with Gentiles. I want to feel free to work and play with them on equal standing’.¹⁷²

Evidently, from the earliest days of their involvement in the sport, Jewish golfers faced a considerable level of racism and discrimination from the British golfing community. From the late nineteenth century through to the 1960s, Jews interested in this typically ‘middle-class’ sport faced a particularly powerful form of ‘anti-Semitism of exclusion’. This had the effect of limiting their involvement and preventing them from participating in the sport on the same terms, in the same manner and on the same courses as many of their non-Jewish peers. Alongside their discrimination by local clubs, which was prevalent over a significant

¹⁷¹ Cousins, *Golf in Britain*, pp. 140-141.

¹⁷² *Hendon Times*, 1 April 1960.

time period and geographically widespread, Jewish golfers also faced anti-Semitism from the golfing press and the ambivalence (and arguably, ignorance) of the golfing authorities. Jews interested in golf, although not necessarily those at higher levels of society, were held to be 'foreign' in their demeanour, outlook and sporting mentality. Golfing anti-Semitism, in its British context, was largely characterised by an attempt to portray Jewish sportsmen and women as a threat to the sport – undermining the special nature of the sport and polluting it with their 'un-British' and 'alien' actions, traits and mentality.

Often hiding behind the defence of being a 'private' institution, which in the minds of the golfing authorities justified racial discrimination and prejudice, golf clubs blocked and limited entry to their sport to Jewish enthusiasts. For reasons often driven by ignorance or racism, the middle-class golf club 'set' – hailing from a section of the population responsible for other contemporary social and occupational anti-Semitism - were conservative in their outlook and sporting mentality and feared the potential for change that a more open attitude towards Jewish golfers symbolised. Ironically, the group which so many golf clubs were keen to bar were much more like themselves than they seemingly appreciated. Jews interested in golf were largely 'Anglicised', were socially, geographically and economically mobile, were sporting both on and off the course and were enthusiastic about golf and the social, business and leisure opportunities which the sport presented. Many of them were, in essence, the perfect golf club 'material'.

Not only did the Jewish community clearly face anti-Semitism in the sporting arena, but they also used sport as means of responding to discrimination and racism. Whilst some

Jewish golfers may have preferred a more direct approach to tackling anti-Semitism in their sport, Jewish enthusiasts, often with the considerable support of their local communities, found ways and means to play golf in a friendlier and more agreeable environment. The eagerness and resourcefulness shown by the Jewish golfing community in establishing 'parallel institutions', which symbolically remained open to non-Jews, points to the communal spirit of the Jewish population and also demonstrates the evidently high regard in which they held their participation in this and other 'middle-class' sports. The paradox of the 'separate' development of Jewish golf is that the drive, finances, enthusiasm and sportsmanship of the Jewish golfing community could have greatly benefited the non-Jewish golfing population if bigotry and racism had not been present.

Significantly, the case study of anti-Semitism in golf highlights an aspect of life in 'middle' England where Jews were prevented from engaging more fully with the British majority due to discrimination and bigotry. The work of a number of scholars of Anglo-Jewry has shown us that many socially and economically mobile Jews faced a 'social' form of anti-Semitism which impacted significantly on their social, educational and occupational lives. An analysis of golf demonstrates that this kind of discrimination against Jews clearly extended to the world of sport - a sphere of life where sections of the non-Jewish community were vehemently racist in the face of an 'invasion' by a foreign, alien element. Between the 1890s and 1960s, and indeed beyond this period according to some sources, golf was one significant area of British life where Anglo-Jewry faced a particularly ignorant and widespread form of racism and social discrimination.

Kicking Discrimination into Touch? Sporting Responses to Anti-Semitism

As is evident within the example of golf, sport was not only an arena where Jews experienced anti-Semitism, but it was also a milieu in which they formed pro-active responses to discrimination and prejudice. In the period from the First World War through to the 1960s, there are numerous other examples from within the sporting world of a similar attitude towards anti-Semitism being shown by the mainstream of Anglo-Jewish society. Evidence shows that, some Jews experiencing sporting anti-Semitism vigorously opposed their discrimination, whereas sport was also seen on several occasions as an environment where racism towards Jews in wider society could be combated. Seemingly, for many British-born working or lower-middle class Jews, sport was one way in which anti-Semitism evident within sport and wider British society could be challenged and undermined.

In this respect, the world of sport provides clear reflections on the varied ways in which Anglo-Jewry more generally responded to anti-Semitism in the period from the Russo-Jewish immigration. More specifically, sport gives another indication of the different approaches taken towards combating anti-Semitism by both the established community and 'grass-roots' individuals and organisations. As Kushner has noted, an 'anti-anti-Semitic tradition' can be detected within the British Jewish community going back to the period of mass immigration in the 1880s.¹⁷³ A variety of scholars, in addressing many different

¹⁷³ Kushner, *The Persistence*, p. 163.

periods of modern Anglo-Jewish history, have noted that there existed a discernible polarisation between the reaction and attitudes towards anti-Semitism on the part of the Anglo-Jewish elites and mainstream Jewry.¹⁷⁴

With regards to the established community, it has often been the case that their response to anti-Semitism was characterised by a non-confrontational approach. Official bodies such as the Board of Deputies generally ‘proved reluctant to take public action when confronted with open hatred’, whilst the Anglo-Jewish elites more generally felt that ‘tolerance’ and ‘liberalism’ would ‘neutralise’ what they viewed as ‘scattered attempts to stir anti-Semitic feeling’.¹⁷⁵ Communal organisations generally ‘preferred behind the scenes diplomacy’ as opposed to directly challenging discrimination, as shown on a number of occasions during the pre-1914 period.¹⁷⁶ Their often passive attitude towards challenging anti-Semitism was most evident during the 1930s, when the Anglo-Jewish elites conformed to the ‘general policy of appeasement’.¹⁷⁷ They repeatedly refused to tackle contemporary discrimination and Fascism directly and criticised those within the community who chose to take this course of action. In 1936, Dan Frankel, Labour MP for Mile End, called on his co-

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance, *Ibid.* pp. 164-169; Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. liii; Elaine Smith, ‘Jewish Responses to Political anti-Semitism and Fascism in the East End of London, 1920-1939’ in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (Eds), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 60-67; Smith, ‘Jews and Politics’, p. 159; Cesarani, ‘The East London’, p. 51.

¹⁷⁵ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁶ Kushner, *The Persistence*, p. 164. Kushner highlights the example of the anti-Jewish South Wales Riots of 1911, where the official Jewish line was to ‘play down the Jewish aspect’ of the disturbances.

¹⁷⁷ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism*, p. 138.

religionists to be ‘restrained and to give no cause for provocation’ – a reflection of the wider attitudes towards anti-Semitism held by the Jewish establishment.¹⁷⁸

In contrast, ‘non-official communal organisations’ originating from the rank-and-file of the Jewish community often proved willing to tackle discrimination and prejudice much more directly.¹⁷⁹ In the period from the 1900s through to the 1940s, evidence suggests that the ‘alternative, grass-roots response to anti-Semitism’ was generally much more assertive than that of the official communal bodies. In 1902, for instance, the ‘Aliens Defence Committee’ was formed by Jewish and non-Jewish trade unionists to combat opposition to Jewish immigration.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, it was immigrant and working-class Jews who defended Anglo-German and Anglo-Russian Jews during the Great War, who protested vigorously against the Holocaust and who formed Jewish defence organisations, such as the 43 Group, to combat Fascism and anti-Semitism in the early post-Second World War period.¹⁸¹

The polarisation between the ‘timidity’ of official bodies and the ‘vigorous’ approach of communal organisations is most apparent during the 1930s, when the Jewish community faced considerable anti-Semitism from Fascist and far-right groups.¹⁸² At this time, many younger, working-class Jews ‘increasingly felt abandoned by the official leadership of the

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Smith, ‘Jewish Responses’, p. 60. Similar attitudes also existed on the part of the Jewish establishment to anti-Semitism during and after the Second World War. See Kushner, *The Persistence*, pp. 166-170; Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 233.

¹⁷⁹ Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. liii.

¹⁸⁰ Kushner, *The Persistence*, p. 164.

¹⁸¹ Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. liii; Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 171; Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 59-61; Morris Beckman *The 43 Group: Untold Story of Their Fight Against Fascism* (London, 1993).

¹⁸² Endelman, ‘English Jewish History’, p. 102; Cesarani, ‘The East London’, p. 51; Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, p. liii.

community' and 'searched for a more radical solution' to right-wing anti-Semitism than was offered by the Jewish establishment.¹⁸³ Much to the concern of community leaders, Jews in increasing numbers began to turn to organisations such as the trade unions, the Communist Party, the Jewish Peoples' Council (formed in 1936) and various other bodies engaged in 'communal defence work' who provided a more assertive and pro-active approach to the Fascist threat.¹⁸⁴ The infamous Battle of Cable Street in 1936 'epitomised the diversity of opinion within the Jewish community' over how anti-Semitism should be tackled. Whilst the *Jewish Chronicle* and the Board of Deputies urged Jews to stay away from the march, groups such as the Communist Party encouraged them to 'counter-demonstrate' and 'fight' the Fascists both ideologically and physically.¹⁸⁵

Significantly, it is also possible to detect the wider split in attitudes and approaches towards anti-Semitism in the world of British sport. In the period from the 1900s to the 1940s, there are numerous examples of Jewish 'sporting' responses to racism which reflect both the 'conservative, non-confrontational' position of the Jewish establishment and the more direct approach generally taken by sections of the wider Jewish community.¹⁸⁶ With regards to the former, it is possible to argue that attempts to use sport as a means of 'Anglicisation' were an indirect effort on the part of the Jewish establishment to alleviate

¹⁸³ Smith, 'Jewish Responses', pp. 48-49.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 60-64.

¹⁸⁵ Elaine R Smith, 'But What Did They Do? Contemporary Jewish Response to Cable Street' in Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (Eds), *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and anti-Fascism in British Society* (London, 2000), pp. 49-50.

¹⁸⁶ Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman, 'Minorities, Fascism and anti-Fascism' in Kushner and Valman, Ibid, p. 1.

growing non-Jewish hostility towards Jewish immigration.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, this ‘non-confrontational approach’ can also be seen with the decision of the Jewish Lads’ Brigade in 1936 to withdraw temporarily from the Prince of Wales’ Boxing Shield competition for fear of creating racial tension through being ‘overly successful’. Although the JLB declared their withdrawal was due to sporting reasons, Kadish has noted that the decision was ‘governed too by other motives’ - principally a desire to prevent anti-Semitism.¹⁸⁸ In May 1936, Commander of Manchester JLB, ECQ Henriques, commented: ‘[we do] not go out for ‘pot-hunting’ and indeed there was a danger in the Jewish clubs always being so successful, so much so that jealousy was perhaps created and non-Jewish clubs would not enter the competitions’.¹⁸⁹

Generally, however, most examples of a ‘sporting’ response to racism during this period mirror the trend amongst the rank-and-file of Anglo-Jewry for a more ‘assertive attitude towards Jewish self-defence’.¹⁹⁰ Within the sporting experiences of many second and third generation, working class and secularised Jews, a tendency for a more direct response to anti-Semitism can be identified. Additionally, it is also the case that a willingness and desire was demonstrated, on numerous occasions, to use sport to challenge and undermine prejudice against Jews in wider society. The wider trend for a more direct approach to anti-Semitism clearly stretched into the world of British sport – an increasingly important social

¹⁸⁷ See above, pp. 45-80.

¹⁸⁸ The Manchester JLB group argued that the decision to withdraw from the competition for one year in 1936 was a ‘sporting gesture’, designed to ‘encourage other units to enter’ and prevent the Shield from becoming a ‘closed’ tournament. UoSSC MS223/4/14, *Annual Report of the Manchester Jewish Lads’ Brigade* (Manchester, 1938), p. 7.

¹⁸⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 May 1936; Kadish, ‘*A Good Jew*’, p. 126.

¹⁹⁰ Collins, ‘*Jews*’, p. 151.

and cultural milieu for second and third generation immigrants, as well as an environment in which Jews and non-Jews met regularly.

There are numerous occasions where Jewish sportsmen and women have demonstrated resolve in the face of anti-Semitism. Their actions often proved a symbolic retort to contemporary prejudice and stereotypes. This is apparent with the examples of Harold Abrahams, who saw sporting success as a challenge to public-school anti-Semitism, and the experiences of scores of Jewish golfers. However, other second and third generation immigrant Jews also demonstrated a more assertive sporting response to anti-Semitism. Jewish professional boxers, for instance, were held to be undermining negative Jewish stereotypes and prejudice through their exploits in the ring.

Likewise, Wimbledon Ladies Doubles Champion in 1956, Angela Buxton, also replied to discrimination in her sporting career with confidence and resolve. Unlike Harold Abrahams, who experienced relatively little discrimination during his sporting life and used sport as a vehicle for integration, the British-born Buxton faced anti-Semitism throughout her entire career - becoming something of an 'outsider' figure within British tennis due to her Jewish origin. Despite this, she argued in her later life that the anti-Semitism she faced proved a motivational factor in her drive for success. As Buxton's experiences will show, many individual Jews involved in sport often demonstrated a willingness to confront racism and anti-Semitism inside or outside of their sport directly.

It is evident that sport was also viewed as an arena where anti-Semitism prevalent in wider society could be challenged and combated. For this purpose, a number of Jewish organisations increasingly subscribed to the view that efforts in the sporting sphere could help to respond to stereotypes and anti-Semitic campaigns and beliefs prominent during the 1930s and the post-Second World War period. The Wingate Football Club, for example, was founded primarily in order to change perceptions of Jews through sporting interactions with the non-Jewish community. In all of these examples, sport was viewed for its potential social and political effects, with many Jews believing that efforts in the sphere of physical recreation could influence wider opinion. Although the success of these campaigns is difficult to measure, it is significant in itself to note that second and third generation Jews felt sufficiently confident and able to use sport in this manner.

An examination of the 'sporting' response to anti-Semitism demonstrates that an assertive approach to combating prejudice is identifiable in the world of sport. It is clear that a number of Jewish individuals and organisations proved unwilling to allow anti-Semitism to affect their sporting experiences. They themselves, as well as others within the community, embraced physical recreation as a milieu in which a direct response to discrimination could be demonstrated. Many second and third generation Jews interested in physical recreation did not subscribe to the view espoused by the communal elites - who displayed, both inside and outside of sport, a less confrontational approach to anti-Semitism – and showed a much more direct and vigorous approach to tackling racism and discrimination aimed towards their community.

Jewish Individuals

Sport - most especially professional boxing - has a long-established role within Anglo-Jewish history for seemingly acting as a bulwark against anti-Semitism and providing an assertive response to anti-Jewish prejudice and stereotypes. During the late Georgian period, it was believed in some circles that Jewish prize-fighting was having a direct impact on levels of violence against the Jewish community. Renowned English social reformer, Francis Place (1771-1854), claimed that Jewish boxing success had the knock-on effect that ‘the art of boxing as a science...soon spread among the young Jews and they generally become expert at it’. This, according to Place, meant that

the consequence was in a very few years seen and felt too. It was no longer safe to insult a Jew unless he was an old man and alone...But even if the Jews were unable to defend themselves, the few who would be disposed to insult them merely because they are Jews would be in danger of chastisement from passers by and of punishment by the Police.¹⁹¹

Whilst in reality only a small proportion of the Jewish community took up the sport, success in boxing seemingly created the perception that Jews were strong and willing to physically defend themselves. The achievements of boxers such as Daniel Mendoza helped to propagate the view that attacking Jews verbally or physically was both less socio-culturally acceptable and an increasingly dangerous proposition. In his history of *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, Felsenstein argues that the success of Mendoza and his contemporaries is ‘one of the most pointed illustrations of the way in which accepted prejudices against the

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England*, pp. 219-220.

Jews could at least be implicitly challenged'. For Felsenstein, the fact that the Jewish community gained 'self respect' from Jewish boxing success meant that 'traditional antipathies' were, to a certain degree, 'assuaged'. The achievements of Jewish prize-fighters were a 'clear challenge...[to] traditional allegation of Jewish cowardice'.¹⁹²

Similar notions have also been expressed with regards to American-Jewish professional boxing during the early twentieth century. Historians of American Jewish sport history have frequently referred to Jewish boxing success as being a rejoinder to Jewish stereotypes and anti-Semitism within wider society. Levine, for instance, claims that Jewish American prize-fighters used 'their fists to challenge anti-Semitism directed at themselves and against other Jews'. He argues that that Jewish boxers, more than any other sportsmen or women, were undermining negative pre-conceptions held within wider American society: 'no other activity provided such a clear way to refute stereotypes of the weak, cowardly Jew that anti-Semites employed to deny Jewish immigrants and their children full access to American opportunities'.¹⁹³ Similarly, Riess has claimed that Jewish success in the American ring 'surprised Gentiles who accepted conventional stereotypes about Jewish manliness'.¹⁹⁴

Seemingly, Jewish dominance of American boxing had a significant impact on Jewish self-perceptions. Whilst there is insufficient evidence to claim that Jewish-American prize fighting affected levels of anti-Semitism in wider society, it is believed that the sport served as a fortifying factor in the mindset of many second generation immigrant Jews. Although

¹⁹² Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes*, pp. 229-230.

¹⁹³ Levine, *Ellis Island*, p. 162.

¹⁹⁴ Riess, 'Tough Jews', p. 60.

the exploits of boxers such as Benny Leonard (World Lightweight Champion, 1917-1925) and Barney Ross (World Lightweight Champion, 1933-1935 and World Welterweight Champion, 1935-1938) may have altered perceptions of the Jewish community amongst a section of Gentile society, their wider social and cultural significance was largely confined to within American Jewry. For Levine, Jewish American boxing success influenced the way that Jews viewed themselves and the way that they believed they were seen by the wider community. By 'reading about Jewish boxers, going to the fights, betting on their heroes and celebrating their victories as local and world champions', Jews were given 'opportunities to vicariously challenge anti-Semitic stereotypes'. Through interest in the sport, younger American Jews could 'identify with Jewish boxers who personified the necessity of Jewish toughness in a threatening world'.¹⁹⁵

Similar notions concerning boxing acting as an important vehicle for challenging anti-Semitism are reflected in the history of Anglo-Jewish boxing. Like their American counterparts, evidence suggests that contemporary British-Jewish pugilists were believed to provide a retort to Jewish stereotypes through their endeavours in the ring. In 1914, for instance, a full-page article entitled 'The Hefty Hebrew: The Shattering of a Silly Old Legend' was published in *Boxing*. The newspaper's correspondent recounted at length Jewish contributions to both professional boxing since the eighteenth century and to the armed forces during the early stages of the First World War. All this, he claimed, helped to undermine the 'old legend that, however the Hebrew may shine in finance, he can never, never has and never will display any real powers as a warrior in any capacity'. In contrast

¹⁹⁵ Levine, *Ellis Island*, p. 167.

to popular stereotypes, *Boxing* argued that the evidence highlighted demonstrated that ‘the Jew has always been a fighter’.¹⁹⁶

Similar ideas concerning the effect of boxing on perceptions of the Jewish community also surfaced during the 1930s. At a time when the anti-Semitic campaigns of groups such as the British Union of Fascists were beginning to gather pace, Jewish participation in the professional ring was claimed to be acting as a retort to right-wing notions of Jewish physical and moral cowardice and their supposed cultural and social aloofness. An article in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1934 claimed that Anglo-Jewish involvement in the ‘pugilistic world’ since the 1900s showed that Jews were a ‘courageous and gallant race, cherishing the British ideals of fairplay, pluck, manliness and chivalry’. British-Jewish success in the prize-ring apparently demonstrated that Jews were strong, both physically and psychologically, and willing to defend themselves with vigour when attacked. It was argued that Jewish involvement in the sport had ‘done more than cartloads of oratory and writing to combat any tendency towards anti-Semitism that may have been sown by the unscrupulous and perverted devotees of the very un-English hate cult’.¹⁹⁷

Whilst there is inevitably a degree of hyperbole in statements such as these, amongst the Jewish professional boxing community there is evidence of a much more assertive and vigorous response to anti-Semitism and contemporary Fascism. In 1968, interviews with

¹⁹⁶ *Boxing*, 12 September 1914. There was a positive response to the ‘Hefty Hebrew’ article, not least from members of the Jewish community who felt that the assertions made by the *Boxing* correspondent would do a great deal to challenge and undermine contemporary racial stereotypes. See, for instance, *Boxing*, 19 September 1914.

¹⁹⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1934.

professional Jewish boxers from the 1920s and 1930s were published in a special feature of the *Jewish Chronicle*. Amongst those interviewed, several boxers claimed that they took it upon themselves to directly challenge contemporary anti-Semitism through their endeavours in the ring. Harry Mizler, for example, recounted a bout during the late 1930s against a known supporter of the BUF where the referee was forced to stop the fight after seven rounds. Mizler, it transpired, ‘wouldn’t knock him out’ as he wanted to inflict as much physical damage on his opponent as possible due to his political and racial opinions. Likewise, middle-weight boxer Jack Hyams recalled a successful fight at the same time against a German boxer who later went on to join the Gestapo. Hyams later claimed he ‘gave him a good beating!’ because he knew his opponent was an anti-Semite.¹⁹⁸

Another professional boxer who responded to contemporary anti-Semitism in a similarly direct manner was Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis. Although Lewis was an especially high-profile supporter of Oswald Mosley during the embryonic stages of the formation of the British Union of Fascists, his biographer claims he abandoned the Party in acrimonious circumstances when they turned to an openly anti-Semitic platform in late 1933.¹⁹⁹ Lewis apparently confronted the BUF leader at his office in London and asked him ‘Is it true you’re anti-Semitic? And I want the truth this time. Are you anti-Jewish?’ to which Mosley simply replied ‘Yes’. According to his son, ‘Kid’ Lewis then ‘settled with Mosley in the

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 22 November 1968.

¹⁹⁹ Lewis stood as a Parliamentary candidate for Whitechapel, for Mosley’s ‘New Party’ in the 1931 General Election. He polled just 154 votes. His son, Morton Lewis, claims that his father supported Mosley during the early 1930s because he was not fully aware of Mosley’s political standpoint. He believes that Lewis’ poor financial position, naivety and good nature explain why he was so trusting of Mosley and therefore slow to realise the increasingly anti-Jewish stance of the BUF and its supporters. Lewis, *Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis*, p. 226-230.

only way he knew how' - attacking him and his four bodyguards and leaving the offices unscathed and 'grinning from ear to ear'.²⁰⁰

Amongst other Jewish sportsmen and women, a similarly resolute (yet much less physical) attitude towards anti-Semitism can also be detected. As we have seen with regards to Harold Abrahams and Jewish golfers, many Jews remained determined to continue their sporting careers in the face of often severe racial prejudice. A similar attitude can also be seen within tennis, a sport which also saw relatively widespread discrimination of Jews. This is especially true with regards to Angela Buxton, who despite success at the very highest level – she was French Open and Wimbledon Ladies' doubles winner, and Wimbledon Ladies' singles runner up, in 1956 – often found herself marginalised due to her Jewish background.²⁰¹

Throughout her career, Buxton faced anti-Semitism and discrimination from both the tennis community and the British tennis establishment. A third generation immigrant Jew, Angela was born in Liverpool in 1934 to Violent and Harry Buxton, a successful businessman and entrepreneur. At boarding school, the Buxtons' only daughter took up tennis and during her teenage years was encouraged to move to London to aid her sporting development. When she attempted to join the prestigious Cumberland Lawn Tennis Club in North West London, however, Buxton experienced her first taste of sporting anti-Semitism. After being initially accepted by the Club, her application was eventually turned down, with Buxton

²⁰⁰ In later life, Lewis was said to have 'regretted deeply' his dealings with Mosley and the New Party, yet the association remains prominent in popular memory of the fighter. Lewis, *Ted 'Kid' Lewis*, p. 230.

²⁰¹ On Buxton's career, see Siegman, *Jewish Sports Legends*, p. 174.

being told by a Cumberland coach that ‘you’ll never make it...you’re perfectly good, but you’re Jewish. We don’t take Jews here’.²⁰² Soon after, Angela’s mother received a phone call from the Cumberland Club notifying her that her daughter had been removed from an upcoming junior county tournament: ‘Oh, Mrs Buxton, I’m very sorry to tell you your daughter’s been disqualified, so don’t bother to come...we’ve heard on the grapevine that she doesn’t really have Middlesex qualifications’.²⁰³

Angela faced a similar level of hostility during her adult playing career. Schoenfeld notes that after the Buxton’s move to Los Angeles in 1952, a move funded by Harry Buxton to help aid his daughter’s career, Angela was summarily rejected from the Los Angeles Tennis Club – renowned at the time for its discrimination against potential members from minority backgrounds.²⁰⁴ In England two years later, Buxton was forced to practice with a local journalist before a tournament held at the Southport Argyle Lawn Tennis Club. This was due to the fact that members of the club, who would traditionally offer their services as ‘hitting partners’ to players entered in the tournament, refused to play with Buxton because she was Jewish.²⁰⁵

Buxton also faced similar prejudice from the British tennis establishment. In later years, it was alleged that decisions taken by the Lawn Tennis Association during the 1950s not to pair Angela with several female British players in the international Wightman Cup

²⁰² Schoenfeld, *The Match*, pp. 37-38.

²⁰³ *Observer*, 8 July 2001.

²⁰⁴ Schoenfeld, *The Match*, pp. 95-7.

²⁰⁵ BBC Radio 4 ‘Woman’s Hour’, Flic Everett Interview with Angela Buxton, transmitted 22 July 2004. http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2004_29_thu_02.shtml (Accessed 12 August 2009)

tournament was driven by the fact she was Jewish.²⁰⁶ Even after her impressive showings in singles and doubles competitions during 1956, the latter in a pairing with the similarly marginalised African American player, Althea Gibson, Buxton faced rebuffs from both the Lawn Tennis Writers' Association and the All England Tennis Club.²⁰⁷ Despite Buxton's success, the British-Jewish player was placed on a 'waiting list' for membership of the prestigious club after her Wimbledon successes. In 2004, Buxton told *The New York Post* that she believed, with reference to the All England Club, that 'I think the anti-Semitism is still there...the mere fact that I'm not a member is a full sentence that speaks for itself. I wish it still wasn't such an elite sport'.²⁰⁸

Despite facing significant prejudice, Angela Buxton showed a determination which enabled her to carve out a highly successful career. Indirectly, she believed that her sporting success provided a retort to the anti-Semitism she faced. Although Buxton claimed she was anything but a 'crusader' for Jewish rights, she admitted many years later that the 'anti-Semitism...made me more determined'.²⁰⁹ Her resolve to offer a sporting counter to those who discriminated against her was apparent during Angela's teenage years. For example, after her rejection from the Cumberland Club in 1949, Buxton made it her personal mission to return to the club and win the Middlesex Junior Championships staged there annually: 'I made a point of going back to win their bloody tournament – twice – just to rub their noses

²⁰⁶ *Observer*, 8 July 2001.

²⁰⁷ For Gibson, see Francis Clayton Gray and Yanick Rice Lamb, *Born to Win: The Authorised Biography of Althea Gibson* (New Jersey, 2004).

²⁰⁸ *New York Post*, 13 June 2004.

²⁰⁹ BBC Interview, 22 July 2004.

in it – and they never gave me a cup of tea. Not even that'.²¹⁰ Buxton's coach also showed pleasure in the fact that she experienced success in spite of anti-Semitism. On the eve of her Wimbledon doubles final appearance in 1956, her coach, Jimmy Jones, used his *Daily Mirror* column to indirectly attack the authorities who had discriminated against Buxton during her earlier years.²¹¹ Although Buxton herself noted her disappointment over the lukewarm and indifferent response she received from the tennis establishment after her 1956 Wimbledon victory, she felt pleased to have gone a long way to realising her sporting ambitions in the face of racial prejudice. She claimed 'there wasn't much publicity about it, in fact I remember there was only one headline 'Minorities Win', a very small headline...[however] as far as I was concerned, I had accomplished something that I had set out to do and it was a very good feeling'.²¹²

Jewish Organisations

As well as these examples of individual Jews, a number of Jewish organisations promoted a response to anti-Semitism through sporting means. In several cases, these groups did not necessarily endorse this approach simply to challenge sporting discrimination. It was also the case that they saw physical recreation as a useful medium for responding to anti-Semitism prevalent in wider society. This is especially true with regards to a number of

²¹⁰ *Observer*, 8 July 2001. In later years, Buxton had the chance to visit the club on several occasions when her son, Joseph, began his career as a tennis umpire. According to Schoenfeld, Buxton made as many people aware as possible of the club's anti-Semitic attitude to her during her playing days. Schoenfeld, *The Match*, p. 39.

²¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, 6 July 1958. Jones claimed that Buxton's success proved that the Lawn Tennis Association had been wrong five years earlier to claim that 'she [Buxton] will never be any good' during a talent scouting session.

²¹² *Observer*, 8 July 2001.

‘grass-roots’ organisations during the peak of Fascist activity in Britain in the mid-1930s. In 1938, for example, the Jewish Peoples’ Council organised an anti-Fascist committee in conjunction with the London Amateur Football League. After an attack by BUF supporters on players on one football team, the Council worked with the League to arrange for speakers to visit all 98 affiliated clubs to hold anti-Fascist meetings and lectures.²¹³

It was also the case that certain Jewish youth organisations saw sport as a means of responding to contemporary anti-Semitism. Whilst members of clubs supported by the Jewish establishment were actively discouraged from becoming involved in Jewish ‘defence’ efforts, the British Maccabi Association placed a strong emphasis from its outset on working against anti-Semitism and using its programme to help undermine stereotypes and popular prejudice.²¹⁴ Indeed, many Maccabi club members were active in anti-Fascist activities during the late 1930s.²¹⁵ As Green notes, Maccabi members were a continual presence at Fascist demonstrations in the East End throughout this decade, including the infamous Battle of Cable Street in 1936.²¹⁶

²¹³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 October 1938. A number of JPC leaders were also involved with the Communist Party, whose sporting wing, the British Workers’ Sports Federation, was led by a number of second-generation immigrant Jews. The Communist Party in Great Britain was also known for its direct approach towards Fascism and anti-Semitism in the 1930s and drew many Jewish members because of this. Collins, ‘Jews’, p. 151; Jason Heppell, ‘A Rebel, not a Rabbi: Jewish Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 15, 1, 2004, pp. 28-50.

²¹⁴ Bunt, *Jewish Youth Work*, pp. 20-23. Bunt notes that AJY leaders believed that Jews should not involve themselves with anti-Fascist groups as this ‘ran counter to their policy of avoiding conspicuous and “un-English” behaviour’. The Board of Deputies continually urged current and former youth club members not to join groups such as the Communist Party – who they labelled a ‘red, red herring’.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 175.

²¹⁶ Green, *Social History*, p. 226.

In a reflection of its European roots, where Maccabi was partly founded as a sporting vehicle to respond to anti-Semitism, the BMA was vocal in its belief that physical recreation could help to combat the growth of anti-Jewish sentiment in wider British society.²¹⁷ When the *Jewish Chronicle* announced the formation of the British Maccabi Association in 1934, it applauded the organisations' aspiration to create a 'virile and sportsmanlike race of Jews'. It went on to highlight that the Association felt that 'anti-Semitism can be far more effectively combated by the younger generation on the field of play in friendly rivalry with non-Jewish sportsmen than by any amount of written propaganda' and noted 'it is for this reason, among others, that we welcome the progress of the Maccabi in Great Britain'.²¹⁸

Throughout the rest of the 1930s, the notion of using sport to help combat anti-Semitism was a prominent theme in the BMA's press campaigns, public addresses and promotional literature. In 1935, the Chairman of the Association, Colonel JH Levey, stated that one reason his organisation focused on physical recreation was because he felt that 'meeting non-Jews on the sports field was one way of killing anti-Semitism'.²¹⁹ Similarly, one year later, against a backdrop of a worsening international and national context for the Jewish community, the BMA's first President, Henry Mond (the second Lord Melchett), affirmed his belief that the promotion of sport could help to challenge anti-Semitism as 'it [Maccabi] presented a field of contact which was of the best type, presenting opportunities of

²¹⁷ Levine, *Ellis Island*, p. 264. Levine notes that Maccabi in Europe was an attempt to 'mobilise the physical prowess of middle-class Jewish youth in the face of increased opposition and violence throughout Eastern Europe'.

²¹⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1934.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 9 August 1935.

friendship and friendly rivalry of a kind that in England was particularly well understood'.²²⁰ In 1947, against a backdrop of growing popular anti-Semitism and violence against Jews, the sports director of Newcastle Maccabi reiterated the view that sport could help to alleviate racial tension:

Sport, in my humble opinion, can bring out and develop a strong feeling of comrade and friendship between Jew and non-Jew, which in these troubled times can go far in combating the dread disease, anti-Semitism. The non-Jew idolises any form of sport, so I appeal to you all, whenever there is an interfunction, whether we or they be visitors, be it with Jews or non-Jew, Play the Game... allow them to judge for themselves if Jewish youth is worthy of the name of Sportsmen [sic], a name which means as much to us as it does to them.²²¹

Clearly, sport was also seen to be a medium for combating prejudice directed towards Jews in the post-war period. This is especially true with the example of Wingate Football Club, founded in 1946 to help combat growing anti-Semitism. Although the 1930s are generally regarded as a peak of anti-Semitism and Fascism, historians have shown that both were also apparent during the Second World War and in the period immediately following the cessation of hostilities.²²² Against a background of worsening relations between the British Government and the *Yishuv* [Jewish community in Palestine], as well as post-war austerity, British Fascist organisations underwent a significant resurgence. Groups such as the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women, headed by ex-Mosleyite Jeffrey Hamm, resumed

²²⁰ Ibid. 4 December 1936. See also *East London Advertiser*, 23 February 1935.

²²¹ TWAS S/MAC/3/1, *Maccabi News*, 1, 1947.

²²² See, for instance, Kushner, *The Persistence*; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, Chapter 8: 'New Wine for Old Bottles, 1945-1960'; Roger Eatwell, 'Fascism and Political Racism in Post-War Britain', in Kushner and Lunn, *Traditions of Intolerance*, pp. 218-222.

the ‘provocative street-corner anti-Semitism’ prevalent during the 1930s.²²³ Alongside events in Palestine and Fascist activities, a number of domestic factors also accounted for a post-War resurgence of anti-Jewish feeling, culminating in 1947 with widespread anti-Semitic rioting and violence in London, Leeds, Liverpool and Glasgow.²²⁴

Although the Jewish establishment remained reticent to confront prejudice directly, there were sections within the community who proved less willing to allow resurgent Fascism and anti-Semitism to go unchallenged.²²⁵ Amongst the large group of Jewish ex-Servicemen, there existed a strong sentiment against contemporary Fascist groups responsible for promoting and carrying out verbal and physical attacks on the community. Amongst those Jews who had fought against Nazi oppression, the 43 Group - so-called due to the number present at their first meeting - emerged in March 1946. The Group resolved to take a more assertive approach to the Fascist threat and broke up meetings, used covert tactics to infiltrate various groups and undertook ‘defence’ programmes. Although publicly condemned by the Jewish elite, the 43 Group grew to over 500 members and by the time of the organisations’ dissolution in 1950, they had dealt a significant blow to contemporary Fascism.²²⁶

Other Jewish ex-Servicemen who wanted to tackle post-war anti-Semitism turned their attention to sport. In 1946, Major Harry Sadow, George Hyams, Asher Rebak and Frank

²²³ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 232.

²²⁴ Kushner, ‘Anti-Semitism and Austerity’, pp. 150-155.

²²⁵ Endelman, *The Jews*, p. 233.

²²⁶ Beckman, *The 43 Group*.

Davis came together to form the Wingate Football Club in Hendon, North London. The club, named after Orde Wingate (1903-1944), who worked with the Jewish Defence Forces and the 'Chindit' task force before and during World War Two, was formed partly for sporting motivations – the founders noting that they wanted to give other Jewish ex-soldiers the opportunity to continue playing the sport they enjoyed during their time in the Army.²²⁷

Significantly, however, the main factor in the creation of the club was a desire to use football as a means of challenging and undermining contemporary anti-Semitism. As was later noted, the four founding members felt that 'they could fight anti-Semitism better in sport than by talking about it'.²²⁸ By entering a Jewish team, wearing blue and white kits emblazoned with the Star of David, into the amateur Saturday leagues, club officials hoped that increased sporting contact would be a source of good feeling and friendship. They believed that the club could 'foster between Jew and Gentile a greater spirit of comradeship' which would help to alleviate growing anti-Semitism.²²⁹

Wingate's officials believed that football could serve as a useful means of undermining contemporary negative perceptions of the Jewish community. Evidence from the Mass-Observation surveys conducted during the Second World War found that derogatory stereotypes of Jews occasionally focused on their apparent lack of interest in sport and

²²⁷ For Orde Wingate, see Trevor Royle, *Orde Wingate: A Man of Genius, 1903-1944* (London, 2010).

²²⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 November 1979.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* 14 March 1947.

games.²³⁰ Similarly, anti-Jewish sentiment both during and after the War was said to have partly concentrated on alleged Jewish ‘bourgeois’ ways, their ‘non-physical’ nature and ‘economic opportunism’ in the face of post-war austerity.²³¹ It was to combat these notions, according to one of the club’s founder members, that Wingate was created. As Frank Davis noted several years later:

Mosley was marching again in Ridley Road and the stereotyped image of the Jew was making a comeback... We decided to fight it by setting up our own football club and I think we did a very good job in proving that being a Jew didn’t mean you were a little fat gawn manufacturer. All right, so a Jew wasn’t a coalminer – but he could be a sportsman who moved around with a great deal of grace.²³²

In order to help change Jewish stereotypes, the club’s founder members stressed the need for Wingate’s players to demonstrate exemplary sportsmanship on the field of play. In a similar vein to the Maccabi movement, Wingate believed that if those Jews playing for the club showed non-Jewish footballers that they were fair and sporting on the pitch, this could transfer into wider society and help to challenge long-held negative preconceptions of the Jewish community. With this in mind, those representing Wingate were pro-actively encouraged during the club’s early years to play fairly and build a positive reputation for the club – a policy which seemingly had much success. As was noted by Fabian and Green, Wingate became synonymous with impeccable sportsmanship during its first two years and had the unique record of not conceding any penalties or having any players reprimanded, or

²³⁰ Smith, ‘Sex’, p. 13. On anti-Semitism within the Mass-Observation movement more generally, see Kushner, *We Europeans*.

²³¹ Kushner, *The Persistence*, Chapter 4: ‘The Jewish Image in the War’; Kushner, ‘Anti-Semitism and Austerity’, p. 155.

²³² *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 November 1979.

even spoken to, by officials.²³³ Wingate also won many awards and plaudits from within the footballing authorities. In 1957, the Secretary of the London League noted that Wingate had ‘maintained a very high standard of sportsmanship and lived up to their motto of ‘Friendship through Sport’.²³⁴ As one club official reported in 1954: ‘whether or not the club won its matches, it always won the esteem of the opponents and spectators’.²³⁵ Founder member Frank Davis claimed many years later that ‘everybody knew that if you played Wingate, you played the best sportsmen’.²³⁶

In later years, other avenues for using football to undermine anti-Semitic stereotypes and prejudice emerged. Despite being based in one of the largest areas of Jewish settlement in contemporary Britain, fewer Jewish footballers joined the North London club during the 1960s and 1970s – forcing Wingate to open its door to non-Jewish players. Although this was felt by some to be a move away from Wingate’s original ideology, others welcomed the development as a positive step. Committee member, Sidney Burns believed that ‘playing on the same side as non-Jews does even more good than playing against them’. For the non-Jews that joined the club during this period, their experiences had often helped to rid them of negative preconceptions surrounding the Jewish community. One player claimed he was surprised to receive such a warm welcome from the team when he joined during the 1970s. Despite being non-Jewish in a still largely Jewish dressing room, he noted positively that ‘no-one ever makes me feel like an outsider’. Similarly, another non-

²³³ AH Fabian and Geoffrey Green (Eds), *Association Football* (London, 1960), p. 357.

²³⁴ *Hendon Times*, 17 May 1957. The club also won awards for its sportsmanship on several occasions during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

²³⁵ *Ibid.* 14 May 1954.

²³⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 November 1979.

Jew believed playing for Wingate had significantly changed his opinion of Jews overall: 'before I mixed with Jews, I always felt that they thought themselves *it*. You know, they had this air of superiority. But I had that idea knocked out of my head the very first day I played for Wingate'.²³⁷

In sporting terms, Wingate only achieved a modest degree of success. Despite several promotions, the club remained firmly in the lower reaches of the capital's Saturday football leagues.²³⁸ Their victory in the 1958 London League Cup was one highlight - an achievement which entered into a form of footballing folklore for some sections of the Jewish community.²³⁹ The club also sent a large number of its playing staff to the Maccabiah Games during the 1950s and 1960s, where they experienced considerable success representing their country. Wingate also had the honour of hosting England's national football team training sessions at their ground in Hall Lane, Hendon.²⁴⁰ Away from football, the club was also heavily involved with charity work during the 1950s and 1960s, raising funds for a number of Jewish and non-Jewish causes across North London.²⁴¹

²³⁷ Dee, 'Your Religion is Football', pp. 58-61.

²³⁸ After starting off in the Middlesex League in 1946 and performing consistently, if somewhat unspectacularly, for six seasons, they won promotion to the London League in 1952, before going on to gain promotion to the Athenian League in 1964. The club lost their ground to the extension of the M1 in 1972, and suffered almost two decades of uncertainty and in many seasons did not field any senior teams. Their merger with Finchley FC in 1991 and their move to the purpose built Abrahams Stadium, however, secured their future into the new millennium. See 'Wingate and Finchley History' <http://www.wingatefinchley.com/history.html> (Accessed 10 December 2009).

²³⁹ The match was the subject of a short story, which linked Wingate with ideas of Jewish physicality and Zionism, published in 1998 by English Jewish fiction writer Clive Sinclair. Clive Sinclair, 'Wingate Football Club' in Brian Cheyette (Ed), *Contemporary Jewish Writing in England and Ireland: An Anthology* (London, 1998), pp. 89-101.

²⁴⁰ *Hendon Times*, 11 January 1960.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* 11 March 1960.

The historical significance of Wingate Football Club lay, however, neither with its modest sporting successes nor its philanthropic efforts. Essentially, an examination of the history of this small football club in North London provides another example of a willingness on the part of a section of the Jewish community to try to use sport to combat anti-Semitism. Those behind the creation of the club may not have pursued as 'direct' a line of action as other anti-Fascist and 'anti-anti-Semitic' organisations such as the 43 Group. They were, however, clearly equally as impassioned to see their community take positive measures to defend itself and work to undermine resurgent Jewish stereotypes. Although perhaps open to accusations of naivety, Wingate and several other Jewish organisations demonstrated a conviction that sport could be a weapon in the wider fight against discrimination and prejudice towards Jews and 'earnestly believed that one positive way of helping combat the ignorance and social evil of anti-Semitism was on the field of play'.²⁴²

The examples shown here give an indication that sections of the Jewish sporting community were often assertive and self-assured when faced with anti-Semitism and racial discrimination. Evidence suggests that a number of Jewish individuals and organisations showed resolve and determination when they encountered prejudice in their sporting lives or when the wider community was faced with upsurges of racism and/or Fascist activity. Physical recreation could not prevent organised and social forms of discrimination from occurring, nor rid society of deep-rooted cultural, social, political and economic anti-Semitism. But a conviction clearly existed amongst certain sporting Jews that physical recreation could, in some small way, help to combat racial prejudice. Alongside wider

²⁴² <http://www.wingatefinchley.com/history.html> (Accessed 10 December 2009).

social and political efforts to minimise anti-Semitism, sport clearly emerged during the first part of the twentieth century as one avenue through which Jews could respond to racial discrimination.

In many ways, evidence from the sporting world reflects wider approaches to anti-Semitism taken by both the Jewish establishment and mainstream Jewish society. The former often followed a non-confrontational, often apologetic, approach, believing that if Jews reduced their visibility in the face of growing discrimination then eventually anti-Semitism would disappear due to British fair play and liberalism. This attitude contrasted sharply with immigrant and working class Jews who wanted and often demonstrated a much more vigorous and direct response to contemporary anti-Semitism. Scholars of Anglo-Jewry have shown that mainstream Jewry spearheaded a much more effective response to discrimination and contemporary Fascism – reflecting inherent socio-cultural differences and aspirations between British-born immigrant Jews and the Jewish establishment.

In many ways, sport provides a reflection of this dichotomy. In youth organisations controlled or supported by sections of the Jewish elites, sport was used in an indirect manner in an attempt to alleviate anti-Semitic prejudice. In the ‘Anglicisation’ campaign of the Jewish youth movement, sport was deployed as a means of minimising the ‘difference’ of immigrant Jewish children. By encouraging Jewish children to cast off their immigrant identity and become, through physical recreation, upstanding English-Jews who subscribed to notions of sportsmanship and fair play, the Jewish establishment hoped to curtail growing Gentile hostility. Similarly, in the case of the Jewish Lads’ Brigade boxing

withdrawal in 1936, a non-confrontational approach was taken to reduce Jewish visibility and lessen the potential for anti-Jewish sentiment. Both these cases show that sport was used indirectly, and arguably apologetically, in the face of anti-Semitism.

In stark contrast, individuals and organisations hailing from the mainstream of Jewish society were often more confrontational and direct in their sporting response to prejudice. As is evident with regards to Jewish boxers and Angela Buxton, individual Jewish sportsmen and women could occasionally provide a clear retort to anti-Semitism and a means of undermining racial stereotypes and preconceptions. The sporting efforts of organisations such as the Jewish Peoples' Council, the British Maccabi Association and Wingate Football Club were designed to combat discrimination prevalent in wider society and use sporting contact as a medium of improving Jewish and non-Jewish relations. Through sport, it is apparent that these Jews, either directly or indirectly, were challenging anti-Semitism and the organised and social discrimination faced by the wider Jewish community during this period.

Despite this, it is difficult to claim that the Jewish sporting response had anything resembling the effect on anti-Semitism and Fascism of wider 'self-defence' efforts by individuals and organisations such as the JPC, the trade unions, the Communist Party or the 43 Group. Although there are indications that Jewish sporting response could, in a much more limited way, help to change Jewish stereotypes, minimise the sporting impact of discrimination and improve interracial relations, there is insufficient evidence to show that sport had anything other than a marginal effect on contemporary anti-Semitism.

Significantly, these examples still show that a belief existed amongst part of the mainstream of Anglo-Jewry that sport was one way of combating prejudice and discrimination. For a growing number of Jews involved in British sport, there seemed nothing incongruous in trying to use a key facet of British national and cultural identity to combat 'un-British' anti-Semitism. This, in effect, is a reflection of the growing involvement and interest in physical recreation by Anglo-Jewry and further evidence of the development of a distinct Jewish sporting tradition during the early part of the twentieth century.

Conclusions – Sport and anti-Semitism

As is apparent throughout this chapter, sport is inextricably linked to anti-Semitism within modern Britain. Sport was not only a vehicle which was used to define and exclude the Jewish 'other', it also proved to be a milieu in which the Jewish community could challenge and combat stereotypes and prejudice. Whilst much has been written of 'organised' and 'social' forms of anti-Semitism faced by Anglo-Jewry, and on Jewish responses to discrimination, an examination of sport illuminates a great deal on the nature and form of anti-Jewish sentiment in the period from the late Victorian era through to the 1960s.

In terms of 'organised' hostility towards Anglo-Jewry, it is apparent that sport was utilised by right-wing groups to reinforce anti-Semitic ideology linked to ideas of Jewish racial and cultural 'otherness'. From the mid-1930s onwards, the British Union of Fascists turned to

sport and sporting rhetoric in order to highlight and further emphasise the supposedly negative effect of Anglo-Jewry on British culture, economics, politics and leisure. By utilising long-standing anti-Semitic notions of Jewish 'difference' and influence, the BUF sought to create the image of a Jewish 'other' within British society which would contrast with their supposedly British values and ideology. In effect, sport formed one aspect of their propaganda campaign against Anglo-Jewry which was designed to further their policy of using the community as a political scapegoat.

With reference to the 'social' discrimination faced by Anglo-Jewry during this period, it is evident that the form of hostility faced by Jews in the spheres of employment, housing and leisure was also prominent in the middle-class sporting milieu. Within that environment, a powerful 'anti-Semitism of exclusion' existed whereby Jewish sportsmen and women were summarily excluded from membership of various private sporting clubs due to their ethnicity. This form of discrimination was especially prominent, and geographically widespread, within the sport of golf. Across the country, from the late Victorian period through to the 1960s, Jewish golfers were banned or subjected to quotas by a bigoted and ignorant golfing community. Such was the strength of this anti-Semitism that Jewish sportsmen were forced to create their own clubs and organisations to enable them to play the sport in an environment free of racism and hostility.

While one 'response' to discrimination can be seen with the creation of these kinds of Jewish sports clubs and organisations, it is also evident that sport was viewed in a more comprehensive manner as a vehicle for challenging anti-Semitism. At various points,

participation in the British sporting world was seen by Jews as a means of directly and indirectly combating discrimination. In a reflection of an 'assertive' trend towards anti-Semitism prominent within the Jewish working classes, sport was used as a means of ideological self-defence – undermining and challenging racial stereotypes and prejudice. Whilst their success may have been limited to specific sporting and/or local contexts, the belief clearly existed that sport was a useful environment in which the battle against racism could effectively be waged.

This chapter demonstrates that a greater understanding of anti-Jewish sentiment in its historical context can be gained by a broad analysis of Jewish involvement in sport. Whilst the sporting world has not previously received any significant attention from academics interested in British anti-Semitism, it is clear that themes and discourses within their research are linked in many ways to the world of physical recreation. It is apparent that 'organised' and 'social' forms of anti-Semitism clearly took on a sporting dimension during the period at hand, whilst wider attitudes and approaches to racism within Anglo-Jewry are also reflected within the sporting milieu. Significantly, the chapter highlights new areas of life where Jews experienced and responded to hostility from the non-Jewish community. Through an examination of the sporting form of anti-Semitism, much is revealed and illustrated about the nature, expression and retort to racial discrimination between the 1890s and the 1960s.

Conclusions

This thesis has revealed that, over the period from the late Victorian era to the 1960s, Jewish involvement and interest in British sport was both considerable and wide-ranging. Not only were British Jews prominent and successful in various local, national and international sporting contexts during this period, but they also made a clear contribution to sport in an indirect manner. Whilst Anglo-Jewry provided some important businessmen and administrators (in boxing and athletics for example) who helped guide and shape British sport during this era, they also became deeply entrenched in wider British sporting culture – as evidenced by the notable growth in sport spectating amongst Anglo-Jewry. Whilst it was not the case that every British Jew was involved in sport or physical recreation during this period, it is apparent that a significant proportion of the population was indeed interested in British sport. As with Jewish sport in an international sense, this thesis has made it clear that ‘sports has occupied...an important place in the modern Jewish world’ within Britain.¹

This demonstration of a sporting tradition within Anglo-Jewry stands in stark opposition to traditional and stereotypical perceptions of the Jewish community. As highlighted at the outset of this thesis, impressions of Anglo-Jewry as ‘un-sporting’ and both uninterested and unsuited to physical recreation (stereotypes reflected across Western society) have been prominent throughout modern history. The picture painted here of a Jewish community

¹ Ezra Mendelsohn, ‘Preface’, in Mendelsohn, *Jews and the Sporting Life*, p. viii.

keenly and comprehensively involved with the British sporting world not only undermines these perceptions, but goes some way towards the establishment of a new conception of Jews within the British popular mindset. In essence, sport was not one of the areas of British life where the contrast between the lifestyles, aspirations, physiques and mentalities of Jews and Gentiles was at its most stark or apparent. This thesis shows that it is in the sporting world that the intrinsic and developed similarities between the two communities are both prominent and perceptible.

Whilst important in their own rights, these are not the only conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of Jewish involvement in sport during the period from the 1890s to the 1960s. Through an examination of sport's role in issues of assimilation, ethnic and religious identity and exclusion, we can see that Jewish involvement in physical recreation during the period at hand had a noticeable effect on the internal and external dynamics of the community. Sport clearly had significant consequences for the way the Jewish community viewed itself as a whole and the way the different Jewish social, ethnic and religious groupings perceived and interacted with each other. Likewise, Jewish sporting participation and interest in sport also had a discernible influence on social, cultural and political interactions between the Jewish minority and Gentile majority populations.

Sporting participation, which was extensive and affected almost every group and discourse within Anglo-Jewry, can illuminate a great deal concerning Jewish society and culture. This is because the Jewish experience of physical recreation in Britain is distinctive, encompassing large-scale immigration, working-class groups, widespread social mobility,

interaction with the indigenous middle-classes and links with the British elites. In addition, unlike many other cultural practices, sport also impacted on a wide range of social, cultural, political and economic changes affecting Anglo-Jewry and influenced its relationship with the majority community. A study of Jewish sporting involvement, therefore, reveals much more than just simple leisure preferences. It goes to the heart of both what it was and what it meant to be Jewish in the eyes of both Jewish and non-Jewish society.

In the first instance, it is clear that sport and physical recreation played a contributory role in the dual processes of immigrant acculturation and integration. Within schools and the Jewish youth movement, sport was consciously encouraged as a means of catalysing ‘Anglicisation’ by a Jewish establishment keen to minimise Gentile concerns over Jewish immigration. By exposing ‘foreign’ children to physical recreation, and a public-school ideology of sportsmanship and athleticism, Jewish elites earnestly believed that the young immigrants would be ‘Anglicised’ both physically and mentally. Sport, in essence, was seen to represent a condensed version of Englishness and national identity. Reflecting trends within non-Jewish philanthropy of the same time, the Jewish establishment encouraged sport for its socio-cultural effects – in Jewish terms this meant aiding the transformation of ‘alien’ Jewish children into young Jewish Englishmen and women.

In a similar vein, competitive sport, either against other Jews or non-Jews, was also believed to play a significant role in immigrant ‘Anglicisation’. To counter charges of conscious immigrant separatism and ‘aloofness’, the Jewish authorities turned to sport as a way of breaking down socio-cultural barriers between Jews and Gentiles. Sporting success

against non-Jews also proved to be a useful means of demonstrating Jewish suitability for integration and helped undermine notions of Jewish otherness and physical weakness which were cited as arguments against immigration. Likewise, the Jewish authorities also viewed competitive sport amongst Jews as a useful substitute for sporting opportunities lost due to observance of the Jewish Sabbath. Organisations such as the Jewish Athletic Association, whose membership grew to substantial proportions, were pivotal in ensuring that as equal a sporting provision as possible between Jews and non-Jews could be achieved – seemingly critical in protecting the sporting spirit created within the youth movement which was key in the ‘Anglicisation’ process.

Counter to popular culture and memory, sport was also much more significant as an arena for the inclusion rather than exclusion of the Jewish sprinter, Harold Abrahams. Whilst there may have been an over-emphasis on the role of social and sporting discrimination in the athlete’s life, it is much more accurate to see his participation and success in sport as a vehicle for ‘Anglicisation’ and integration. Involvement in athletics, as Abrahams himself noted, aided his acceptance and entry into exclusive social, education and sporting environments closed to many within the immigrant community. Through his sporting interests, both on and off the running track, Abrahams moved socially, culturally and religiously closer to the non-Jewish community to the point where his own Jewishness was negligible. For the Bedford-born athlete, who was later chastised within Anglo-Jewry for his ‘Anglicisation’, sport acted as both a facilitator and indicator of integration into English society.

In all of these cases, sport essentially acted as a catalyst in the creation of a hybridised formation of British-Jewish identity. Not only was sport an accessible and enjoyable aspect of Britishness that was available, both individually and collectively, and which helped assimilation of the indigenous culture. For a community which has traditionally sought acceptance into the British mainstream through participation in the arts, business or politics, sport also acted as another way in which Anglo-Jewry legitimated itself in the eyes of the wider community. By encouraging physical recreation amongst the immigrant population, the established British Jewish community aimed to make itself and the new 'foreign' Jews more socially, culturally, physically and mentally acceptable.

Continuing the idea that sport impacted on Jewish identity, it is also clear that sport acted as a powerful force in the erosion and re-construction of Jewish ethnicity. In terms of Jewish religious identity, it is evident that interest in sport had a discernible effect on levels of observance of the Jewish Sabbath. It is apparent that during this period, many young Jews increasingly preferred sporting activities over a more traditional adherence of the Jewish rest day. Jewish sporting interest, which also affected religious observance in many other ways during this time, clearly contributed to a wider growth in religious apostasy. Indeed, the decision of many second and third generation immigrants to choose sport over the Synagogue on the Sabbath is demonstrative of both the increasing interest in sport and of the growth of secularity amongst the community.

With the case study of boxing we can clearly see the role that professional pugilism had on social mobility and the physical and psychological move of young Jews away from the

culture and authority of their elders. Intensely disliked by many established and first-generation Jews, Jewish interest in professional boxing symbolised the new found cultural, social and religious freedom of modern Anglo-Jewish life. For many second and third generation immigrants, sport effectively loosened the ties holding them to the immigrant community as well as easing the grasp of parental and communal authority. Participating in or watching boxing offered a route out of the immigrant milieu and both reflected and contributed to wider trends for social mobility. Effectively, Jewish professional boxing symbolised the rejection of immigrant culture and the wider development of secularised, British-Jewish identities amongst many younger Jews.

Attempts by Jewish sporting organisations to address the trend for decreasing concern for religious and cultural aspects of Jewishness ultimately failed, due mainly to a greater demand for sport than for cultural activities amongst Jewish youth. The Zionist-influenced Maccabi movement, which developed in Britain during the 1930s, had at its core a desire to ‘re-engage’ an increasingly apostate and assimilated population with its Jewishness. Despite the evident success of other Zionist organisations in this respect, however, Maccabi was unsuccessful, with its sporting programme commanding much greater interest than any non-sporting or educational activity. Within much of Maccabi’s leadership and membership there was a clear inclination for a focus on sporting activities, rather than on Zionism or religious or cultural learning – reflecting preferences held within the membership, and sections of Anglo-Jewry as a whole.

In essence, sport played a significant role in exacerbating the ‘drift’ of second and third generation Jews away from their religious, cultural and communal identity. In many ways, sport strengthened and demonstrated these Jews’ increasing familiarity and affinity to the culture of the wider society. Whilst it may have been previously understood that the Jewish community saw remarkable social, cultural and religious change during the period at hand, the role of sport in this process has not received the academic attention it warrants. Far from just reflecting wider trends and processes within Anglo-Jewry, physical recreation contributed directly to growing religious apostasy and social mobility, and in decreasing ‘Jewishness’, within the British Jewish community. Engagement with British sport had a clear impact on the outlook of younger Jews on religion, Jewish culture and on relations and interactions with their familial and communal elders. Effectively, as in America, it proved to be a powerful factor in the destruction and ‘redefinition’ of Jewish identity and ethnicity amongst second and third generation Jews.²

It is also evident that British sport has been a significant arena for the manifestation of anti-Semitic perceptions and discrimination. Between the 1890s and the 1960s, the British sporting world saw the expression of both an ‘organised’ and ‘social’ hostility towards the Jewish community. Whilst wider anti-Semitism in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres of Jewish life have drawn an increasing amount of academic attention, this thesis illustrates that the world of British sport also saw a powerful and geographically widespread hostility towards Jews by a variety of individuals and organisations. It is also apparent that physical recreation acted as a vehicle for Jews to challenge and undermine

² Levine, *Ellis Island*, p. 271.

anti-Jewish sentiment. In effect, sport has been utilised as a means of defining, expressing and combating notions of Jewish ‘otherness’. It is an aspect in the strengthening and weakening of Jewish stereotypes and the social, cultural and sporting separation of the Jewish and non-Jewish community.

In terms of the ‘organised’ anti-Semitism of the British Union of Fascists, it is apparent that sport and physical recreation became a clear aspect of propaganda attempts to emphasise Jewish ‘foreignness’. By connecting sporting rhetoric, ideology and practices to long-standing anti-Semitic perceptions and stereotypes, the BUF tried to construct an image of a weak, immoral and underhand ‘sporting’ Jew to help emphasise the supposed manliness, sportsmanship and morality of BUF members. In effect, the anti-Semitic portrayal of the sporting Jew was consciously utilised to try to present the BUF leadership and ideology in a more racially and morally pure, British light; sporting anti-Semitism being utilised in order to try to gain popular and political support.

With the case study of golf, we can see the clear manifestation of the belief in Jewish ‘otherness’ in a sporting environment. From the late nineteenth century onwards, Jews were summarily excluded and banned from an apparently large number of private golf clubs due to their racial and ethnic background. ‘Social’ discrimination of this kind was driven by anti-Semitic fears concerning a ‘negative’ Jewish influence on the nature of the sport, notions which also surfaced in the golfing press. Jewish exclusion within the middle-class sporting environment not only reveals much about the underlying exclusivity of the club milieu, also demonstrates that wider anti-Semitism catalysed by Jewish social mobility

clearly extended to Jewish leisure and sporting interests. The strength and depth of anti-Semitic feeling within golf left Jewish golfers with no real alternative but to pursue separate development – a clear indication, not of the openness of British sport, but of the power of race and ethnicity as exclusionary factors in sporting participation.

In opposition to the development and manifestation of sporting anti-Semitism, Jews have also used sport as a means of responding to popular and sporting discrimination. At various points in the twentieth century, sport offered a means of undermining anti-Semitic perceptions of the Jewish community and a vehicle for responding to racism encountered within the British sporting environment. Reflecting trends within the immigrant working-class community for a more ‘assertive’ attitude towards self-defence, sport provided a high-profile arena in which anti-Semitism could be challenged and perceptions altered. In a limited way, through sport Jews challenged discrimination within the sporting world and, during peak periods of popular anti-Semitism, combated anti-Jewish sentiment prevalent within wider society.

In many ways, sport was as an important factor in the development, demonstration and undermining of Jewish stereotypes. It also served as both a means for the expression and rejection of an image of Jewish ‘otherness’. Essentially, the British sporting environment was a milieu in which perceptions of Jews could be formed and challenged and an arena in which underlying popular and social anti-Semitism could have a powerful exclusionary effect. As well as informing a great deal on previous knowledge and understanding on the

nature of anti-Semitism, an analysis of sport also reveals new avenues in which discriminatory attitudes surfaced, were defined and were challenged.

Evidently, because an insight into the sporting experiences of Anglo-Jewry reveals much about interactions within the Jewish community and with the wider non-Jewish population, this thesis has important historiographical ramifications. For historians of modern British Jewry, this analysis of the Jewish sporting experience demonstrates effectively that leisure interests must be addressed if comprehensive social and cultural histories of Anglo-Jewry are to be developed. In one sense, sport gives an important 'window...onto the modern Jewish experience' and can tell the historian much about the general nature of Anglo-Jewish society and culture during the time period.³ It is also true, however, that the impact and influence of sport was such that many considerable social and cultural changes within the community can be more fully understood by examining the Jewish sporting experience.

Whilst this thesis shows the considerable direct impact that sport had on the lives of many British Jews, it also opens up a previously unexamined perspective for the study of migration, ethnicity, minority identity and racial discrimination within modern Britain. Although it may not have been understood or appreciated previously, an analysis of minority sporting participation can illuminate a great deal on the way immigrants formed their own identities and on the nature of internal interactions within minority communities and their relationships with wider society. Any social history which seeks to

³ Jack Kugelmass, 'Why Sports' in Kugelmass, *Jews, Sports and the Rites of Citizenship*, p. 25.

comprehensively analyse modern Anglo-Jewry, or any other British minority for that matter, which does not attempt to address sport is effectively incomplete.⁴

This thesis also bears much significance on the historical study of British sport. An investigation of Jewish participation in physical recreation informs a great deal on the nature and characteristics of British sporting traditions. Firstly, it is clear that an analysis of Jewish sporting involvement demonstrates both the inclusiveness *and* exclusiveness of the British sporting environment for outsiders and minorities. Whilst sport may have opened up opportunities for Jewish migrants to engage with an essential aspect of British culture and identity, it was also a milieu in which social, cultural and racial prejudices could be formed and mobilised. Secondly, it is also apparent that sport can have vast social and cultural importance for migrant and minority groups. Participation and interest in physical recreation, which was consciously promoted by the Jewish elites, offered Jews the chance to acculturate a hybridised form of 'Britishness'. Sporting interests also affected the development and cohesion of religious and ethnic identity.

Most simply, however, this particular examination highlights a fact popularly known, yet largely academically overlooked – namely that there has been a significant historical involvement in British sport by immigrants and minorities. Whilst social background, gender and nationality have all been seen, quite rightly, as important determining influences

⁴ Significantly, there does seem to be a growing awareness amongst scholars of British minority and immigrant history that sport and physical recreation are important themes to address. See, for instance, Panayi's volume entitled *An Immigration History*, published in 2010, which looks briefly at Jewish, German and Irish immigrant involvement in British sport and the impact that physical recreation had on the internal and external dynamics of these minority groupings. Panayi, *An Immigration History*, pp. 155, 168-9, 174, 179, 293, 313-5.

on sporting participation, this is not true for immigration and race – an important omission from the canon of British sport historiography.

As this thesis demonstrates, immigrant and minority groups such as Jews can have a significant impact on British sport, whilst sport can also considerably affect the minority community itself in many different ways. Studies of minority sporting involvement could, therefore, be the next logical step for a field which is concerned at being ‘too narrow in our questions, our audiences and our constituency’. In essence, race and ethnicity could provide ‘new’ angles for historians interested in developing a broader understanding of the British sporting tradition. By turning to physical recreation within immigrant and minority ‘ghettoes’, the ‘ghettoisation of the subject’ – a fear prevalent within British sport history for over 20 years - may be avoided.⁵

⁵ Johnes, ‘British Sport History’, p. 402. In 1984, James Walvin claimed that the field needed to ‘make an impact beyond the pale of the specialism itself’ in order to achieve a broader influence and stronger reputation within wider academic British history. James Walvin, ‘Sport, Social History and the Historian’, *British Journal of Sport History*, 1, 1984, p. 5.

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GLC Greater London Council

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Manchester Jewish Museum

Oral history archive

National Archives

MEPO Metropolitan Police archives

Scottish Jewish Archives Centre

Glasgow Maccabi Archives

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Tyne and Wear Archive Services, Newcastle Upon Tyne

- S.MAC** Newcastle Maccabi
SX 124 North-Eastern Jewish Golfing Society, 1963-1976
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