



Jewish Country Houses

Objects, Networks, People

Report of Activities: 2020

www.jch.history.ox.ac.uk

[@JCHJewishHouses](https://twitter.com/JCHJewishHouses)

COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on our activities, as it has on every aspect of life in 2020.

Working with the Heritage Sector

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact in the heritage sector: many of the individuals with whom we had been working closely were on furlough for much of 2020 and most of the properties with whom we have developed close relationships have been closed to the public for much of the year.

To give just a few concrete examples of the way in which our work has stalled: (1) an all-day meeting to review progress and develop ideas for the European Days with NT curators, hosted by Willesden Jewish Cemetery and planned for April, was cancelled (2) plans for a major exhibition at Strawberry Hill have been put on hold (3) volunteer training has been put on hold and (4) plans for Jewish heritage activity related to the European Days of Jewish Culture/ UK Jewish Heritage Days have been put on hold, as these activities could not take place.

In the absence of our annual evaluation surveys, we have been gathering testimonials from key partners, and these are included as an appendix to this report.

Despite these challenges, the project has adapted and evolved over the period, continuing to develop new partnerships, to pursue funding initiatives, and to provide a vibrant hub for an international community of scholars and curators.

Cancelled and Rescheduled Events

We have all discovered that virtual conferences and academic events have advantages, but our hugely successful formula was dependent on holding conferences in relevant properties as a way of encouraging participants to engage with

the history of these sites, and building relationships with the heritage professionals working in them. In this sense, COVID-19 does pose an existential challenge to this project as originally conceived, and we have attempted to create a new programme over a longer period that will allow us to retain some of the original strengths of the project.

Neither the conference in Paris on “Jewish Collectors and Patterns of Taste” (scheduled for June 2020) nor the conference on “Jewish Dealers and the European Art Market” (scheduled for September 2020) could take place. Both have been rescheduled, and we have consequently also postponed the major conference planned for Spring 2021 at Upton House.

Contingency arrangements are in place so that events in 2021 can be hybrid, reduced, or fully virtual as required. Nevertheless, it is not possible to delay Collecting Strand events indefinitely since they are linked to publication projects.

Impediments to Research

The UK national lockdown created serious problems for project researchers: (1) home-schooling and/or the new burdens of online teaching created unexpected burdens for all project researchers (2) libraries and archives have been closed for a long period, and international travel became extremely difficult. Specifically, a research-trip to the US planned by Abigail Green, Tom Stammers and Juliet Carey for April 2020 was cancelled and it is unclear when we will next be able to access US archives or visit relevant US houses (Fallingwater, Oheka Castle). (3) all work on the digitisation of Ferdinand de Rothschild’s writings stalled.

Funding

Awarded

The Martin J. Gross Family Foundation has agreed to sponsor the new photography for our flagship book publication, without which the production costs associated with an ambitious, pan-European project of this kind would have proved prohibitive. We are enormously grateful to the Foundation for their generous and enthusiastic support of this project, and on-going commitment to it.

As in previous years we were able to supplement AHRC funding within Oxford through: (1) a University of Oxford Knowledge-Exchange Extension grant (to supplement heritage sector attendance at “Jewish Collecting and Patterns of Taste”, now postponed to 2021) and (2) a Creative Industry Seed Grant.

At the end of 2020, we were awarded a £3,985.00 University of Oxford Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund grant to run a pilot project (“Teaching the Holocaust through the Jewish Country House”) for virtual teacher training and site visits, in partnership with the Holocaust Educational Trust, J-Trails, the National Trust and Waddesdon Manor.

The Hélène Binet Photography project has attracted additional support from the National Heritage Institute (Czech Republic), the Montefiore Endowment and Waddesdon Manor.

Pending

We are awaiting the outcome of a major grant application to the Claims Conference entitled “Teaching the Holocaust through the Jewish Country House”.

Historic England have agreed to support an application for a PhD student to work on the collections and untapped archives of Ranger’s House as part of a wider study on German and German-Jewish collectors in

Britain: we are exploring various funding avenues to support this CDA.

Unsuccessful

An application to make a short, animated film about Salomons Estate for the “AHRC in Quarantine” initiative was unsuccessful. We would like to thank Chris Jones (Salomons) and Ruth Ur (Ur Kultur) for their help with this application.

An application to Oxford’s Public Engagement with Research grant programme was also unsuccessful.

Research

This was the first full year of our AHRC funded research project.

As PI, Abigail Green’s efforts have focused on developing our flagship book proposal with Juliet Carey; on developing the content of the Mobile Exhibition in collaboration with Marcus Roberts (J-Trails); on applying for supplementary funding for Holocaust-related activity; and on setting up the ‘Palaces, Villas and Country Houses’ route, with the support of project administrator Briony Truscott.

Green has been working collaboratively with Co-I Tom Stammers on Salomons Estate: they delivered a joint research presentation on ‘Jewish Country Houses, Collections and National Memory’ to the Jewish Home Fellowship programme at the Katz Centre for Advanced Jewish Studies (University of Pennsylvania), to the Jewish Country Houses research seminar, to the Ashmole Society (Brasenose College), to Wendy Fisher’s “international 'online university' initiative”, and to a joint session of the Ramsgate Montefiore Heritage and Worth Park History Societies.

Green has also completed 'A Resource Pack for UK Heritage Professionals', which can be downloaded from the project website:

<https://jch.history.ox.ac.uk/files/jewishcountryhousesresourcepackpdf>

Co-I Tom Stammers has been researching collections related to several families in Britain, including the Salomons (with Abigail Green), the Samuels, and the Monds, as well as identifying relevant archival materials for his period of research leave in 2021-22. He presented this work as public lectures to Edinburgh Art History Department and to the Jewish Historical Society of England (JHSE).

He has been working with Silvia Davoli on the re-organisation of the collecting strand events for 2021, and also feeding in ideas for her virtual exhibition at Strawberry Hill. Together they are developing the idea of an online exhibition around the Lost Jewish Houses of Europe with Dr. Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah and the Jewish Heritage Network.

Project Researcher Silvia Davoli has been working on the development of the Italian dimension of the project. She has liaised with the Jewish Museum of Rome (Director Olga Melasecchi) and the Jewish Museum of Venice (curator Marina Ansaldi), and has collaborated with Dr Luisa Levi D'Ancona Modena to compile an updated list of the Italian Jewish country houses. She has also identified untapped archival sources linked to the figure of Ernesta Hirschel Stern,



Ernesta Stern

including historic photographic material relating to her country houses (Torre Clementina at Cap St Martin in France and Villa Hirschel de Minerbi at Precenicco near Udine).

Dr Davoli has been on a part-time secondment to Strawberry Hill House for part of this year, where she has been working on the online exhibition, 'The Unexpected Jewish Past of Strawberry Hill', for the European Days of Jewish Culture. The exhibition will be online at the beginning of December 2020.

Finally, as access to archives has been limited, Silvia has carried on her research on Wilhelm Gottlieb Leitner, reading and transcribing relevant archival material that she had previously collected at the Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. Where possible she has used bibliographic resources available online as well as online services provided by the single archives.

Co-I Jaclyn Granick has not formally begun her AHRC-funded work on the project. During this first year, she has been working with Green on our Claims Conference funding application, on producing an overarching Jewish narrative for the "Palaces, Villas and Country Houses route" and on the @JCHJewishhouses twitter feed.

Three post-doctoral researchers have joined the project as Affiliated Researchers: Dr. Luisa Levi d'Ancona Modena (Israel), whose contribution will focus on Italy but engages with all aspects of the project; Dr. Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah (Holland), an expert on Baghdadi and MENA Jewish elites and their philanthropic networks; and Dr. Alice Legé (Italy), whose research focuses on Jewish collecting culture with particular reference to Gustave Dreyfus and Cahen d'Anvers families.

In October 2020 we also welcomed two doctoral researchers: Colette Bellingham-Kennedy, who is starting a CDA at Waddesdon Manor supervised by Abigail Green and Juliet Carey; and Isobel Muir, who is starting a CDA at the National Gallery supervised by Tom Stammers and Susanna Avery-Quash. Isobel has taken over responsibility for the JCH Twitter feed.

In addition to these activities, the JCH research team organised a series of remote seminars hosted by the Oxford Modern Jewish History Seminar, with four sessions in Trinity Term 2020 and three in Michaelmas Term 2020, in addition to a talk by Ewald Frie on German Country Houses hosted by the Modern European History Seminar. We would like to thank David Rechter and Zoe Waxman at the Modern Jewish History for their embrace of this collaboration.

Each seminar attracted between 30-60 participants and reached an international audience of scholars and curators, although we regret that the terms of the UK furlough scheme have made it harder for UK curators to participate. It has promoted a sense of intellectual community, fostered ties with scholars in the USA, and generated new connections among researchers working in this area.

Publications

Jewish Country Houses: the Lure of the Land: an illustrated book proposal was submitted to publishers in September 2019, and has been revised after peer review in discussion with them. We await a final decision, but informal feedback is positive.

In 2022, a special issue of the **Journal of the History of Collections** will appear dedicated to the theme of German-Jewish collectors outside of Germany. It will feature nine essays edited by Tom Stammers (Durham) and John Hilary, and will include many contributors and supporters of our project (such as Silvia Davoli, Tessa Murdoch, and Pauline Swords).

National Trust Partnership

Partnership work with the National Trust has largely been put on hold due to the challenges posed by COVID-19, but we remain in close contact with central NT staff, as well as with house managers at some key properties. It was pleasing to see Nymans featured so prominently in the article about this project published in *The Times* (28/09/2020).

The Collecting Strand events sponsored by the National Trust have been particularly impacted by COVID-19 as they were due to take place in 2020. We are very grateful to the NT for the flexibility they have shown in rescheduling these events. Going forward, we hope that the longer time-frame of the project will allow NT curators and staff to contribute in a meaningful way. We have identified four properties we hope to involve in different ways going forward: Ascott House, Clandon Park, Ightam Mote, and Lindisfarne Castle.

Nino Strachey left the Trust earlier this year, and we would also like to take the opportunity to record our thanks for the invaluable support she provided this project during the incubation phase in particular.

Strawberry Hill House Partnership

Silvia Davoli was seconded to Strawberry Hill for part of 2020 but plans for a major exhibition entitled “Three Ladies of Strawberry Hill”, originally scheduled for 2022, have been put on hold. Nevertheless, it was pleasing to see Lady Waldegrave and Strawberry Hill featured so prominently in the press coverage of the “Palaces, Villas

and Country Houses” route in The Times, and in the Jewish Chronicle (03/09/2020).

Silvia is working on a digital exhibition that will focus on Lady Waldegrave and the Sterns titled ‘The Unexpected Jewish Past of Strawberry Hill’. The exhibition will be accessible online from December 2020.

Waddesdon Manor Partnership

Colette Bellingham-Kennedy started work on a Collaborative Doctoral Award supervised by Abigail Green (Oxford) and Juliet Carey (Waddesdon Manor) that will focus on the little-known photographic archive at Waddesdon. This promises to be an exemplary CDA that will illuminate an aspect of the collection that has received little attention, and it is brilliant that Colette will be able to access relevant archives at a time when many Ph. D candidates are struggling to do so.

Partnership work with Waddesdon Manor in other areas has been on hold due to the challenges posed by COVID-19, but we are very grateful to Waddesdon and to the Rothschild Foundation for their on-going support of this project.

AEPJ Partnership

Work towards Phase 1 of the “Palaces, Villas and Country Houses” route, being developed in partnership with the AEPJ as part of the Jewish Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, dominated 2020, and this first phase is now largely complete. It features 16 properties in six countries, with potential for further development. The properties currently included are:

Belgium: Château de Seneffe
Czech Republic: Villa Löw-Beer, Villa Stiassni, Villa Tugendhat; **France:** Champs-sur Marne, Musée Nissim de Camondo, Villa et Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild; **Germany:** The Liebermann-Villa on Lake Wannsee; **Italy:** The Villa “La Montesca”, Villa Varda; **UK:** Hughenden Manor, Mottisfont Abbey, Waddesdon Manor, Nymans, Salomons, Strawberry Hill House.

“Palaces, Villas and Country Houses” launched in early September to coincide with the European Days of Jewish Culture, and we were delighted that this date enabled us to generate significant publicity in the UK, with a feature article in the Jewish Chronicle, and a news piece in The Times.



The Times, September 2020

The European Routes of Jewish Culture are currently in a developmental phase, with further development scheduled for 2021. It is already clear that the route and the publicity attached to it are serving to strengthen ties with European partner properties, and the digital focus of this project is particularly welcome at this time.

UK Museums and Heritage Initiatives

National Gallery

Co-supervisions began in October with Susanna Avery-Quash at the National Gallery following the successful application for a CDA exploring Jewish collectors and donors at the institution (c.1830-1945).

Historic England

A programme of Minor Amendments to the Historic Buildings List was agreed within the framework of the 2018-19 Jewish Country House KE-Fellowship, and Historic England have now completed work on the first phase of this project, which entailed updating entries related to a sample of c.20 historic houses owned or renewed by Jews. Historic England will now devolve responsibility for making further minor amendments within the framework of this collaboration to their regional offices.

Victoria & Albert Museum

We have worked with Alice Minter at the Gilbert Collection (within the V&A) to reschedule Part I of the 'Jewish Dealers' workshop for the new date of 19 April 2021. The event has been configured to meet Covid safety requirements and delegates will be able to participate remotely should they choose. We have also been carrying out detailed planning of Part II of the workshop (December 2021) which will feature more international speakers and will be hosted in association with London Art Week.

Association for Art History (AAH)

Tom Stammers (Durham) organised a panel with four speakers on Jewish Visual Culture in Modern Europe; due to Covid, it will now take place online in April 2021.

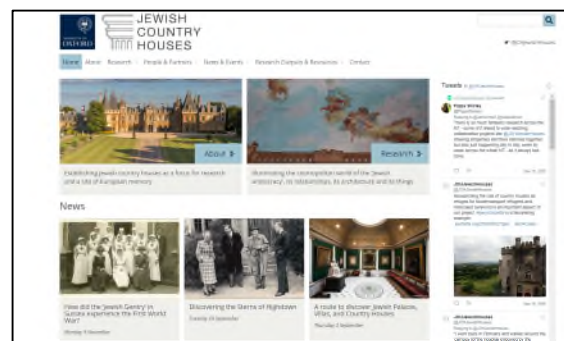
Pears Institute

Tom Stammers (Durham) has also worked with David Feldman (Pears Institute) and

Ella Dzelzainis (Newcastle), to organise a series of six lectures entitled 'Race, Religion and Difference in the Global Nineteenth Century'. Beginning in February 2021, the series will feature a number of talks exploring the intersections between different ways of talking about cultural and ethnic difference in the nineteenth century, including anti-Semitism.

Smaller Museums and Heritage Initiatives

COVID-19 has made it difficult to build on our contacts with properties that are not already closely involved in the project. Nevertheless, we have identified Highdown Gardens (Worthing) as an important but hitherto unknown JCH. Worthing Borough Council are developing a new HLF funded visitor centre here, and Hamish McGillivray presented the exciting new material he has uncovered as part of this project to our JCH research seminar. We will include Hamish's findings about East End Jewish holiday activities on Highdown Hill (NT owned) in a new Trusted Source article 'Jewish Stories at our Places' that will diversify our current NT focus on Jewish Country Houses to include the Birmingham back-to-backs and 2 Willow Road.



The jch.history.ox.ac.uk website (above) has emerged as a useful forum for engaging with local heritage initiatives and publicising their work. In 2020 we published a review of the new book about the Montefiore Estate at Ramsgate, an article by Hamish McGillivray on "Discovering the Sterns of Highdown", and – for Armistice Day - an article on the Jewish

gentry in Sussex during World War One, produced in the context of the Shalom Sussex research project.

We remain in close contact with Chris Jones at Salomons Estate, and are excited to report that he is developing a fantastic Salomons Archive website hosted by the Tunbridge Wells Civic Society. We are also in contact with the Worth Park History Society, although progress on the costume project has been delayed by COVID-19.

The Montefiore Endowment provided essential support for the H el ene Binet photography project at an early stage, and her work at Ramsgate synagogue is now complete. The Montefiore Endowment have also given outline approval for us to make use of the Montefiore site during an international workshop we hope to hold in Ramsgate, including support for a service to be held in the synagogue and sponsorship of a generous kiddush under cover.

European Partnerships

Stammers and Davoli are developing the idea of an online exhibition around ‘the Lost Jewish Houses of Europe’ in collaboration with Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah (in her post doing online content for the Jewish Museum Amsterdam). An outline of the project has been introduced by Goldstein-Sabbah to the Jewish Heritage Network who are enthusiastic about creating a website that will track the history of houses, families and artworks across the continent. It is hoped that this online exhibition will launch in the second half of 2021, and that it may be taken up as a digital exhibition by Jewish museums in Europe. The research for the exhibition will build on work with properties in the AEPJ route and also allow us to build new partnerships, for example, with the Jewish Museum of Venice.

Universit  Paris I, Sorbonne

Thanks to the kind support of Professor Cyril Grange, a member of the project’s International Advisory Board, we are delighted to be able to hold two days of our conference on Jewish collectors in June 2021 in the Sorbonne’s Milne-Edwards auditorium. This is a much bigger venue that will allow us to maintain social distancing.

Centre des Monuments Nationaux

We continue to work with the Ch teau de Champs on preparations for “Jewish Collectors and Patterns of Taste” (now scheduled for June 2021), and are delighted that the Ch teau has joined the ‘Palaces, Villas and Country Houses’ route.

The Institut Fran ais provided outline approval for the inclusion of Villa Kerylos in the H el ene Binet Photography project, but progress on this has stalled due to COVID.

Museo Ebraico di Roma

We are developing a new collaboration with the Jewish Museum of Rome, which has appointed an internal researcher, Gaia Fiorentino, to develop work in this area. Gaia has been contributing to the compilation of the general list of Italian Jewish Country Houses and she is planning to research further the case study of Villino Levi, owned at the end of the 19th century by Barone Giorgio Levi and his wife Xenia Poliakoff.

Mus e Nissim de Camondo

We continue to work together on preparations for “Jewish Collectors and Patterns of Taste” (now scheduled for June 2021), and are delighted that the museum has joined the ‘Palaces, Villas and Country Houses’ route.

National Heritage Institute, Czech Republic (Villa Stiassni)

The National Heritage Institute is a sponsor of the H el ene Binet photography project,

which will include Villa Tugendhat as one of four particularly emblematic Jewish Country Houses. The National Heritage Institute has supported our application to the Claims Conference and is working to secure further funding to cover catering and accommodation for the “Jewish Country House and the Holocaust in History and Memory” event scheduled for March 2023.

UrKulturWe continue to work with UrKultur on the H el ene Binet photography project, which we hope will result in an exhibition to coincide with the publication of the book. Work on Ramsgate and Waddesdon is nearly completed, and H el ene has made an initial visit to Villa Tugendhat.

Appendix (i):

Jewish Country Houses at the Modern Jewish History Seminar

Trinity Term 2020

Monday 11 May 2020

Abigail Green (Oxford) and Tom Stammers (Durham)

'At home in Britain? Jewish Country Houses, Collections and National Memory'

Wednesday 20 May 2020 (Joint seminar with The Long 19th Century)

ChaeRan Freeze (Brandeis University): **'The Rothschilds of Russia: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Political Economy of Intimacy in the Diaries of Zinaida Poliakova'**

Monday 1 June 2020

Hamish MacGillivray (Acme Museum Services) on behalf of Highdown Gardens/Worthing Council: **'Philanthropy, Flowers and Furlongs - the forgotten stories of the Sterns at Highdown, Sussex'**.

Monday 15 June, 2020

James McAuley (independent scholar and writer): **'The House of Fragile Things'**

Michaelmas Term 2020

Monday 19 October 2020

Joseph Sassoon (Georgetown): **'The Global Merchants: The World of the Sassoons'**

Monday 2 November 2020

Matthias Lehmann (UC Irvine): **'Baron Hirsch and the Politics of Jewish Philanthropy'**

Monday 30 November 2020

Myriam Chimènes: **'Music in the homes of the Parisian Jewish Elites (1870-1940)'**