

13 FEB 2024

The Boundary Walls with the Remains of the Bet Torah and 14 Monuments at the Jewish Cemetery in Penzance, Cornwall

Description: The Boundary Walls with the Remains of the Bet Torah and 14 Monuments at the Jewish Cemetery in Penzance, Cornwall.

Grade: II

Date Listed: 23 February 2004

English Heritage Building ID: 490978

OS Grid Reference: SW4740630722

OS Grid Coordinates: 147406, 30722

Latitude/Longitude: 50.1227, -5.5352

Location: Leskinnick Terrace

Locality: Penzance

County: Cornwall

Country: England

Postcode: TR18 2DG

Listing Text

PENZANCE

866/0/10032 LESKINNICK TERRACE
23-FEB-04 The boundary walls with the remains of
the Bet Torah and 14 monuments at the
Jewish cemetery in Penzance

(Formerly listed as:

LESKINNICK TERRACE JEWISH CEMETERY BOUNDARY WALLS AND
FOUR MONUMENTS TO:- SOLOMON ZALMAN [DATED 1823], JUDAS SON
OF MOSES [DATED 1824], JACOB JAMES HART [DATED 1846] AND
UNIDENTIFIED MONUMENT DATED 1791.)

The boundary walls of the Jewish cemetery in Penzance with the remains of the Bet Torah and 14 headstones and tombs date from the mid-C18 to the C19. They are constructed from thick granite rubble walls with slate or stone headstones.

PLAN: The cemetery is irregular in plan, tapering towards the entrance at the south-east. Here there is a small roofless vestibule, with the exposed foundations of a square cell immediately to the north, believed to be the remains of a Bet Torah (cleansing house) where the dead would have been washed and prepared for burial. The boundary walls, around 2m high, enclose a small cemetery with 14 listed headstones, as well as a number of other headstones which are not considered to be of significance in a national context.

MONUMENTS: Those monuments which are late-C18 and early-C19 in date are included in the list: un-identified stone dated 1791; Solomon Zalman 1823; Judas son of Moses 1824. Those monuments which are of good quality are also included in the list: Jacob James Hart 1846; Lemon Wolf 1848; Hannah Levy 1851; Israel Levin

1851; Julia Levin 1879; Rev Greenberg 1861; Eliezer ben Isaac 1844; Shevya Levy 1850; Israel ben Moses -undated infant death; Judah ben Naphtali undated (1817).

HISTORY: The first Jewish cemetery in post-Expulsion England was opened in London by the Sephardim at Mile End in 1657. By 1800 there were some 25 Jewish cemeteries nationally and by 1840 there were over 40. The Penzance cemetery was established on land leased to the Jews by the Rogers estate and other local prominent Anglican families. The earliest plot leases date from 1740. In Penzance the leases were granted directly to named Jews rather than being underwritten by a Christian sponsor, which was more commonly the case, because it was uncertain if Jews were permitted to hold property. The cemetery was in a prime location and the plot leases offered favourable terms, suggesting that the Jews were being actively encouraged to settle in Penzance. The first synagogue was built in Penzance in 1768. Enclosure of the cemetery began in 1811 and was completed in 1845 after the Jewish community bought the freehold in 1844. The earliest headstone dates from 1791 with unmarked, probably earlier graves around it. The last historic burial was in 1911, although two late C20 burials were allowed on unused plots. During 1941 the walls and some headstones in the south west corner suffered some bomb damage and were later repaired. There are two late-C20 burials which are not of historic significance. The cemetery was first listed in 2004.

SOURCES:

<http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/susser/jewcemwest.htm> accessed 11/10/2007

Keith Pierce and Helen Fry, *The Lost Jews of Cornwall*. (2000)

The boundary wall with the remains of the Bet torah and 14 early or good quality monuments of the Jewish cemetery in Penzance are designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

* The Jewish cemetery survives well as one of only 25 cemeteries nationally which were established in the C18. It is considered to be amongst the best preserved outside London.

* It survives well with its walls and the majority of its early monuments surviving intact with clearly legible, and in many cases impressive quality inscriptions

* The partial survival of the Bet torah is particularly rare in cemeteries of this early date

This text is a legacy record and has not been updated since the building was originally listed. Details of the building may have changed in the intervening time. You should not rely on this listing as an accurate description of the building.

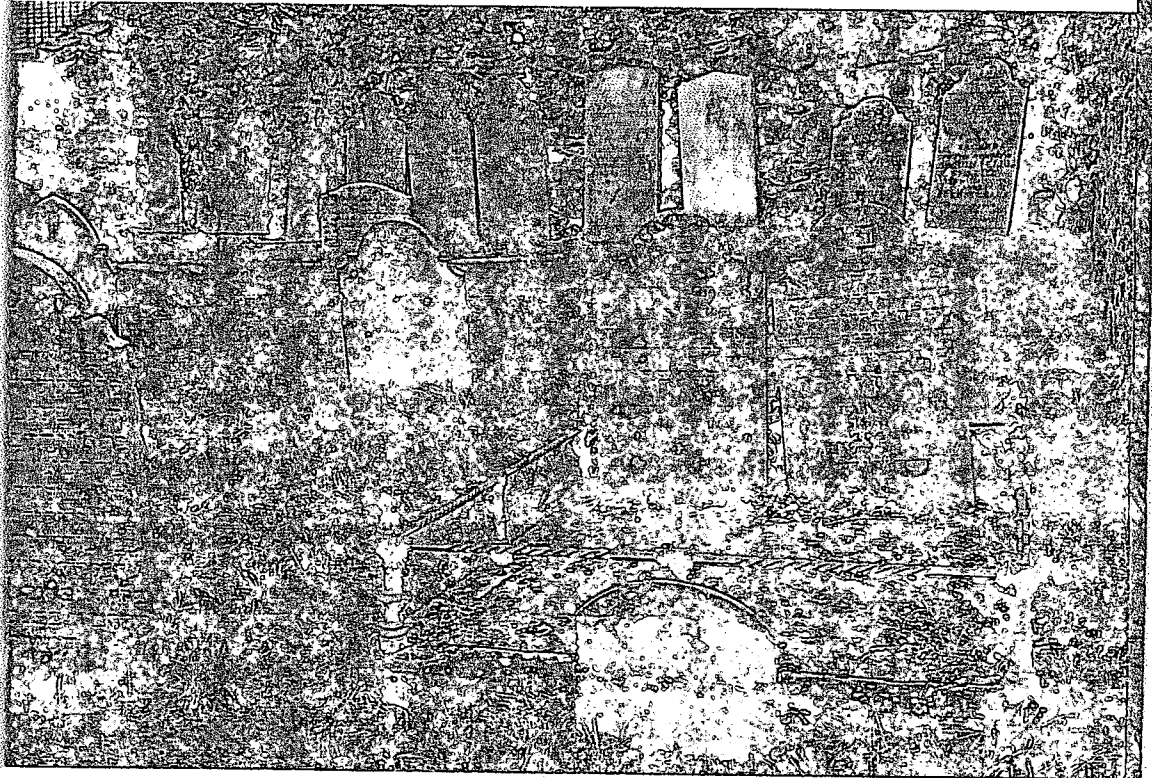
Source: English Heritage

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THE PENZANCE JEWISH CEMETERY

A CONCISE HISTORY AND GUIDE



KEITH PEARCE

These walls of 1845 were so well constructed that they remained intact until the 1940s. During the Second World War of 1939-1945, 867 German bombs fell in the Penzance area between 1940 and 1942: 16 people were killed, 48 houses were totally destroyed, 157 were seriously damaged, but many more houses, almost 4000, received minor damage of some kind. One bomb destroyed part of the lower walls near the cemetery entrance, and also several headstones in the section of the cemetery which had been reserved by the Congregation for the Poor. Repairs were carried out, presumably by the Town Council or by the church authorities, to these damaged walls. The respect with which the cemetery was regarded at the time, especially in view of the fact that there had not been a Jewish community in the town for over fifty years, is reflected in the fact that the headstones which were damaged beyond repair were replaced with several miniature headstones. They are in English script only (those of Solomon Teacher, 7:1; Catherine Levy, 7:2; and Joseph Barnet, 8:2). Further weakening to the walls may have resulted, and in the early 1990s several sections of the exterior-facing walls in the top right corner were substantially rebuilt.

Throughout the congregation's Minutes and Accounts from 1808, it is clear that the congregation were vigilant in their upkeep of both the synagogue and the burial ground, as the regular payments to numerous local tradesmen show. Builders were brought in for essential repairs to both. The synagogue building itself was insured. The early minutes of September to November 1810 record: "By half years insurance on Synagogue... 8 shillings 9 pence." There are numerous such entries for ensuing years, and this may also have covered the cemetery as part of the congregation's property, as no separate insurance for the burial ground is specifically itemised. Frequent payments to local carpenters are mentioned, and their services would most likely have been used for the building of the simple coffins for burial. Builders may also have been employed to prepare the graves for burial. A groundsman for the cemetery, a Mr. Richards, was appointed as late as April 1891, at a point when the congregation and its finances were in decline. It is not known if the congregation employed a groundsman for the cemetery throughout the period from 1808-1892, nor if the position was a regular or an occasional one. It seems likely, however, that the George Foot who was "Retained at £2. 2s. per annum" in June of 1852,

ROW 6

1. SOLOMON (Samuel) LEVY (1841). From Exeter. Optician & Hawker.
2. ELIAS (ELI) EZEKIEL (1844). Son of 2:3 & 3:2.
3. MILLIE BISCHOFSWERDER (1880), aged 11 weeks. Granddaughter of 8:3.
4. SHEVYA LEVY (1850). Widow of Hart Elias of Falmouth.
5. HENRY JOSEPH (1881). Pawnbroker & Outfitter. Son of 1:2, husband of 6:6.
His children: 4:1, 4:2, 4:3, 7:5 & 7:6
6. AMELIA JACOB (1891). Wife of 6:6 & niece of 3:1.
7. RUTH JOSEPH (1832). Another cholera victim. From Plymouth. Related to 5:2.
8. ISRAEL (a child, undated).

ROW 7

1. SOLOMON TEACHER (1856). Hardware & Jeweller. Son-in-law of 1:10 & 11.
2. CATHERINE LEVY (1864). Unmarried sister of 1:6 & 1:9.
3. RACHEL BISCHOFSWERDER (1886). Second wife of 8:3.
4. SARAH CICILIA BISCHOFSWERDER (child: 1891). Granddaughter of 8:3.
5. BESSIE (Betsy) JOSEPH (1900). Unmarried daughter of 6:5 & 6:6.
6. JULIA BISCHOFSWERDER (1911). Daughter of 6:5 & 6:6.
This was the last burial of a member of the original community. Note: The grave of
Arnold Levene (below: 8:5) is at the end of row 7.

ROW 8

1. JUDAH ben NAPHTALI LEVY (undated, but he died in 1817). See p. 14.
2. JOSEPH BARNET (1856). Unmarried, from St. Ives.
3. Rev. ISAAC BISCHOFSWERDER (1899). Minister for twenty years.
Neither of the below were connected with the historic Jewish Congregation.
4. ADOLF SALZMANN (1964).
5. ARNOLD LEVENE (1998).

Plan of Penzance Jewish Cemetery

