

The Pezaros – a Jewish family connection

Moses Pezaro b.1839

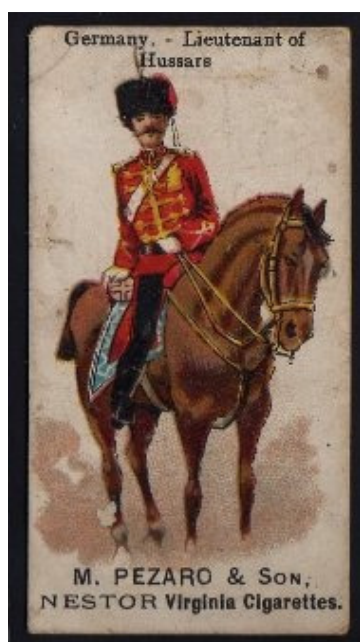
The 1881 Census records that Moses and his family lived at 162 Stepney Green, London. His age is given as 44. He and his wife Rose had were living with nine of the total of sixteen children they had. At least two, George then aged 17 and Abraham then 14, were deaf mutes. There were also two resident domestic servants; Emily Hicks aged 19 and Alice Howard aged 14. Both were local girls, born in Whitechapel. Moses' occupation was given as cigar maker, as was that of his eldest son, Hyman. George, the second son, is described as a cigar bundler. Moses and his wife were both born in The Netherlands, and Moses appears to have moved to London with his father Haim who died in 1858ⁱ and he was living Spitalfields in East London before 1857 where their eldest surviving son was born. In 1861 they were still living in Spitalfields but soon moved to New York. A Moses Pezaro, described as a 'segarmkr', was based at 154 Leonard Street, off Broadway in 1865.ⁱⁱ They were back in London by 1872. After a further period in New York they returned to London for good by 1878.

By the 1880s a substantial number of Jewish immigrants from The Netherlands, known as 'Chuts'ⁱⁱⁱ, were resident in Spitalfields, many of them living in slum conditions. They had been living in similar circumstances in Amsterdam but this was not a ghetto in the traditional sense as Jews were not legally discriminated against to a great degree in The Netherlands. The move to London seems to have been based on greater economic opportunities. Many Chuts spoke Dutch amongst themselves (Yiddish was imported by central European Jews who moved to London in much greater numbers in the late 19th Century) and they had some distinctive habits. They ate seafood, which is not considered kosher by most Jews, and had an unusual naming convention for men - boys were often given their father's name as a second given name (e.g. Moses Levie Haag could be the son of Levie Moses Haag) which meant that grandsons could have the same name as a living grandfather – again something which most Jews would not do. The Chuts founded the 'Dutch' Ashkenazi synagogue in a disused Huguenot (French Protestant) chapel in Sandys Row, Spitalfields, in 1854.

Many Chuts were engaged in tobacco-related manufacturing. Imported American tobacco was stored in bonded warehouses in Pennington Street, alongside Tobacco Dock, until the duty was paid, and then sold to manufacturer to be turned into cigars, pipe tobacco, cigarettes or snuff. After a period in a partnership with Isaac Stokvis, operating from 16 Wood Street in Spitalfields^{iv} ended in 1882, Moses set up M. Pezaro & Son, a firm that manufactured cigars and cigarettes. The latter were sold under the 'Cake Walk' and 'Nestor' brand names. Post Office directories in the late nineteenth century give the company premises as 259 Cambridge Road (now Cambridge Heath Road). Moses' time in New York was almost certainly related to the export of tobacco products to Europe and spanned the period of the American Civil War when the trade was badly disrupted. A change in tariff regulations in 1901 precipitated a 'Tobacco War' with the USA and led to the creation of rival tobacco

giants, British American and Imperial. Most of the independent manufacturers subsequently went out of business thereafter.

The 1901 Census records that Moses and his wife were living 'over the shop' at 259 Cambridge Road, Bethnal Green, with three of their children. The youngest Jeanette, aged 18, was born after the 1881 Census. There was also a servant, Agnes Rose, aged 25 and born in Dorset. Moses died in 1904 and was buried in the Novo (New) Cemetery in Mile End Road. This is recorded in the records of the Bevis Marks Synagogue, a Sephardic congregation, and he and his family were presumably members of this community^v. The fact that he was a Sephardi, together with his surname, suggests that his family may have originally come from the Mediterranean, but perhaps as far back as the sixteenth or seventeenth century.



George Pezaro b.1864

George was the second surviving son of Moses and was born in New York. He was living with his parents in Stepney in 1881 and later moved to Leyton, but by 1901 he was married with three children and living at 117 Listria Park, Stoke Newington. His wife Adelaide Oppenheim was also a deaf mute, as was their boarder Daniel Salomon, a brass polisher. The three children were not similarly disabled.

Bernard Pezaro b.1894

Bernard Pezaro was the second child and only son of George Pezaro. He had an older and younger sister. He married Hilda Smith, a close relative of my maternal great-grandmother^{vi}. Hilda, who was not Jewish, came from Leyton, where Bernard and his sisters were born, and presumably Bernard met Hilda there. "Uncle Bernie", as my mother knew him, was a tailor's cutter by trade, as was his deaf and dumb uncle, Abraham.

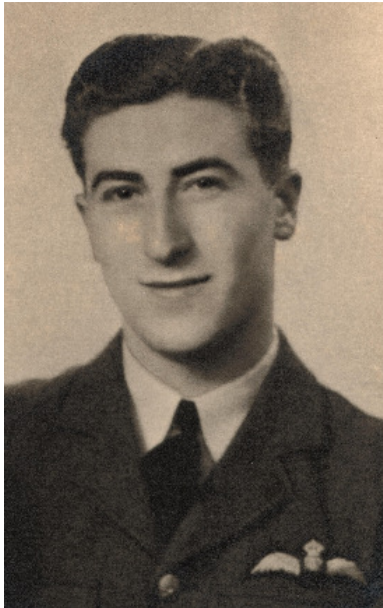
Bernie served briefly as Territorial soldier in the RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps) before the Great War. During the war he served in a cavalry regiment, the 8th Hussars, which saw limited service on horseback but did a great deal of digging trenches on the Western Front. He was in France by 1915, as he was awarded the 1915 Star, remaining a trooper until June 1916 when he was granted a commission in the Royal Fusiliers, an infantry regiment. His application included a character reference from the Senior Jewish Chaplain (and noted historian), the Rev. M. Adler.



Three battalions of this regiment were made up of Jewish volunteers, the so-called Jewish Legion, and were sent to fight in the Middle East, however Bernie was sent back to a battalion on to the Western Front. He was seriously hurt late in the War by a shrapnel wound to his spine, resulting from aerial bombing. Although he returned to tailoring after the war he was eventually bedridden as a consequence of his injuries and had respite stays in the Star and Garter residential home in Richmond. He died in 1947. Bernie had two sons who were bought up as members of the Church of England; the elder, James, was killed in action in 1944, the younger, Geoffrey, died in 1959.

James Pezaro b.1923

My mother (b. 1933) recalls that “Jimmy”, a favourite cousin, was a talented cook as a youngster. He later trained as a cook at the Central London College in Vincent Square, and worked in the kitchen of the Savoy from 1940 to 1941. He joined the RAF in 1941 and was accepted for pilot training. He was one of the eight-thousand cadets sent to America for training under the Arnold Scheme, as a member of course SE-42-K. He spent most of 1942 in Georgia and Alabama doing his primary, basic and twin engine training, at the end of which he was promoted to Flight Sergeant. Returning to the UK in January 1943 he completed his advanced training and then converted to four-engine bombers with 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Wigsley (Notts). In October 1943 Jimmy was commissioned as a Pilot Officer and joined 106 Squadron at RAF Syerston (Notts), flying Lancaster Mk III bombers. This unit had a distinguished history as part of No. 5 Group; Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC drafted key personnel from it to create 617 Squadron, “The Dambusters”, in 1942. Jimmy flew thirteen operations with the squadron from November 1943 to January 1944, the first from Syerston and the rest from RAF Metheringham (Lincs). The first and second outings were as a 2nd pilot to gain experience, and for the last two he had to return to base early due to defective a rear turret and engine respectively.



Source: French Family of Corner Brook, NF
Williams Family of St. John's, NF

In early April 1944 Jimmy and his crew transferred to 83 Squadron, a Pathfinder Force unit recently transferred back to No. 5 Group, flying Lancasters from RAF Coningsby (Lincs). Jimmy was duly promoted to Flying Officer^{vii}. Jimmy's first operation with his new unit, on 20th/21st was also abandoned for technical reasons. The bomb sight failed and he returned to base to land with a full load of bombs and flares. The second operation was on 22nd/23rd was successful. On the night of 24th/25th April, piloting Lancaster serial number ND469, identification code OL-C, Jimmy took off for a raid on Munich. It was Jimmy's sixteenth operation and his crew were officially considered to be "quite experienced". At nine-thousand feet his aircraft was hit by flak (German anti-aircraft artillery) but he made a controlled descent to 1000 feet. Here the plane received a further hit from flak and crashed at Allach, five miles north-west of Munich, exploding on impact. All the crew, which included a Canadian and a New Foundlander^{viii}, were killed. The crew were initially buried at Schleisshiem where the photograph above was probably taken. Later their remains were removed to the concentration CWGM (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) cemetery at [Durnbach](#).

Richard Dace

richard@hastang.co.uk

July 2015.

ⁱ <http://sefardies.org/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=I14192&tree=tree2>
<http://www.jsgsb.org.uk/alluk/buriald.asp?br=118145>

ⁱⁱ Trow's New York City Directory - 1 January 1865

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuts> <http://tracking.modern-industry.com/jacobus/dutch.htm>

^{iv} Now 21 Wilkes Street, a desirable town house in the Spitalfields conservation area.

^v <http://www.jsgsb.org.uk/alluk/buriald.asp?br=118149>

^{vi} My maternal great grandmother, Ada Hornett, was living with the Smith family in Wandsworth in 1901. She was Hilda's first cousin. Hilda died in 1941. She developed mental health problems and at time of her death was a patient at Severalls Hospital, Colchester, one of the Essex county asylums.

^{vii} Aircrew were promoted a rank after volunteering for the Pathfinder Force units and this was normally a collective decision by a whole crew. 83 Squadron had been part of No. 5 Group until the creation of the elite Path Finder Force in 1942, but was later transferred back as a marker unit for its former group.

^{viii} The rear gunner, WO2 B. Baldwinson, was Royal Canadian Air Force. The mid-upper gunner, Sgt G. French, was a New Foundlander, but appears to have joined the RAF in Africa, either in Rhodesia or Basutoland.