



Jewish Heritage in England

Gerald E. Kadish

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2006 marks the 350th Anniversary of the Resettlement of the Jewish community in England. In 1656 Jews returned to England after an absence of nearly 400 years, since the medieval expulsion under Edward I in 1290. Jews from Amsterdam came back in the wake of Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel's petition to Oliver Cromwell, during the brief period when England was a republic. The Jewish community has enjoyed a history of continuous settlement in England since 1656, a record unmatched anywhere else in Europe. Today, Anglo-Jewry, a small community that has never numbered more than about 450,000 people, is the oldest non-Christian minority in Britain. For the first time, Jewish Heritage in England celebrates in full colour the undiscovered heritage of Anglo-Jewry. It is the first comprehensive guide to historic synagogues and sites in this country dating from before the Second World War, based on an authoritative survey carried out with the support of English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The guide is easy to use, covering more than 300 sites, organised on a region-by-region basis. Each section highlights major Jewish landmarks, ranging from Britain's oldest synagogue, Bevis Marks Synagogue in the City of London, through the Georgian gems of the West Country to the splendid High Victorian "cathedral synagogues" of Birmingham, Brighton and Liverpool. Heritage trails around former Jewish quarters of the major cities are included. Relics of Anglo-Jewry's medieval past are explored in York, Lincoln and Norwich, and venerable burial grounds with Hebrew inscriptions are found in the unlikeliest of places. Curious oddities are not to be missed, including a 19th-century private penthouse synagogue in Brighton and an Egyptian-style mikveh [ritual bath] in Canterbury. This guide will undoubtedly appeal both to the specialist and the tourist alike.

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