

Casa Shalom -The Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies
Gan Yavneh Israel
Gloria Mound

The origins of the work conducted today at Casa Shalom are perhaps unusual, but it is an entity that has within a few years made considerable strides, becoming both internationally and academically respected and a clear example of how unexpected events can be a catalyst for unique and important research.

The whole concept was initiated almost as a holiday hobby in the Spanish Balearic Islands of Ibiza and Formentera, known as the Pitiüses Islands, in 1978, when it emerged that within these backwaters Jews had been protected by the Islanders and survived from after the expulsion in 1492 until modern times. Jewish customs and ritual were discovered, along with documents, including a 14th century Megillat Esther, now undergoing restoration by the Spanish Government. That along with the revelation that four buildings had been secret synagogues, some in use until the Civil War in 1936, the importance of the discoveries began to be appreciated more widely. Within a few years the research expanded to the larger Balearic Islands of Majorca and Minorca. See our informative web-site at www.casa-shalom.com

From the Judeo-Spanish Conference at Glasgow University in March, 1984, the Department of Hispanics has taken a positive interest in the ongoing research. Since 1988 Gloria Mound has been nominated annually an Honorary Research Fellow and each Head of Department has sat on the Board of Casa Shalom. The Institute has been supported since its inception in 1994 as an amuta [non-profit organization], by Mr. Elie Schalit and the JNF UK and the Neil Davis UK Charitable Trust. Its main support continues to be through its wide international membership and stalwart band of volunteers. Such valuable assistance enabled research in Spain, Portugal, the United States, Canada,

the Caribbean, South America and Africa, culminating with meeting people with hidden Jewish origins and the collection of valuable genealogical data about past and present families and communities.

Local volunteers assist in translations and general office activities. Much time and effort is given over to E-mail enquiries and help with genealogical searches as we hold considerable onomastic dossiers and have published and lectured widely. To all questions we reply as helpfully as possible, using our unique database. Because of our limited budget we can only continue research if the enquirer becomes a member of Casa Shalom. The membership charge is very small. We have a sliding scale starting at \$36 per year, which includes our free journal with reduced rates for other publications and off-prints. We are always most careful to be discreet and keep the privacy of those that desire it.

Visitors have been welcomed from all over the world, many from families of hidden Jewish background, desirous learning more about their Jewish heritage. From our Institute's limited resources, books, *Mezuzot*, *Talitot*, candlesticks, Hebrew textbooks, dictionaries and other items are often requested and sent to many parts of the universe. There are plans to hold more seminars, open days and tours to places of Jewish interest, some hitherto unknown.

While each area of the research has a distinctive personal history, the constant theme has been the tenacity of the Jewish faith. Today, whilst perhaps not large by comparison with some, a unique library and photographic collection as well as audio cassettes and archival material have been amassed during extensive travel and research. Except for a small amount of paid secretarial help all other assistance is given on a voluntary basis. Accumulating new information on a daily basis, as well as aiding

those who seek answers to questions on Jewish identity and ritual occupies many hours. At all times we endeavor to assist scholars and students with information. The enquirer's initial question frequently leads in turn to the enrichment of our research data about Marrano life and practices. In the nearly thirty years since we began our investigations, we have contributed to a number of prestigious publications, including the *Encyclopedia Judaica Year Book*. We have also attended innumerable conferences in Israel and abroad. The fact that we are able to supply so much firsthand personal material has meant that our lectures have proven very popular. They make history come alive to all levels of audiences, both for adults and children, and especially where there are problems of Jewish identity. A large number of papers on all facets of Marrano-Anusim studies have been published and more are forthcoming. Increasing attention is given to the Holocaust and how refugees fleeing the Nazis were helped by local secret Jews.

In 1997 the first of *The Casa Shalom Member's Journals* was published and received many accolades for its high standard and new material contained therein. It has also proven to be a lifeline to so many isolated Marranos-Anusim in many parts of the world.

Recently, one of our main projects has been the previously unknown early Jewish immigration to Florida/Cuba and Puerto Rico. The majority of this influx came from the northern Balearic Island of Minorca in 1768 through the Canary Islands when the British occupied both Florida and Minorca. Our findings have pushed back the previously accepted Jewish history some one hundred and fifty years. In a few cases, at the other end of the spectrum we have been fortunate enough to trace the present day descendents of some of these families. The work has been in association with the University of Miami's Department of Jewish Studies. We now hold a very large amount of archival material on this subject at Casa Shalom, showing important historical links to nearby American states like Louisiana and

also to Cuba and Jamaica. From these areas new data continues to arrive all the time. We are deeply indebted to St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States, which has shown such a positive interest in our research and where so many of the Minorcan immigrants finally settled.

Our library has now a beautiful new extension, opened by Israel's 5th President Yitzhak Navon last January. It contains many important and rare items about Crypto-Jews not only in Hispanic countries, but also in places like Iran and Sao Tome Y Principe. The latter are two Islands off the Gulf of Guinea, where two thousand children between the ages of two and twelve years of age were taken in 1493 from Lisbon as slaves. Five hundred years later some vestiges of Jewish awareness and practices remain amongst the descendents of these children. We have also conducted seven Passover Sedarim for the Marranos-Anusim in the Balearic Islands.

In Israel, in addition to adult lectures a number of classes have been arranged in schools on the subject of Crypto-Jewish life with great success. Many children of immigrants to Israel are from a secular and mixed marriage in the former Soviet Union and endure serious identity problems. We are proud to help such students understand their heritage. With almost equal appreciation the lectures, always accompanied by unique slides and usually musical and interview recordings, have been even more successful in Europe and America. The question of those who wish to return to Judaism openly and lead a fully observant Jewish life is difficult and complex, but happily in the last few years our efforts to better acquaint the necessary authorities with the history and situation of *Anusim* are bearing fruit, but it often incurs expense on the part of Casa Shalom and therefore ongoing support is vital.

Short Resumé of Casa Shalom Holdings

Asterisk * denotes that personal testimonies are also included.

General and Anglo-Jewish History

First edition *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1900-1906. Funk and Wangalls, NY) and other sets of early and modern Encyclopedias.

* Research papers and photos of the late Rabbi Abraham Chaitowitz, recipient of the first United Synagogue (UK) Sir Robert Waley-Cohen Memorial Travelling Scholarship Prize in 1973. These papers include much material concerning findings in Churches and Monasteries on the Spanish mainland as well as Majorca.

Bevis Marks Records of Births Marriages & Deaths from inception of the Congregation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews in London from 1660 until 1901.

Transactions and index of the Jewish Historical Society of England.

* Extensive Anglo-Jewish and colonial books and archival material, including hitherto unknown Jewish settlement in the town of Banbury, UK.

All Fighters (Jewish) World-Wide Against Fascism in the Spanish Civil War Including the Lincoln Brigade. Freemasonry and Marranos Conference 2003.

America

* Marranos in Boston, New Orleans, Florida etc. with Iberian links to remote places where Jews were sheltered for generations, Caribbean Islands and Brazil.

* Florida Papers relating to early settlers and most important items relating to the Minorcan Immigration, Jewish practices, including manuscripts on families who later left for Cuba and other places in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and Atlantic Islands. We also hold several testimonies about Crypto-Jewish practices in the Southwest part of the United States, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Mainland Spain and Canary Islands/Madeira, Morocco, Libya

* Lucian Wolf and Haim Beinart's works on the Jews of the Canary Islands.

* Jews and secret practices, persecution, inquisition, food etc.

* Papers relating to Jews in the Canary Islands, Cape Verde, Azores, Sao Tome etc., both past and present.

Archivos Espanoles Simancas. The Spanish National Archives is not open to the general public, but we were given access and hold in addition to Spanish items, copies of documents relating to Italy with specific books on Sicily, Genoa and Venice.

* Holocaust studies in relation to Spain, Portugal, Libya and Marranos in this period.

* Statements from Marrano families.

* Statements relating to Jewish life in Libya and Morocco.

Balearic Islands

Copies of Jewish land sales and disputes prior to the official dissolution of the Jewish Community in 1435, from Santa Clara Convent (partly in Hebrew), Palma de Majorca. Movement of secret Jews from Majorca to Salonika and Italy, mostly Leghorn (Livorno) and Sicily.

* Lives and ritual amongst the local secret Jews in Majorca known as *Chuetas*.

* Minorca Genealogy, showing links to New Zealand and United States families. Copies of ancient Ketubot (Jewish marriage contracts) of Palma-De-Majorca, Minorca. Secret synagogaes, one discovered by Head of Jews Free School in 1930s.

Copies of fourteen fragments comprising 85% of a total 14th century Megillat Esther, found in Ibiza, now being restored by the Spanish Government.

* Balearic Periodicals/newspapers/old films/photos including Freemasonry guide books.

* Walter Benjamin's, Raoul Hausman's, Elliot Paul's sojourns in Ibiza 1932-36. Activities of the Nazis in Majorca & Ibiza both pre-Spanish Civil War & post World War II.

* Information and works pertaining to the life of Baram, an Israeli painter and his artist wife Bella Brisel when they lived in Formentera in the 1950s/60/70s. Baram received the first officially permitted Jewish burial in the Pitiuses Islands for 500 years. Later buried on the Mount of Olives Jerusalem.

* Works of Isodoro Macabich Llobet, Juan Mari Cardona, prime historians of Ibiza and Formentera.

* Papers relating to Prince Luis Salvador of Hapsburg's life (1847-1915) and works on the Balearic Islands, and many other places he visited and had homes. In all his travels he paid particular attention to a country's flora and fauna. Records of his finding of secret Jews in Ibiza; his unusual and somewhat bizarre friendship with Nathaniel von Rothschild of Vienna; copies of seventeen letters by Rothschild to the Prince etc.

Works of Nito Verdera and Rafel Bauza Socias and their theses that Columbus came from the Balearic Islands and was a secret Jew; copy of Columbus letter from Cuba in 1503, later translated into English (18c).

Portugal

Archival material on the Islands of Sao Tome Y Principe, including some from the Inquisition archives in Lisbon relating to the sending of 2000 Jewish children to the Islands as slaves in 1493 and the residue of Jewish customs still remaining.

Information on past and present Portuguese communities, both open and secret.

Publications of Gloria Mound and Casa Shalom on the above subjects:

We hold slides, cassettes, films, photos on most of the above subjects, including a number from pre-Spanish Civil War in 1936. Photos and testimonies of Republican bombing of the battleship Deutschland in Ibiza harbor in 1937.

Papers of family of Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria, Rabbi Moritz Grunwald, who was selected to be Chief Rabbi of the UK in 1892, but never took office because during the visit he succumbed to the flu and died. His son and grandchildren led secret Jewish lives in Ibiza from 1932 until modern times.

In conclusion I would like to say: We are a recognized non-profit organization, which aims to reach out to those of Jewish and non-Jewish origin who desire to know more about their Jewish heritage. We provide a hitherto unavailable facility, but only connect

members to each other if **both** sides wish it. The Institute welcomes members to visit the Library by previous appointment. We have no lending facilities, but will gladly provide bona-fide members even by post with photocopies at very low cost as not all who enquire from us have access to a computer. We look forward to welcoming you at Casa Shalom in the not too distant future.

Gloria Mound was born in London in 1930. She studied in Spain 1985-88 and made aliyah with her husband Leslie in 1988. In the same year the University of Glasgow accorded her the honor of being an Hon. Research Fellow, which has been renewed each year since. Although most of her day is taken up with directing the activities of the Institute, she greatly enjoys being with her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, gardening and music. Her aim is to train a suitable person to carry on the work of Casa Shalom when she can no longer do so.

Gloria Mound, Casa Shalom, Institute For Marrano-Anusim Studies
Pob. 66 Gan Yavne
Israel 70800
Tel/Fax 972-8-8573 150
Mobile 050-7492-516
e-mail marrano@aquanet.co.il



President Navon opening the library of Casa Shalom