

# THE JEWS OF CORNWALL

## A History – Tradition and Settlement to 1913

Keith Pearce

Cornwall was the first of the Celtic regions of Britain and Ireland to be annexed by the English, and so the first to lose its native language. The linguistic and cultural confusion which resulted from the death of Cornish led to unsubstantiated but persistent traditions that Phoenicians, Saracens and Jews had been present in Cornwall from ancient times and that Jews had controlled and operated the tin industry in medieval times. In this substantial and meticulously researched book, the author applies a critical and penetrating analysis to the place of Jews in Cornish folklore, and also distinguishes the Cornish Jews from the indigenous Cornish Gentiles who adopted Hebrew names, but who are not known to have been of Jewish descent.

In the main body of the text, the identities, occupations and commercial contribution of those Jews who lived in Cornwall in the 18th and 19th centuries and who settled in Cornwall's southern ports of Falmouth, Penzance and Truro, as well as in Redruth and St. Austell, are presented in remarkable detail. There are comprehensive family trees, biographies, information from public records, membership of civic organisations, such as Freemasonry, and complete translations of Hebrew headstones, which should be of great value to those tracing their own family history.

All of the Rabbis known to have served in Falmouth and Penzance have also been identified, some, like Rabbi B. A. Simmons, living in the County for fifty years, and the religious life of the congregations and their struggle to survive is also given extensive coverage. With many original illustrations, this book represents a major contribution by the author to Cornish and Anglo-Jewish history, representing some thirty years of study and research.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



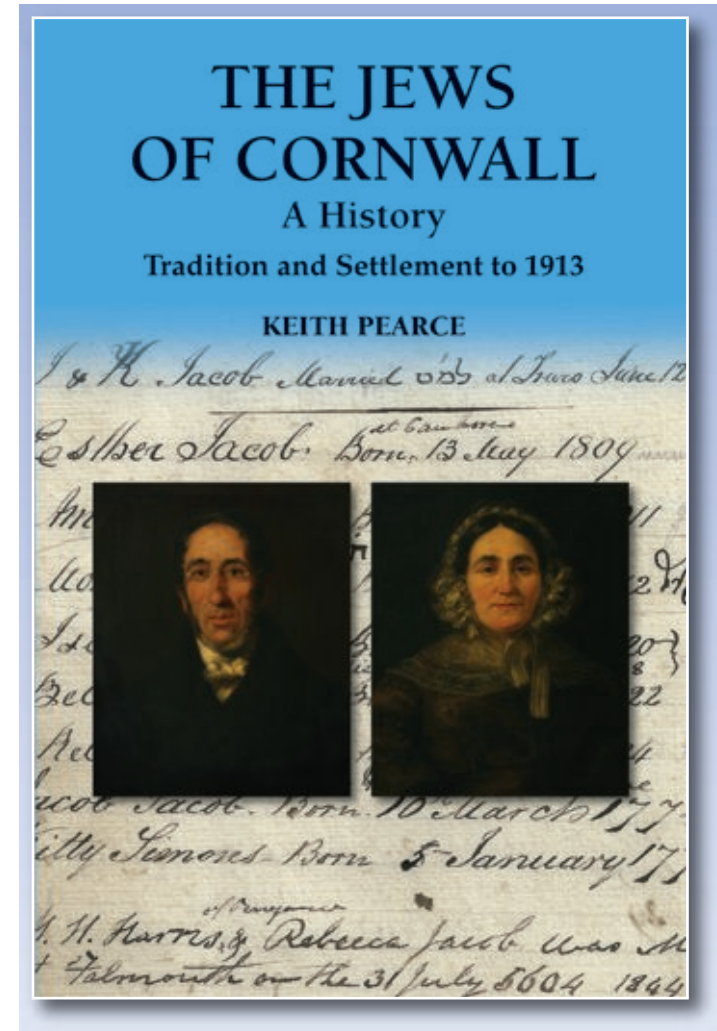
**Keith Pearce** was born in Camborne, Cornwall in 1949. Generations of his family on both sides have been closely associated with Methodism. From an early age he developed an interest in Biblical History, and later in Judaism. He was educated at Redruth Grammar School, and then studied at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Exeter College, Oxford. He has lived in Yorkshire, and returned to Cornwall in 1974. He taught Religious Studies, including Jewish Studies, Politics and Law to Sixth Form Students in Penzance until his retirement. He has been the custodian of the Penzance Jewish Cemetery since 1998, and is an honorary member of Kehillat Kernow.

David Giddings studied at Downing College, Cambridge and taught History to Sixth Form Students in Penzance for many years. He also has an interest in Cornish Archaeology.

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Above: Penzance Jewish Cemetery (c. 1980). Photo by Mandy Pearce.

Left: Rabbi Joseph Rintel of Falmouth. Courtesy Jacob Archive

Below: Example of a double-page spread in the plate section.




David Bischofswerder (centre seated) with members of his family at his home *The Hollies (Chycelin)* c. 1889. His father, Rev. Isaac Bischofswerder, by this time a widower, is seated far right. Photo from an original in the possession of Victor Bishop.

Israel Levin's Watch, Clock, Jewellery & Plate Establishment in Market Jew Street. Courtesy Penlee House Museum and Gallery.




THE JEWS OF CORNWALL



Chapter 4.  
Portrait: "The Old Jew" by John Copley (c. before 1780). Likely to be the image of Rabbi Abraham Hart (Solomon Lazarus) of Penzance. In the private collection of and courtesy of Vis Stedius (The Lanser Gallery, Truro).

Plate 14

THE JEWS OF CORNWALL



Chapter 4.  
(Top left) Mary Hart (Miriam Solomon), the second wife of Lemson Hart (top right). (Below) Uncertain, but likely the brothers James Jacob Hart (Jacobus) and Frederick Hart, both partners in the Lemson Hart firm in London. Artists unknown. Photographs by Simon Butler, courtesy of Penelope Stronach.

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