

*The timing, of the last week in April 1851, is most interesting. This was immediately before the opening of the Great Exhibition, in Hyde Park, London by Queen Victoria on 1 May. This initiated the busiest ever period (up to that time) on the entire British railway system and probably the world. No fewer than six million people visited the Exhibition in the few months of its opening, at the rate of up to 100,000 per day. Many of these were from outside London and trains, hotels, etc. would generally have been rammed. Many excursions were chartered and relief trains run. Paradoxically anyone leaving London would have stuck out like a sore thumb – “But you’ll miss the biggest show on earth!”*

### III. The jewellery and the diamond merchants

Although the available descriptions of the stolen jewellery are limited in detail, it is valuable to examine the information we possess concerning both the stolen goods and Thonen’s employers, the diamond merchants Jacques Schwabacher and Louis Birnstingl.

To aid our understanding, we have incorporated insights provided by members of the *Antiquers* forum, an online community of antique jewellery enthusiasts, whose contributions we sincerely appreciate.<sup>91</sup>

The advent of the industrial revolution ushered in a transformative era, enabling mass production of jewellery and subsequently driving down prices. Concurrently, the discovery of gold reserves in Australia and California contributed to an ample supply of these materials in the global market. The 1840s witnessed a substantial increase in middle-class incomes in Britain, creating a favorable environment for the affordability of jewellery among a broader segment of society. Notably, Queen Victoria herself was frequently adorned with exquisite jewels, exerting a significant influence on the prevailing fashion trends of her era.<sup>92</sup> The enduring impact of these trends on jewellery design can still be observed in the 20th century:<sup>93</sup>

*By the 1840s, diamond set floral bouquets were worn as brooches or in the hair with diamond drops (representing either seeds or rain drops) falling from the flower heads.*



*Portrait of Queen Victoria by Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1859)*

<sup>91</sup> See the discussion at Rene\_R (Bamberger, D.): “Diamond jewellery stolen in 1851”, in: Antiquers forum, 1 July 2023. <https://www.antiquers.com/threads/diamond-jewellery-stolen-in-1851.79180>

<sup>92</sup> A fine example of this is the 1859 Winterhalter portrait, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen\\_Victoria\\_-\\_Winterhalter\\_1859.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen_Victoria_-_Winterhalter_1859.jpg)

<sup>93</sup> Levys: “Victorian Jewelry and fashion styles from 1837-1901”, in: History of Jewelry. <https://levysfinejewelry.com/pages/victorian-jewelry-and-fashion>

*These pieces are the predecessor for the 3-dimensional designs Cartier made popular more than 100 years later.*

The newspaper articles reporting on the robbery provide several concise descriptions of the stolen jewellery. However, it is important to note that some of these descriptions are inconsistent, lacking in detail, or potentially inaccurate. Consequently, it proves challenging to extract substantial information about the stolen goods beyond the most fundamental aspects:

- *The property stolen consists of a necklace, forming two bracelets, a pair of earrings, a brooch, and centre piece of a necklace, also forming a brooch, with drops – value £450.*
- *The value of the diamonds, according to the London papers, is estimated at £4,500 [£450?].*
- *[...] a diamond bracelet, value £100, a diamond stomacher, value £130, two diamond bracelets, value £160 [£60?], and two diamond ear-rings, value £160 [£60?], diamonds to the total value of some £450 [£550?].*
- *[T]wo large diamond brooches, the centre-piece, a brooch of a diamond stomacher, and a pair of diamond bracelets. Prisoner told me he had taken off the pendants or drops from the centre ornament, and had taken the stones out and sold them [...] five carats of diamonds, for £25.*
- *I proceeded to sell the diamond drops as soon as I landed again in Liverpool. I only got £3 per carat, so I did not sell more than sufficient to meet my urgent necessities, as I intended making restitution of the whole of the property at a future time.*
- *I afterwards found, on searching the prisoner's pocket-book, a duplicate or memorandum of a pair of brilliant earrings, deposited at [a pawnbroker] for £40. Prisoner said these earrings, together with the pendants he broke off the centre-piece, and the other articles produced, formed the complete suite of diamonds. The other portions of the pendants, consisting of the settings, were obtained by another officer.*
- *The property produced, consisting of two bracelets, brooches, stomacher brooch, ear-rings, etc., is worth £450 at the wholesale value, as charged in the invoice. The pendants have been taken off the centre piece and the diamonds taken out. I can identify the settings as my property, but the loose diamonds I can only presume belong to me.*

What we can say is that the jewellery consisted of approximately six individual pieces, presumably silver jewellery adorned with diamonds. The centerpiece was adorned with drops weighing at least five carats.

During the Victorian era, it was not uncommon to find jewellery that exclusively showcased diamonds. However, the absence of other gemstones or pearls in the stolen pieces could mean that they had been specifically crafted for the purpose of transporting diamonds, possibly as a means to evade taxes imposed on loose stones.<sup>94</sup>

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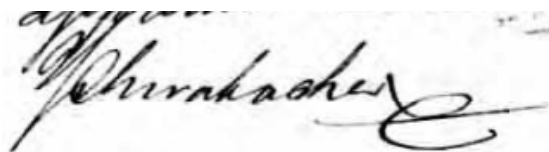
<sup>94</sup> Deborah: "Diamond jewellery stolen in 1851", in: Antiquers forum, 1 July 2023.

<https://www.antiquers.com/threads/diamond-jewellery-stolen-in-1851.79180/#post-9481514>

The cumulative value of the jewellery, equivalent to £450 in 1851, would be approximately £80,000 in 2023.<sup>95</sup> However, considering the lower value of diamonds at the time (relative to other gemstones like rubies, sapphires and emeralds), it is plausible that the pieces may hold a significantly higher present-day value than £80,000.

The biographies of the merchants themselves are interesting, and may be important for understanding Thonen's involvement in their firm.

Jacques Schwabacher,<sup>96</sup> a Hungarian Jew, was born on 20 February 1821 in Pressburg (now Bratislava) in what is now Slovakia, then a part of the Austrian Empire. He ventured into the diamond trade and relocated to England during the 1840s. In partnership with Jacques Bettelheim, their business operated from 65



*Jacques Schwabacher's signature, from his marriage record (19 May 1873)*

Fenchurch Street, London. In early 1850, they moved their office to 8 Broad Street Buildings, but their business partnership ended on 15 March 1850.<sup>97</sup> Schwabacher sought naturalization in England in 1851, which was granted the following year. During March 1851, he resided as a lodger of Frederick S. Lee at 56 Christopher Street, St. Luke, Finsbury. Subsequently, he returned to Fenchurch Street later that year. In January 1852, Schwabacher became a freemason.<sup>98</sup> Eventually, he relocated to France where he married Rachel Jenny Hirsch in 1873.<sup>99</sup> He continued his work as a diamond broker in France until his passing on 4 February 1886.

Louis (or Lewis) Birnstingl was born in the town of Arad, Hungary (now Romania), in 1818 or 1819. After the death of his father, Eisik Löb Birnstingl, from cholera in 1831,<sup>100</sup> Louis relocated to Pest (now Budapest) in modern-day Hungary. There, he pursued a career as a silversmith and diamond merchant. In 1838, he embarked on a journey to Australia, joining his older brother Maurice (more details to follow).

<sup>95</sup> At an average inflation rate of 3.06%, £450 in 1851 is worth £80,375.08 in 2023; compare <https://www.officialdata.org/uk/inflation/1851?endYear=2023&amount=450>

<sup>96</sup> Some additional information and links to sources about the two diamond merchants can be found at <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Schwabacher-5> and <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Birnstingl-2>.

<sup>97</sup> The London Gazette, Jan.-Apr.1850, page 811.

[https://www.google.de/books/edition/The\\_London\\_Gazette/DRIKAQAAMAAJ?gbpv=1&pg=PA811](https://www.google.de/books/edition/The_London_Gazette/DRIKAQAAMAAJ?gbpv=1&pg=PA811)

<sup>98</sup> "Jacques Schwabacher", in: England, United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers, 1751-1921, London 'B', #116-1204, fols 1-180, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1576863:60620>

<sup>99</sup> "Jacques Schwabacher (52) marriage to Rachel Jenny Hirsch", in: Paris, France, Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1680-1930, Archives de Paris; Paris, France; Etat Civil 1792-1902, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/7915177:62058>

<sup>100</sup> Kunz, E.F.: "Blood and Gold; Hungarians in Australia", 1969, page 20. Compare Felice S: "Eisik Löb Birnstingl". <https://www.ancestry.de/family-tree/person/tree/166908362/person/262183709388/facts>

Upon his arrival in England, Louis married Helen Levy (born in 1822, died in 1893) from Chelsea at St. Luke, London, on 12 March 1851.<sup>101</sup> According to the census conducted on 31 March 1851, Louis was the head of the household at 38 Hunter Street, St. George, Bloomsbury, London. In the census records, he was listed as a coral merchant, indicating possible business connections to the Middle East.

Louis Birnstingl's business partnership with Jacques Schwabacher was dissolved in October 1851.<sup>102</sup> Subsequently, he traveled to Australia and returned to England in late 1853.<sup>103</sup> By 1856, he resumed trading under the firm name of Louis Birnstingl & Co. at 8 Broad Street Buildings, while also operating under the firm of Solomon Maurice & Co. in Sydney, Australia. However, on 9 February 1856, Louis Birnstingl declared bankruptcy.<sup>104</sup> Details from the proceedings of the bankruptcy court are as follows:<sup>105</sup>

**NOTICE** is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, Louis Birnstingl and Jacques Schwabacher, of No. 8, Broad-street-buildings, in the city of London, lately carrying on business as Merchants and Commission Agents, under the firm of L. Birnstingl and Co. was, on the 1st day of this present month of October, dissolved by mutual consent. All debts due to and from the late partnership firm will be received and paid by the said Louis Birnstingl. —Dated this 9th day of October 1851.

*L. Birnstingl.  
J. Schwabacher.*

*The partnership of Schwabacher and Birnstingl is dissolved (9 October 1851).*

*IN RE L. BIRNSTINGL.—[Before Mr. Commissioner FONBLANQUE.] The bankrupt was a merchant in Broad-street-buildings. His accounts, prepared by Messrs. Beesley and Franklin, show debts, £16,026; liabilities, £20,402; balance of consignments to the house of S. Maurice and Co., of Sidney, £14,211.*

*This was the examination meeting.*

*Mr. Linklater appeared for the assignees, and Mr. Lawrance for the bankrupt.*

*The Court was informed that the assets would produce little or nothing, except in the event of the bankrupt going to Australia, and making the best of the consignments.*

*The bankrupt passed; and it was understood that he should proceed to Australia for this purpose. In the meantime an allowance of £5 per week would be made to his wife, with whom he had received a fortune of £2,000.*

By 1861, Louis Birnstingl had obtained British citizenship and was residing in St. Pancras. In 1871, he had relocated to Kensington, and by 1881, he had moved to 26 Leinster Gardens,

<sup>101</sup> "Louis Bernstingl", in: England und Wales, ziviler Heiratsindex, 1837-1915. [https://search.ancestry.de/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=8913&h=2274913&indiv=try&o\\_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=61265](https://search.ancestry.de/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=8913&h=2274913&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=61265)

<sup>102</sup> The London Gazette, Sept.-Dec.1851, page 2545,

[https://www.google.de/books/edition/The\\_London\\_Gazette/5hpKAQAAMAAJ?gbpv=1&pg=PA2545](https://www.google.de/books/edition/The_London_Gazette/5hpKAQAAMAAJ?gbpv=1&pg=PA2545)

<sup>103</sup> Kunz, E.F.: "Blood and Gold; Hungarians in Australia", 1969, page 24.

<sup>104</sup> The London Gazette, February 1856, pages 714-715.

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/21853/page/714/data.pdf>,

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/21853/page/715/data.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> "Court of bankruptcy, yesterday", in: Morning Chronicle, 6 June 1856, page 8.

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl/0000082/18560606/026>

Paddington, where he continued his occupation as a merchant. Louis Birnstingl passed away on 23 October 1889 at Hawthornden, Lawrie Pard Road, Sydenham, Kent, England.<sup>106</sup>

Prior to his arrival in England, Louis, along with his brother Maurice (Moritz) Birnstingl, had spent a considerable amount of time in Australia. During their stay, they worked as master silversmiths and importers of jewellery. In 1969, Egon F. Kunz highlighted the lives of the Birnstingl brothers and their significant involvement in the construction of a synagogue in Sydney in 1845 in his book *Blood and Gold*. A review of the book was published in the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in 1970, which said:<sup>107</sup>

*[W]e meet Isaac Friedman, the first Hungarian in Australian history. He arrived in 1833 and was prominent in establishing the Hobart congregation. His changing fortunes have been repeatedly referred to in the Proceedings of this Society, which are often quoted and acknowledged by the author. Friedman was followed in 1838 by Maurice Birnstingl, who together with his brother Lewis, was among the first outstanding silversmiths in Sydney. They were also generous contributors to the Synagogue Building Fund in 1845.*

In 1854, Louis' brother Maurice moved to Marseille in France.<sup>108</sup> He may have later entered into a business partnership with Jacques Schwabacher.

It has been suggested that Thonen's employment by the diamond merchants may not have been unusual, even though Thonen himself was a *goy* (a non-Jewish person):<sup>109</sup>

*In London, and I'm thinking Hatton garden, it wasn't uncommon for Jewish diamond merchants to employ trusted gentiles/goyim in lesser more menial roles.*

For further discussion of the role that Birnstingl's "Australian connection" may have played in the claims that Edward Thonen himself was Jewish, see the chapter [Claims of Jewish descent](#).

### Why did Thonen come to England?

FitzSimons has speculated that Thonen had been expelled from Prussia, and that this is why he moved to England. While we are certain that Thonen had not been expelled, FitzSimons may have a point. England was considered a kind of safe haven for political refugees from

<sup>106</sup> "Louis Birnstingl", in: England und Wales, nationaler Nachlasskalender (Index von Testamenten und Verwaltungen), 1858-1995. [https://www.ancestry.de/imageviewer/collections/1904/images/31874\\_222948-00040?pld=5146990](https://www.ancestry.de/imageviewer/collections/1904/images/31874_222948-00040?pld=5146990)

<sup>107</sup> Kunz, E.F.: "Blood and Gold; Hungarians in Australia", 1969.

[https://www.google.de/books/edition/Blood\\_and\\_Gold\\_Hungarians\\_in\\_Australia/9lkhAAAAMAAJ](https://www.google.de/books/edition/Blood_and_Gold_Hungarians_in_Australia/9lkhAAAAMAAJ)

"Blood and Gold" (book review), in: Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol.6, part 8, 1970, pages 549-550. <https://ajhs.collectiveaccess.au/Detail/objects/52866>. Reviews also appeared in the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, vol. 56, part 2, June 1970; and in the Jewish News, 1 March 1970.

<sup>108</sup> Kunz, E.F.: "Blood and Gold; Hungarians in Australia", 1969, page 24.

<sup>109</sup> Ownedbybear: "Diamond jewellery stolen in 1851", in: Antiquers forum, 2 July 2023.

<https://www.antiquers.com/threads/diamond-jewellery-stolen-in-1851.79180/page-4#post-9483775>



Thonen's fame here; or they considered it an instance of two different people of the same name, and did not believe the article to be about "their" Edward Thonen.

For further discussion of whether this article was known to researchers in Australia during the 20th century, see [the next chapter](#).

### Claims of Jewish descent

One of our preliminary inquiries revolved around the origins of the (as we later discovered, erroneous) assertion that Thonen had Jewish heritage. Elberfeld had a small but well-established Jewish community throughout the 19th century. Based on the population figures for 1827, the year of Thonen's birth, the religious distribution in Elberfeld was as follows: 22,861 Protestants, 5,218 Catholics, 15 Mennonites, and 127 Jews.<sup>141</sup> As early as 2009, attempts were made to search the internet for any Jewish connection to Thonen in Elberfeld. These endeavors proved fruitless, but they did confirm, based on available lists of Elberfeld's Jewish residents, that no Jewish family bearing the surname Thonen existed in the town in 1848 and 1859.<sup>142</sup> The comprehensive roster of Elberfeld's Jewish population in 1846, which included biographical details for each individual, also provided no mention of an individual named Thonen.<sup>143</sup> It should be noted that earlier records would not have contained any family with that name since Jews in the area did not adopt surnames prior to 1845.<sup>144</sup>

In light of our inability to find any evidence of a Jewish individual named Thonen in Elberfeld, we proceeded to investigate the origins of the claims regarding his Jewish connection in Australia. Both the Ballarat Hebrew Community and the Melbourne Hebrew Community have no records pertaining to an Edward Thonen.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, none of the known contemporary eyewitness accounts, particularly those by Carboni, make any reference to Thonen's religious affiliation.

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<sup>141</sup> "Annalen der Stadt Elberfeld", 1827, page 52, <https://digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/ihd/periodical/pageview/1493158>. The figure for Protestants includes both Lutherans and Reformed.

<sup>142</sup> hhheilbut: "re. Edmund THONEN and the Wuppertal-Elberfeld Jewish Community BOOK CITE", 2009, <https://groups.jewishgen.org/g/main/message/46754>. The first name is misspelled, but this was a search for the Edward Thonen who died in Ballarat. For lists of the Jewish inhabitants of Elberfeld in the 19th century, see also Jorde, F.: "Zur Geschichte der Juden in Wuppertal", Bergland-Verlag, Wuppertal-Elberfeld, 1933.

<sup>143</sup> "Amtsblatt für den Regierungsbezirk Düsseldorf", 1846, page XII. [https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10001243\\_00511\\_u001?page=20](https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10001243_00511_u001?page=20)

<sup>144</sup> Arbeitskreis der NS-Gedenkstätten und -Erinnerungsorte in NRW e.V.: "Judentum im Bergischen Land", <https://www.ns-gedenkstaetten.de/nrw/wuppertal/wissenswertes/juedische-geschichte>

<sup>145</sup> 'Archives of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation', SLV A1387 Series 6, 6/1 AJHSV MS 9352A, 6/4 6/1 AJHSV MS 9352A; 'Archives of the Melbourne Jewish Congregation' SLV Section 1 Letter Books Correspondence, Indexes, Box I Jewish Congregation of Melbourne and Port Phillip 26 Jan 1844 – 2 Sept 1859, Box II Melbourne Hebrew Congregation 1 Feb 1855 -12 dec 1869, A1532, A1533a, A1649 Series 075

Previous works pertaining to the Jewish community at Eureka were examined, including Rubinstein's *The Jews in Australia* (1900),<sup>146</sup> Spielvogel's *The affair at Eureka: the story of '54* (1928),<sup>147</sup> and Rosenthal's *Formula for survival: the saga of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation* (1979).<sup>148</sup> Rubinstein's account offers comprehensive coverage. Rosenthal and Spielvogel both mention the Jew Charles Dyte. Spielvogel refers to Thonen as *little Teddy Thonen, the German lemonade man*, but does not ascribe Jewish identity to him. It seems unlikely that Spielvogel would have omitted Thonen's Jewish background had he considered him a Jew.

In Gregory Blake's 2013 book *The Eureka Stockade: an International/Transnational Event* the source claiming Thonen's Jewish heritage is cited as *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol 4. Part 7. 1958. p.480*.<sup>149</sup> The 1958 article says:<sup>150</sup>

*Amongst the thirty "rebels" who lost their lives was Teddy Thonen, the lemonade man. He was the only Jew who took part in the actual fighting.*

However, upon examining the aforementioned article, its sole source is Withers's 1887 book *History of Ballarat*, specifically on page 13; and while Withers mentions Thonen on multiple occasions, he does not indicate his Jewish affiliation.<sup>151</sup>

Ultimately, the earliest known reference stating that Thonen was Jewish, and the one to which all subsequent claims can be traced back, is a self-published article by Lazarus Morris Goldman from late 1954.<sup>152</sup> This article was reprinted multiple times in December of that year, presumably in commemoration of the event's centennial.<sup>153</sup> It was also featured in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Vol. IV, Part II* (1955), on page 82.<sup>154</sup>

*Edward Thonen, who was killed instantly when a bullet struck him in the mouth, was born in Elberfeld, in Prussia, and was well known in Ballarat as a lemonade seller. [...] Carboni's tribute to this Jew, who gave his life for what he deemed right and fair, explains why he found a ready place on the council which directed the miners' resistance.*

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<sup>146</sup> Rubinstein, H. L.: "The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History. Volume I. 1788-1945", William Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1900.

<sup>147</sup> Spielvogel, N. F.: "The affair at Eureka : the story of '54", J. Fraser, Ballarat, 1928. Besides the song *German Teddy* (dated to 1889), which we will discuss in the [following chapter](#), this is the earliest instance we are aware of where Edward Thonen is referred to as *Teddy Thonen*. The nickname is not attested in contemporary sources.

<sup>148</sup> Rosenthal, N. H.: "Formula for survival: the saga of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation", Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1979.

<sup>149</sup> Blake, G.: "The Eureka Stockade: an International/Transnational Event", UNSW Canberra, 2013, pages 121-122. The source is misprinted, it should be "Vol 4. Part 8. 1958. p.480".

<sup>150</sup> Available online at <https://ajhs.collectiveaccess.au/Detail/objects/48524>

<sup>151</sup> Withers, W. B.: "History of Ballarat", F. W. Niven & Co., 1887.

<sup>152</sup> Goldman, L. M.: "The Jews in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century", December 1954 (self-published).

<sup>153</sup> See, for example, the anonymously published "The Jews of Eureka" in *The Great Synagogue Journal*, December 1954.

<sup>154</sup> "The Jews of Eureka", <https://ajhs.collectiveaccess.au/Detail/objects/52721>

Regrettably, Goldman provides no citation or reference to support this claim, neither in his original article nor any of the reprints. Despite our efforts, we have been unable to identify any other source from which Goldman could have derived this information.

The Sydney Jewish News published a review in their December 17, 1954 edition:<sup>155</sup>

*Participation of two Jews in the Eureka Stockade, the centenary of which was celebrated recently, is described in an article, "The Jews of Eureka" published in the current issue of the Great Synagogue Journal. The article says that one of the Jews, Edward Thonen, born at Elberfeld, (Western Germany), was killed instantly when a bullet struck him in the mouth. The other, Charles Dyte, who came to Australia, later became President of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation and Mayor of Ballarat East. Both were highly respected among the miners and their families who became involved in the rebellion against local authorities and the then Governor of Victoria.*

The 1954 article appeared again, in modified form, in the 1958 edition of the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, which is the version that Blake referred to.

The idea that Thonen was Jewish gained rapid popularity. Early sources that echoed the claim include Solomon's *100 Full Years of Ballarat Jewry* from 1961<sup>156</sup> and Cowen's *Jews in Remote Corners of the World* from 1971.<sup>157</sup> Numerous later references can be found, persisting up to the present day, all relying on various iterations of Goldman's 1954 article.

This is also in line with what was known about Thonen when the *Eureka Encyclopedia* was published in 2004 (and with its sources). The Encyclopedia says:<sup>158</sup>

*THONEN, EDWARD (1830-1854) A Prussian, he was one of the leaders of the miners and was killed at the storming of the Eureka Stockade on 3 December 1854.*

*Thonen was born in the town of Elberfeld (or Elberfeldt) which was located in Westphalia, an enclave of the Kingdom of Prussia close to the Netherlands border, and near the city of Dusseldorf. During the Napoleonic Wars it had been annexed by France, but after the Congress of Vienna in 1815 was restored to Prussia. Some writers spoke of it as the 'Manchester of Germany', and it had a slightly radical tradition with the town maintaining a system of poor relief. Indeed the philosopher Frederick Engels went to school in the town - he was ten years older than Thonen and in 1845, when Thonen was 15, Engels addressed communist meetings in Elberfeld. Following from the Year of Revolutions (1848), in May 1849 there was an uprising in Elberfeld and nearby towns, which was suppressed by the Prussian authorities. It is speculation but Thonen may have been one of those who left for exile in England.*

<sup>155</sup> "NEWS IN BRIEF", in: The Sydney Jewish News, 17 December 1954, page 2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article262676388>

<sup>156</sup> Solomon, I.: "100 Full Years of Ballarat Jewry", in: The Australian Jewish Herald (Melbourne, Vic. : 1935 - 1968), 30 March 1961, page 7. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/265728085>

<sup>157</sup> Cowen, I.: "Jews in Remote Corners of the World", Prentice-Hall, 1971, page 113.

<sup>158</sup> Corfield, J.J., Gervasoni, C., Wickham, D.: "The Eureka Encyclopaedia", Ballarat Heritage Services, 2004, page 506.



*Edward Thonen came to Victoria in 1852. He moved to Ballarat and worked on the goldfields selling lemonade. He had quickly gained a reputation as a strong chess player. At the second Bakery Hill Meeting on 29 November 1854, he was chosen to be a captain of some of the diggers. A blacksmith and pike-master during the Eureka uprising, he was described as being five feet tall, thin but robust. He died from gunshot wounds when he was defending the Eureka Stockade. Raffaello Carboni wrote that Thonen's mouth was literally full of bullets. He was buried on 5 December in the Ballarat Old Cemetery. The only Jewish person killed at Eureka, Edward Thonen was aged 24. The informant for his death certificate was Dr Albert Sickler.*

*Thonen is now remembered by Thonen Drive at Ballarat Old Cemetery. Peter Lalor's accounts mention that Thonen's terrier dog would not leave his body, and this later became the legend of the Pikeman's dog. However, according to an unpublished diary, it seems more likely that this was William Emmerman.*

[Sources:] Heinrich Born, *Die Stadt Elberfeld 1610-1910*, Druck und Verlag von J H Born: Elberfeld 1910; Eberhard Illner, *Bürgerliche Organisation in Elberfeld 1775-1850*, Ph C W Schmidt: Neustadt an der Aisch, 1982; Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: a biography*, Chapman & Hall: London 1936; Newman Rosenthal, *Formula for Survival: the saga of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation*, Hawthorn Press: Melbourne 1979, p9; Dorothy Wickham, *Deaths at Eureka, Ballarat 1996*; Dorothy Wickham, Clare Gervasoni & Wayne Phillipson, *Eureka Research Directory, Ballarat 1999*, p96; 'The Jews of Eureka', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Vol 4 (1954)*, p82-83.

One possible explanation for Goldman misattributing Jewish heritage to Thonen might be a contemporary source indicating his knowledge of Hebrew. Although we are unaware of such a source, its existence cannot be entirely dismissed. It is plausible, if not probable, that Thonen possessed some understanding of Hebrew, as we have discussed in the context of his education in the chapter titled [Youth and education](#). Alternative hypotheses, such as a late-life conversion to Judaism, appear improbable due to the absence of supporting evidence.

Another possibility<sup>159</sup> would be that Thonen's relationship to the diamond merchants Schwabacher and Birnstingl, both of whom were Hungarian Jews, was somehow known to Goldman, and was taken as evidence that Thonen was Jewish as well. Most diamond trade during the Victorian age was done by Jews,<sup>160</sup> a fact that Goldman was probably aware of. We have no proof that he knew of Thonen's time in England, let alone the background of his employers; but since he does not state his sources, we cannot rule it out either. Finding an "Australian connection" for the diamond merchants is not difficult: Birnstingl spent some time in Australia, and he is even mentioned in a book review in the *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society* from 1970 (see chapter [The Jewellery and the diamond merchants](#)).

<sup>159</sup> First suggested by German Wikipedia user *Hodsha*, 23 June 2023.

[https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Diskussion%3AEdward\\_Thonen&diff=234906029&oldid=234848183](https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Diskussion%3AEdward_Thonen&diff=234906029&oldid=234848183)

<sup>160</sup> See the discussion at Rene\_R (Bamberger, D.): "Diamond jewellery stolen in 1851", in: *Antiquers forum*, 1 July 2023. <https://www.antiquers.com/threads/diamond-jewellery-stolen-in-1851.79180>

Although we could not find any mention of Birnstingl's time in Australia prior to 1969,<sup>161</sup> 15 years after Goldman's article, his role may well have been known in 1954. Goldman may also have been aware of the newspaper accounts about Thonen's diamond robbery that were published in Australian newspapers in the 1890s, which mention Birnstingl, and correctly inferred that the Birnstingl and Thonen in London and Australia were the same people. However, if Goldman further concluded that Thonen must have been Jewish because he worked for a Jewish merchant, he would have been wrong.

Even if we ignore everything else that is known about Edward Thonen (like his baptismal record, or the information in his request for permission to emigrate to Australia), the case for a Jewish heritage is extremely weak. Considering that this piece of information is absent from known contemporary sources and studies of Jewish life in Ballarat before the mid-20th century, and can be traced back to an unsourced self-published article that emerged a century after the event, we deem it to be a fictional and unsubstantiated claim, lacking credibility.

### **The song *German Teddy***

Carboni's accounts of Edward Thonen's story were the inspiration for a song, *German Teddy*, probably dating to the 1880s. A manuscript of the song, dated July 15, 1889, was given to New Zealand composer Alfred Hill by Lieselotte Schreiner from Germany, a friend of Hill from Hohenprießnitz in Saxony, who he may have known from his time at the Leipzig Conservatory. The manuscript is in the Alfred Hill collection of the State Library of New South Wales,<sup>162</sup> where it was rediscovered in the 1980s by musicologist Kay Dreyfus.

That song, in turn, inspired the 1984 symphony *German Teddy* by Kay Dreyfus's husband George Dreyfus (born in 1928), an Australian composer of Jewish descent who, like Edward Thonen, was born in Elberfeld. The symphony premiered in Wuppertal in 1986, and was again performed at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka in 2016.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Kunz, E.F.: "Blood and Gold; Hungarians in Australia", 1969.

[https://www.google.de/books/edition/Blood\\_and\\_Gold\\_Hungarians\\_in\\_Australia/9lkhAAAAMAAJ](https://www.google.de/books/edition/Blood_and_Gold_Hungarians_in_Australia/9lkhAAAAMAAJ)

<sup>162</sup> A traditional song sent to Alfred Hill by Lieselotte Schreiner, in Series 04: Alfred Hill music manuscripts collected, 1880–1953. Call numbers MLMSS 6357/Boxes 41–42, MLMSS 6357/Box 62X, record identifier 94Rkr0j1, State Library New South Wales, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/94Rkr0j1>

Dreyfus, George, *German Teddy* [music]: traditional song / arranged by George Dreyfus; Bib ID 18416, National Library of Australia, <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/18416>

<sup>163</sup> "World Premiere – German Teddy by composer George Dreyfus", Melbourne Composers' League, 1 April 2016. (Note: This was not, in fact, a world premiere. The symphony had been performed in Wuppertal before.)