

NEIGHBOURS WHO DISAPPEARED

Lipník nad Bečvou



The group of young Jewish people, the photograph approximately from 1930: Aron Pechman, Jozef Grünbaum, Hugo Hohenšerová, Kurt Grünbaum, Ruf Ben-gorová, František Šim, Růža Ebošová, Karelína Redková.



The authors of the work together with L. Křiváček and M. Tereš.



Of the synagogue "immigration after the Jews", model of the Jewish school next door hall.



At the grammar school in Lipník nad Bečvou, where we study, the project „Neighbours Who Disappeared“ started in collaboration with the Civic Society Moravian Gate in March 2001. We participated in this event. There was a strong Jewish minority in Lipník nad Bečvou. We ourselves asked a lot of questions. We contacted the Jewish citizens who survived the Holocaust but also people who knew the Jews and who could therefore inform us of their fortune.



The synagogue – the second oldest preserved in Czech lands – the written record of 1540. According to the site centre, right of the hall it might be even older. The Renaissance vault decorated the women's section. Between 1907 and 1908 it was extended and in 1910 it was reconstructed in the neo-Renaissance style. In 1947 the synagogue was purchased by the Czechoslovak Church, now called the Czechoslovak Humanistic Church, and was called the Chapel of the Prince of Peace. The Church has carried out modern reconstructions.

We answered the question how the Jews came to Lipník. Then a further question was raised. How did these people live? From an early age they learn reading and writing, they learn the laws. The traditional Jewish life is of such a structure that it expresses ethnic and religious interests and a sense of the Jewish historical experience. Their history, saturated with domination and tyranny, must have taught the Jews to keep together. Thanks to their manners and customs they had preserved their identity and belief. They had to be alert so that these feasts would not become merely a routine but that they would be able to see God's love in them every time and with a sincere heart.



The former Jewish school.

To extend our knowledge and to get inspired for our next work we took part in an educational trip to Prague and Terešín. We learned more about the history of the Jewish people, Jewish feasts and their symbolism, rudiments of Jewish religion. We also realized how close the Jewish culture is to ours – the Christian culture of Europe has its origins in Judaism and the Jews as a people became much closer to us. Together with the Civic Society Moravian Gate we prepared an exhibition focused mainly on the life of the Jews living in Lipník in the past. Next year we want to establish a permanent exhibition focused on the life of a Jewish family.



Gurman's foundation house opposite the synagogue served impoverished Jewish citizens.

The oldest mention of the Jews in Lipník nad Bečvou is from the year 1412 – it was put down by Sarah the Jew from Lipník (Sara Jüdieta de Lipník). From the second half of the 15th century, Jewish families that arrived built their houses in a stereotypical way in the alley along the western city ramparts on both sides of the Osecká Gate. It was a typical location for a medieval Jewish settlement in a fortified town: an alley on the very periphery of the centre consisting of terraced houses without out-lines, in a confined space.

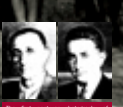


The old Jewish cemetery was founded in the south of the town in 1567. Fifteen rabbis are buried here. After 1800 it was partly reconstructed with funds from a foreign sponsor. While searching for Jewish citizens in Lipník we happened to meet a former mayor of the town Mr. Zbyněk Štábl. He was the mayor when the old Jewish cemetery was being reconstructed in 1922. He told us about it: "Then in the 1930s the majority of 617 graves wanted to move into the same burials – a Jewish burial. Due to the political conditions then it was not possible to reconstruct the cemetery. The cemetery could be reconstructed only at the beginning of the 1990s. At the end of the 19th century the Jews had been buying houses and building plots, e.g. at the Hravnická Gate where the second centre of Lipník's Jews was founded. The Jewish quarter in Lipník was not such a clearly defined and isolated ghetto as it was in most Moravian towns. Of the craftsmen a butcher, glazier, sword maker, rope maker, hat maker, stocking manufacturer, later also a distiller, bookbinder and musician are mentioned.

For their shops a lot of Jews in Lipník had kvetlits (from German, a small vaulted shop) in the arcade of the houses in the square rented in the 19th century and they also used to settle there.

The Jewish colony Horečko, unique from an urbanistic point of view, was founded in 1813 and originally consisted of 26 terraced houses, this time with a small yard and garden. The houses were built in a unified architectural design. The housing has undergone great changes up until now and it is impossible to see the original appearance. The Nazi occupation of our country caused the tragic end of the hundred-year-old Jewish community in Lipník. With two deportation transports, on 22 and 26 June 1942, 141 Jews from Lipník were deported to Terešín and later to extermination camps. Only three of them survived. The memorial plaque on the building of the Lipník town hall only presents three names of three Jewish citizens who died in the resistance activities against the Germans. In 1940-1948 the Jewish community in Lipník was re-established for a short period. Today only one family lives in the town.

The work took us a lot of time and energy. However, it has repaid us beyond measure. It has taught us tolerance and not to condemn. We have learned about history and how to communicate with people much more. It has taught us to condemn hatred of other nations – not only Jewish but all of them. Whether they are Romany, Arabs, black people or any others, please get to know them better first as an individual, and only then judge. It would be a big mistake to lump all of them together and not to give them the chance to present themselves.



The first passer photograph of Mr. Schreiber's father, May 1945. Mr. Schreiber in September 1946.

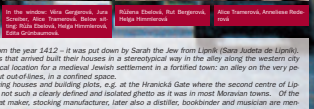
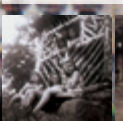


Dr. Jiří Schreiber, the talk on 25 June 2001.

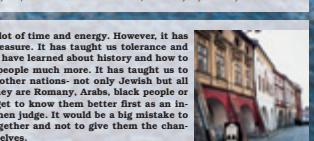
We talked to people. We invited for a talk one of the Lipník Jews who survived the Holocaust, Dr. Jiří Schreiber, now living in Pardubice.

"Hard it is to express the feelings of a man who is a native of Lipník nad Bečvou, and also a former student of Lipník secondary school, who went through Terešín, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Aussenkommando HASSAU, Work Mauthausen and the march of death – and who is standing in a classroom of Lipník grammar school in front of dozens of young people as young as he was when he was deported and who due to this lost his home, his family and his friends as well. Various thoughts are on my mind. "Am I able to tell them anything at all? Will they be asking, will they be interested in the narration of an elderly gentleman? Do they know who their "Neighbours Who Disappeared" were?" With this group of students I spent two unforgettable hours then. They were great, each of their questions radiated a deep interest in the topic. Soon it was clear that I had a well-informed and knowledgeable audience in front of me. After finishing the talk I got a beautiful present in remembrance – a ceramic model of the synagogue in Lipník that competes with Prague's Old New Synagogue both in style and antiquity. The model of the synagogue, where I – in front of the whole Jewish community sang my part of the Torah at my Bar mitzva. That was the last year and the last month when about 150 Lipník Jews lived as free people in democratic Czechoslovakia.

In fact, of the entire family – I counted there were about 34 of us – only two of us came back, that is my father and I. More than two hundred people left Lipník and only seven of them returned in total. Those were two of us, coming directly from a concentration camp, then two mixed marriages, whose Jewish members were deported at the end of the war, and then one man of the same age arrived with the allied army. Much later František Šim returned, now living somewhere in the USA. So this would be the whole "final balance". ... It is necessary to forgive but it is also necessary not to forget!"



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