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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Edinburgh Star

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From the Editor

With each new edition I worry about how I can continue to find new and interesting features in time. I am always amazed when, in the run up to consolidating the latest edition of the Star, I find I actually have enough material to put together for not only 'just another edition' but also one with variety and sometimes surprises....at least that is what I hope our readers still feel.

It is with this in mind that I now write, uncomfortably, the bare facts about a magazine that the Community outwardly appears not only to enjoy, but looks forward to receiving.

I am uncomfortable about writing such an editorial because it is not the first time I have explained the difficulties we have producing a tri-annual publication on our limited funds. There is an unreasonable expectation for our non-subscribing readers to believe that the magazine will continue to be printed without their help. I must stress that the huge generosity of the thirty-nine regular subscribers together with those outwith the community, try as they may, will never be able cover the deficit.

Reiterating this appeal would not be necessary if we could rely on a

regular subscription from the 101 recipients, out of the 140 in our own community, who are perhaps still unaware what their lack of financial support means. It means that all those hard working editorial board members, not to mention the writers, without whom there would be no magazine, are undervalued. But what it also regrettably means is that there is a strong possibility that the number of editions per annum will be reduced.

If you really wish to continue reading about what goes on in our immediate community, together with issues from outside but still associated with us and creating a larger dimension of interest, please become a regular subscriber, if you are able to, and save our magazine.

And as an incentive to respond to the above, this edition is celebrating the lighthearted nature of the 'Rosh Hashanah edition' with its well-loved 'Festival commentary'. Although it will be too late to take advantage of the recommendations written by Julian, there is always next year in which to look out for the favourites that often make a return appearance.

I am delighted to observe that the slot that our Community youth are

occupying is happily growing with each edition; they need encouragement with your support too.

There is a continuing international flavour with news and information from Israel and Jamaica and a book review covering the Jews of Kerala.

The need for dialogue, understanding and acceptance, regarding inter-faith relationships, has never been so strong and has been addressed by Rabbi Rose and the Reverend Donald Reid. This theme has been reinforced by the report promised in the last edition, of the meeting up of Israeli and Palestinian youth at the 'Windows for Peace' conference.

Along with the 'one-off' articles, sit the firm regulars, 'Around and About', 'Society Reports' and 'Reviews', which help to keep the Community informed and up-to-date.

A sincere thanks to all those who have supported the Star in the past and to those who will in the future.

The Board wish all our readers Shanah Tova and everything good for the coming year.

Judy Gilbert

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Rosh Hashanah Message

Rabbi David Rose

The High Holidays are a period of reflection and self-assessment. We are called upon to examine our actions and inaction and to see where we can improve. Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we believe that G-d evaluates our performance and gives us His opinion. It is our job to see how we can improve on that assessment.

It is important to understand that this evaluation is not only personal but communal. We are judged not only as individuals but as a collective. For this reason our confession on Yom Kippur is in the plural. We are all in some way responsible for others. This responsibility is especially pronounced when it comes to communal activities. While we can make an argument that we are not wholly accountable for others' individual actions, we can be brought to brook for the behaviour of a community of which we are a part. Here, each individual has a role to play and an influence that can be brought to bear. Furthermore, if our

actions could have made a difference, we could individually be held responsible for the sins of the whole community. The opposite, of course, is also true. If by our participation the whole community is enabled to perform a worthy act, we individually, can get the kudos for that as well. A simple example of this can be found in that perennial problem of small communities, getting a minyan. If someone goes along and helps make up a minyan then they can receive the merit of the fact that a minyan took place and the community were able to perform the important mitzvah of praying together. Yet if one individual decides they can't be bothered and doesn't turn up, the whole weight of the blame of not having a minyan may fall on their shoulders, not on the nine that did arrive. If the whole community receives this magazine, while only a few pay for it, then this could be one of contributing factors towards the magazine coming out less frequently. On a more positive note, we say every week in Shule a prayer for those who serve the community. This points out the great reward that accrues to those who selflessly work for the community. All the good deeds of the community thus accrue to them. These days, thus, teach us the

importance of being involved. G-d sees us as being part of a community and judges us on how we relate to it. He calls upon us to work with others for the common good and holds us accountable if we choose to stand aloof. So this holiday season, as we evaluate our lives, let us especially examine our community life and our relationship to it. Are too few people doing too much? Could others do more? Could I do more? We believe that during these days we are above all saved by being part of a collective. We join together as a community for prayer as at no other time of the year. We believe that G-d judges us favourably precisely because we are members of a collective. Where one individual, standing alone, may be condemned the community can be saved. Yet in order to benefit we must be part of the community to which we belong. Let us, therefore, this Rosh Hashanah commit ourselves to doing more for our community, being more involved, showing greater concern, taking a larger role. And as a community, may we all be written in the Book of Life, for a happy, prosperous and peaceful year.

A Happy New Year
Rabbi David Rose



Do you
remember...?
Answers in the next edition.

Jews & Christians: Where do we go from here?

Rabbi David Rose

In the period since the Second World War, and especially since 1965, Jewish-Christian relations have made great strides. Much of the suspicion and mutual antagonism that characterised their relationship for centuries has dissipated. Yet there is a feeling that we are standing still, if not going backward. There are many reasons for this, but I believe three main ones are: divergent needs and power relationships; the issue of Israel; and the bedrock barrier of the Christian Bible. I will deal with each in turn and try, in conclusion, to seek a way forward. This is my personal view, influenced by personal experience and reading on the subject, but I believe it to be essentially true, even if not often openly articulated.

Part of the problem with Jewish-Christian relations, is that both sides come to the table from a different place. For Christians, Jews are part of their religious story, while Christians are not part of the Jewish religious discourse. While Israelis, for example, can, and generally do, ignore Christianity, it is hard for a Christian, even when living in a country that has never had a Jewish population, not to have an opinion on a people he hears about in Church every week. Furthermore, while many Christians genuinely want to know more about Judaism, if only to understand their own religion better, it is probably true to say that few Jews, living in a Christian country, wish to learn more about Christianity. The main reason Jews engage with Christians, as Christians, is to stop anti-Semitism. Jews see in Christianity the main source of anti-Jewish prejudice and want Christians to work to end it. The imbalance in this relationship is clear: Christians want Jews to teach them about Judaism; Jews want Christians to change their behaviour. Furthermore, while Christians have no expectations of how Jews behave in Synagogue; Jews often have profound concerns and even demands on how Christians behave in Church. Jews should ask themselves what it would be like if every time they sat down to a Passover Seder, Buddhists, for example, were looking over their shoulder to check if it was not being offensive or anti-Buddhist. That is what happens to Christians every Easter. This Jewish concern may be perfectly justified and necessary, but it creates an imbalance in the relationship that should be recognised. Furthermore, despite Christian efforts, Jews remain intensely suspicious of the Church, not really sure that Christianity has changed its negative view of Jews. The main reason for this will be discussed later, but this suspicion casts its pall over the whole relationship, including the issue of Israel.

The main issue seen as dividing Jews and Christians today is that of Israel. Many Christians see a moral imperative to

support the Palestinians, while Jews are extremely sensitive to criticism of Israel by churches. Part of the problem is the lack of understanding among Christians of the centrality of Israel to Judaism and Jewish life. A good illustration of this is a story told to me by a visiting Rabbi. An article was written by a local minister in his town arguing that the key to Middle East peace was for the Jews to get over their obsession with the Land of Israel. A rabbinical colleague wrote in reply, that Jews would get over Israel, when Christians got over their fixation with the person of Jesus. This ignorance seems partly to be due to lessened study of the Hebrew Bible within churches. I was shocked, when showing a church group around the synagogue, to learn they did not know the story of the rebellion of Korach. Another major issue is the above-mentioned suspicion among Jews that Christianity has not really changed its view of the Jews. One of those classic views was that Jews have no right to national sovereignty. Criticism of Israel is, often unfairly, seen as proof of the Church's bad intentions. This is especially true when such criticisms are, quite naturally for Christians, couched in theological terms. Christians also seem to be often naive in thinking that Jews (or Muslims for that matter) will listen to their moral preaching; considering their historical relationship. I have often thought it is like a formerly abusive parent telling his now grown child how to behave. Not only will the criticism be rejected, but the child may take it as proof that the parent has still not really changed. Much Christian criticism of Israel may be well-intentioned and totally free of prejudice, but for Jews it is often like pouring salt into a still open wound.

“Criticism of Israel is, often unfairly, seen as proof of the Church's bad intentions”

It is to this wound that we must now turn. While Israel is what psychologists call the presenting problem, the real issue in Jewish-Christian relations is, I believe, still anti-Semitism. The problem can be illustrated by a comment of a former congregant of mine in a discussion on Jewish attitudes to Christmas. What is there to celebrate in an event that brought centuries of suffering to millions of Jews, he stated. This statement, which is probably shocking and offensive to many Christians, brings us to the heart of the matter. It is no coincidence that Jewish-Christian dialogue began in earnest after the war. Many Christians were shocked by the Holocaust and the realisation of the moral challenge it posed to Christianity. They realised the urgent need to tackle Christian anti-Semitism. For Jews, as mentioned, this was indeed the main purpose of Christian-Jewish dialogue. Much has been achieved in this regard and Christian teaching about Jews has changed beyond recognition. Yet for Jews a major obstacle still remains: the Christian Bible. And it is in dealing with this issue that our relations hit bedrock. This was illustrated to me by an incident in a counselling class, where we all had to bring

biblical illustrations. A Catholic girl brought part of the story of the crucifixion, some parts of which I found offensive. In the discussion afterwards she was genuinely shocked, saying that this was at the very heart of her religion. Indeed it is, and that is the crux of the problem of Jewish-Christian relations. A serious historical argument can be made, that anti-Jewish prejudice was not incidental to Christianity, but was part of its founding myth. The anti-Jewish rhetoric and stereotypes in the Gospels are not incidental to the story, but integral and purposeful. That is not to say by any means that this is their whole or even main message, but in dealing with Jews, the text created a caricature of Jews that injected the venom of anti-Semitism into the world's bloodstream; a poison that is still there today. Many Christians, of course, agree with this analysis and much has been done to correct this negative image. Yet for Jews, the fact is that with all the corrective commentaries in the world, it is the story that is the problem. A cancer in remission is still not cured and can return with a vengeance, and no Jew can truly be safe in the world while these texts still remain preached in churches. Let any Christian who doubts this replace the word Jew in the Gospels with the minority of their choice: black, gay, Muslim, or even Christian, and see how that minority feel every time they hear these words, whatever their context. Christians often argue that there are things in the Hebrew Scriptures they feel uncomfortable with. Many Jews may agree with them. The same may be true of the Quran and other sacred scriptures. There is however simply no comparison with the damage that the image of Jews in the Gospels has done to generations of Jews, and the real danger it still presents to the Jewish people today. Yet, of course, this text is the sacred scripture of a billion Christians, regarded by many of them as divinely inspired. Surely, it is the most outrageous arrogance andchutzpah even to ask another religion to look in this way at their scripture. It vastly increases the imbalance in the relationship talked about earlier. Yet, as many Christians have themselves acknowledged, it is the heart of the matter. Jews will never truly believe Christianity has changed while these texts are preached in Churches throughout the world, texts that cast a pall over the whole relationship. I believe that until this issue

is honestly discussed and dealt with, by both sides, Jews and Christians are effectively stuck and cannot progress. This may be a bridge too far, but it is one we need to cross. How then do we go forward? There are three possible options. Christians may decide that they have gone as far as they can in accommodating Jewish wishes. There is some evidence of such a reaction in some churches: the idea that Jews are simply asking for too much. This could lead to a renewed theological anti-Semitism or simply disengagement with the Jewish community.

Jews may also simply walk away. They may give up on Christianity as irredeemably anti-Jewish and seek refuge in an avowedly secular society.

Conversely, Jews and Christians can try to deal with the difficult issues that confront them, leaving political correctness aside and facing painful realities. We must acknowledge the dichotomies and imbalance in our relationship and be honest about our different agendas. We need to confront head on the issue of Israel. Christians need to understand the importance of Israel in Jewish life, while Jews need to appreciate the importance of moral witness to Christians, even when that witness is painful for us to hear. We must confront together the painful issue of anti-Semitism in the Gospels. Christians must understand how these texts present a real danger to Jewish welfare, even today, while Jews must appreciate the audacity of what we are asking Christians to do in confronting their own scriptures. We must above all be honest with each other. None of these problems is easy or maybe even possible to solve. Yet we must deal with them. It may be that I have offended Christians or Jews or both, by what I have written, yet it is precisely such a discussion that we need to have. Jews, despite past antagonisms, have always seen Christianity as part of G-d's plan for the world. Through it, millions of non-Jews have come to know the G-d of Israel. We therefore have an obligation not to give up on our relationship, no matter how difficult, but with honesty, integrity and respect, walk together. G-d expects nothing less.

A Christian's view of Israel

Reverend Donald Reid

I do not see it as my task to give an overview of Christian views of Israel but to give my own personal views, as a human being who happens to belong to the Christian tradition. How much my Christianity affects my views is hard for me to say and perhaps easier for the reader to infer.

Since I am speaking personally, then, it is probably easiest for me to approach the subject from the perspective of

my understanding of recent history; my concerns for the present day and tomorrow; and how these are overlaid or complicated by the fraternal or filial relationship a Christian feels – or might feel – towards Judaism (which inevitably influences my views on contemporary Israel).

Recent history

Nothing can be said about 20th century history without reference to the Holocaust, that uniquely statist and industrial horror perpetrated on the Jews – and others – in Europe. Growing up in the west of Scotland where I had a few Jewish

classmates, there was the frisson of 'otherness' deriving from their different holidays and from an awareness that their faith was 'another'. As a serious minded young person, growing in awareness of the horror of the Second World War and the evil of the Holocaust – which I realised eventually was still happening only 13 years before I was born – it was all the more horrible and evil, precisely because I could identify with the very ordinariness of the people caught up in that unspeakable and outrageous orchestration of violence. Later I would visit Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen and Sobibor to – to do what? – to see where such terrible things

had happened and stand there. Again it was the ordinariness which struck me, how much like a barracks in Scotland, Auschwitz or Sachsenhausen looked.

I have therefore always felt that remembrance is vital to re-member those in the human family who have been dis-membered from our number. It is a failure of empathy and imagination not to realise the need to remember and to do so in such a way as to face the darkest shadows cast by our inhumanity; lest it happen again.

I hear and (I think) understand what people say about the complexities of Christian history which prepared the ground for the holocaust. My feelings of horror for my brothers and sisters extinguished so premeditatedly, springs, however, not from feelings of 'Christian' guilt, but 'human' guilt for which the better word is surely 'awareness': awareness that the seeds of such violence can germinate in any of us.

Remembrance and awareness are for me the keys to understanding the existence of the modern day state of Israel. From black and white footage of the exodus of the Jews from Europe to seeing how Israel has made the desert blossom, I am committed (because i 'remember' what happened in Europe) to the right of Israel to exist and (because I am *aware* that this generation of human beings is not necessarily less violent) to continue to insist that it does so, and to be prepared to back that commitment.

The Holocaust was a human tragedy – not just European – and humanity (not only Europe or Christendom) owes it to the children of the Holocaust to live in a secure home.

The present day

However... the same human feelings which commit me to Israel also commit me to all the peoples of that land and of all lands. The facts of history, which conduced – rightly - to the establishment of the state of Israel stand alongside the facts, the human stories, of those who were dispossessed in the process.

History here as elsewhere is too complex to be resolvable – history can only be redeemed by what we do now and in the future. This is where Israel (and no doubt

not only Israel) seems to me, and to many like me, to fall short – to its own peril.

I observe that generations of Palestinians have now lived in 'exile', something the people of Israel of all people should understand. I observe that where there is political will, wars can be afforded and huge resources deployed. I observe that as more and more people visit Palestine, they come back shocked at what they see and that this is shifting views within the churches. I observe that with each decade that passes, the bitterness, fear and desperation deepens. I observe that the lack of peace in Israel, the occupied territories and Gaza has an effect on world peace in a way other conflicts do not. Everyone has a stake in world peace and yet I also observe that any criticism of Israel results in a torrent of bilious, orchestrated fury. I observe that the power imbalance between Israel and the Palestinians is huge and yet people speak as if both sides have equal responsibility. I observe that Israel is a modern, prosperous democracy yet the suggestion is made that we should expect no more of her than Burma or Zimbabwe or China. I observe that a strong Israel is too weak to make peace with an entity, which could never be a threat to it militarily and – if there were an agreed and just peace – would have no moral basis for waging war.

I wonder then, where is the will for peace? I demand of both sides that they mean what they say and make peace a reality. We are all responsible now.

Christian Jewish issues

I also refute the suggestion that Christians should say nothing about this because by our history we are compromised. That is a non-sequitur which I feel sure would NOT be argued were there to be only supportive statements of Israel. The relationship between Christianity and Judaism is sometimes described as abusive. I think this is sometimes true. But we are – to good or ill – inextricably involved and we have to find ways of having family quarrels where emotional accusations are not thrown around in order to silence the other, but where we speak and listen truly. I therefore do understand that Christians have a responsibility not to collude with anti-Semitism, but sometimes the

accusation of anti-Semitism seems to be used as a means of closing down discussion. I remember an unpopular head of department at a university assuming people were against her "because she was a woman" when in fact it was because she did and said horrible things to her colleagues.

Anti-Semitic remarks do exist in Christian scriptures just as racist remarks exist in the Hebrew Scriptures. These texts are

"If Christ reappeared today, I am sure he would be dispatched again by the authorities"

unlikely to disappear from our respective canons, but I suggest a way forward is commentary – that we clarify that 'the Jews' singled out for opprobrium in the New Testament (and in odious films like 'The Passion of Christ') were human beings who happened to be Jews, but in fact represent human beings – all of us – at our worst. If Christ reappeared today, I am sure he would be dispatched again by the authorities. The point is, as attested by Jewish and Christian experience, that we as human beings seek out scapegoats. Jews have certainly been used as scapegoats by Christians and others, and that must be faced and apologised for. But the deeper lesson is that this is something human beings do to the enemies they create out of their need for a bogey man and perhaps this dynamic too is present in the Israeli / Palestinian / Arab conflict - on all sides.

Our theological resources tell us this deep truth and it is ironic that our political tribalism might be preventing us from recognising that self-awareness and remembrance of the humanity of the other.

Patterns repeat. But we can choose NOT to act out these hateful dynamics and meet on that holy ground where we wrestle together, and are both wounded and blessed.

Associate Rector: Rev Donald Reid of The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Edinburgh, is Convener of the Scottish Interfaith Council. He is the director of the Festival of Spirituality, which takes place during the Edinburgh Festival.

Society Reports

British WIZO is 90



Edinburgh WIZO decided to mark British WIZO's 90th birthday in style with a lunch at Prestonfield House and our British President, Michele Vogel, joined us to make this a very special occasion.

It was rather a wet day so champagne on the lawn was changed to the lounge with a harpist to create a lovely background as the ladies gathered to meet and chat.

Our 26 guests were addressed by our UK President with information about the latest projects that WIZO has established and some of the amazing contributions that Israel has given the world in science and all the new technology in the field of water conservation, agriculture and medicine. This information never seems to hit the headlines in the media and it seems strange, as Israel, the only democratic country in the Middle East, welcomes free media access to all parts of the country.

Mr James Thomson, the proprietor of Prestonfield House, was extremely generous hosting our reception and at no extra charge made us all feel very special by creating a wonderful table. We are greatly indebted to him for all his kindness.

Our guests left with gift bags to remind them of this very memorable day and we look forward to Glasgow's 90th birthday event on 14th September at Trades House, when Sir Malcolm Rifkind will be the guest speaker.

We would like to end with thanks to our generous supporters and sponsors who helped us raise £1,850.

Association of Jewish Refugees – Edinburgh Group

Scotland and Newcastle Annual Get-Together – Wednesday 9th July 2008

At the start of July, around 40 members of the Scottish and Newcastle groups of the Association of Jewish Refugees met up for their annual summer get-together just as they had done for several years in the past, at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's Community Centre.

Following a warm welcome including coffee/tea and biscuits, the 40 members who had made it to the meeting first heard from Michael Newman, the AJR Head of Media and Public Relations, and the new head of Social Services, Maisie Holland. Of particular interest was the news that in recent years both the number of AJR Groups and the overall membership had risen dramatically; in fact 76 new members had joined the AJR in just the first quarter of the year.

Members then split up and joined one of three Discussion Groups on Legacy ('How and when we tell our past experiences to our children and grandchildren'), Second Generation (ie those born to refugees and survivors who came from Nazi Europe) or Experience of Childhood in a New Country. The session on Experience of Childhood in a New Country raised many interesting points. It was essentially directed towards those who had come over to the UK with the Kindertransport and as a consequence without their parents. As expected, several members provided a deep and often dramatic insight into their own experiences. While some indicated that they had soon settled happily into their new environment and saw it all as a new adventure, others gave an opposite impression. From the outset many experienced the problem of finding, as Jews, suitable and sympathetic accommodation – even within the local Jewish community. All agreed they needed a strong constitution to survive and overcome the many problems they experienced.

In the session on Legacy, the key questions which guided the discussion from the outset were: a) should survivors pass on what they have experienced and gone through – and if yes then; b) when should they pass on what they know and; c) what should they pass on. All agreed that only 20 years ago little was spoken about the Holocaust. Today, however, survivors are willing to speak more about what they experienced. All agreed that this was a positive move and in fact essential as there was still such a lot of ignorance on this subject within our present-day society. However, many members indicated that the reason why some people still do not want to come forward was because personal experiences often become sensationalized in the Press. Nevertheless, other members felt that the wider community was now interested in what they had to say – in particular, their

personal stories. We heard how some survivors felt it particularly important to convey their own stories to groups within present-day society, especially our schoolchildren, as this enabled such groups to gain a greater understanding of humanity and key humanitarian issues.

Following an hour of intense discussion, everyone looked forward to lunch - a superb fresh salmon lunch which had been kindly prepared by one of the AJR members attending, Irene Mason. Before continuing with the day's programme, a vote of thanks to Irene Mason was given by David Goldberg. Batteries having been recharged, everyone settled down in the afternoon to a presentation by Anita Parmar on the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust, the UK Charity providing Holocaust education and materials to teachers and students. Anita Parmar, The Trust's Educational Officer, began by outlining what the Trust did and what it had achieved over the past 20 years - working in schools, universities and in the community to raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust, providing teacher training, an outreach programme for schools, teaching aids and resource material. Through its work it has educated thousands of students across the country and trained and supported hundreds of teachers every year. For example, one of the Trust's programmes involved sending educators and Holocaust Survivors into school classes from Year 6 upwards to teach about the Holocaust.

Just as exciting we heard how through the Trust's Lessons from Auschwitz Project, nearly 5,000 sixth-form students and their teachers had taken part in 1999 in two afternoon sessions and a one-day visit to the former Nazi extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. This was with the aim of passing on the universal lessons of the Holocaust and its relevance for today to their schools and the wider community upon their return from the visit. Before finishing, Anita Parmar showed snippets from the Trust's groundbreaking educational DVD-ROM Recollections: Eyewitnesses Remember the Holocaust, produced together with the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. As we saw, this resource includes testimony from 18 eyewitnesses to the Holocaust and is aimed at not only teaching students about the events of the Holocaust, but also reflects on the lessons that can be learnt for today. It is the first resource here in the UK to focus solely on the interactive use of visual history testimony when teaching about the Holocaust. Finally a well deserved vote of thanks was given by Henry Ross.

The day ended with a session of excellent musical entertainment by Gica Loening and then a welcome cup of tea ensuring members went away happy and contented after what had been a very stimulating day, brimming full of interesting sessions and presentations.

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Around and About

The Shein Scene



Sunday 22nd June

The Cheder Prize Giving was preceded by a video presentation prepared by the Senior Class under the supervision of Janet Mundy, on 'Jews around the World'. Freddie Green and Clare Levy, of the Intermediate class, then presented their interesting and thought-provoking projects on the 'Mishkan'. They illustrated the talk showing the planning and purpose of the First and Second Temple. Elaine Levy supervised the project. The essence of Freddie Green's presentation, using Indiana Jones as the keystone, can be found in the 'Young Community' section.

Doreen Bowman awarded the Cheder prizes and Michael Taylor, Ben Griffin and Isaac Ansell handed bouquets to the teaching staff. A digital radio was presented to Judy Gilbert who will be stepping down from teaching and handing the role of Assistant Head Teacher to Janet Mundy.

The Cheder picnic took place in the lovely situation of Flotterstone where delicious food, organised and prepared by June Budd along with her team of helpers, was consumed with relish by parents, teachers, children and a million midges! A park ranger provided the young people with interesting, exciting and environmentally orientated activities.

Saturday 16 August

The Annual Service commemorating the opening of the Edinburgh International Festival took place in the Synagogue on 16 August. A large congregation greeted the arrival of the Lord Provost, the Rt. Hon. George Grubb, the Lady Provost, City Councilors, Bailies, High Constables and representatives of Lothian and Borders Police. They were preceded by officials carrying the City Mace and Sword. The sermon was enhanced by the choir and Rabbi Rose commented on the Festival and the wonderful opportunities afforded for the removal of international barriers to allow freedom of dialogue, so essential for peace and harmony.

At the Kiddush after the Service, Mrs. Hilary Rifkind, Chair of the Board of Management, warmly welcomed the civic dignitaries and commented on the excellent relationships and close affinity

which have always existed between the small but vibrant Jewish community and the city. She greatly welcomed the excellent support always available from the city authorities and the strong mutual respect between the two.

In his reply, the Lord Provost thanked the Rabbi and Mrs. Rifkind for their comments and spoke of his pleasure and that of his colleagues at being present in the Synagogue. He

stated that the Jewish community is the past, present and future and that during the 62 years of the Festival and that it had made a valuable contribution. He again mentioned the relationships, which he had established with Jewish families over many years since boyhood, amongst which was an enduring friendship with Norman Berger.



AGM of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Wednesday 18th June 2008

The AGM report was given by Shul Chairman Hilary Rifkind. Although it is usual for the vote of thanks to be given at the end of any meeting it feels more appropriate to introduce the following report with the very appropriate sentiments expressed by Clarice Osborne.

Sic: 'For a woman to reach the top she has to have extra qualities, far more than are expected of any man. Two examples of such women, controversial though the first may be, are Margaret Thatcher and less controversial, Golda Meir. We are proud of Hilary and the beautiful way she speaks on behalf of the Community; clearly much thought goes into the preparation of these speeches. This responsibility is in addition to the many other duties she performs for the Community. We should indeed be grateful and I now ask you to accord her a hearty vote of thanks.'

The Report...

Hilary Rifkind

Hilary Rifkind, the Chairman of the Board of Management, welcomed the 38 members who attended the AGM of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, which was held on Wednesday 18th June in the Community Centre.

She expressed appreciation to all members of the Board for their efforts and support throughout the year, and thanked both wardens for all they had done to ensure the smooth running of synagogue services and their efforts to encourage the young people to develop their skills.

The Honorary Treasurer, Laurence Bowman, presented a detailed report of the financial activities. There was an overall loss, which was somewhat disappointing as the income from mobile phone companies had increased. Whilst it is expected that costs will increase and revenue decrease due to diminishing numbers of members, it was not intended to raise seat contributions. The Chairman thanked Laurence Bowman for his excellent presentation of the accounts, for the time and effort he had put into preparing the financial statement and for the integrity with which he had looked after the finances of the EHC during the 4 years in which he had held the office of Hon Treasurer. The following 12 members were elected to the Board of Management: Laurence Bowman, Malcolm Cowan, Anthony Gilbert, Melissa Gilroy, David Goldberg, Steven Hyams, Anita Mendelssohn, Gershon Mendick, Arnold Rifkind, Hilary Rifkind, Jackie Taylor, Raymond Taylor. Morris Kaplan and Philip Mason were elected as Senior and Junior Wardens respectively. Malcolm Cowan, John Cosgrove and Philip Mason were re-elected as Honorary Vice-Presidents. Hilary Rifkind was re-elected as Chairman of the Board and Malcolm Cowan was elected as Honorary Treasurer, the Chairman having commented on his considerable experience and professional expertise.

The reports from the Board of Deputies and SCoJeC had been circulated and the Chairman stressed the importance of the work carried out by these two bodies in representing the interests of the Jewish community to the wider British community. She expressed thanks to Edward Green for the work he does as the EHC representative to the Board of Deputies.

Hilary Rifkind praised the Community Centre Committee for the various enjoyable events that they have organised and for their successful fund-raising. The Chair of the Committee, Steven Hyams, presented his report, thanking the committee members for all their hard work and also everyone who had supported functions throughout the year. He extended grateful thanks to Edward Green for donating the TV screen which had enabled them to have a most successful film evening, as well as providing entertainment for other groups in the community.

The Chairman then reported on the many diverse activities of the year, one of the highlights being the celebratory lunch for the 75th Anniversary of the Opening and Consecration of the Synagogue. She commented that our relationship with the wider community continues to flourish; our strong links with the City of Edinburgh are marked annually by the Civic Service, Holocaust Memorial Day and the service for Yom HaShoah and we have an excellent relationship with Lothian and Borders Police. She also reported on the pleasing involvement of the top Cheder class in synagogue activities and was very encouraged by the steady influx of very young children to the pre-Cheder class and Toddler Group.

The Chairman voiced concern over the fact that the number of people who are able to make an active contribution is diminishing in every area of our communal life, saying that we will only be able to maintain our vibrancy if more members are willing to participate actively in social and religious activities.

Young Community: Indiana Jones – real Jewish Life

Freddie Green (Aged 12)

To be or not to be – that is the question? Welcome to my special presentation of Indiana Jones – real Jewish life. For those of you who didn't have the time to attend my presentation, or just found reading it easier, here it is!

In the fictional adventure movie Raiders of the Lost Ark, the hero Indiana Jones sets off on a quest, which will hopefully lead him to the lost Ark of the Covenant. After discovering the Ark and having it stolen by the Nazis and then had a mental breakdown because he just found something that nobody was ever thought to have found, or ever will find, just to lose it again.

Near the beginning of the movie, two FBI agents approached Dr Jones with news that they had intercepted a Nazi

transmission explaining that the Germans had discovered Tanis, the mythical lost city where the Ark was thought to have been buried. Keep in mind that the film is set in 1936.

The early Israelites thought that the Ark was the physical manifestation of G-d on earth, it was a reminder. According to Exodus 23 and 37, the dimensions were 2½ cubits long and 1½ tall and 1½ wide. They made it from Acacia wood and lined it with pure gold. Acacia / gold rings were made for the tribe Levi to carry the Ark with Acacia poles lined with gold. Two winged cherubs facing each other were put on top. The Ark was carried around in the Tabernacle, which was a portable temple that G-d had told the Israelites to build because of the sin of the golden calf.

The Map Room in Raiders of the Lost Ark was a large room where there was a 3-D map of Tanis laid out on the floor. A

special headpiece topped the Staff of Ra, and was placed in a hole in the ground at a special time of day. The sun would shine through a hole in the roof, strike the headpiece and a red laser created by the sun's power would shoot out and mark the location of the Ark. There was a possibility that the Staff of Ra was Aaron's staff, which turned into a snake to impress the Pharaoh. The Egyptians could have taken this along with their loot from Canaan along with the Ark.

When Jones with his friend Salah finally discovers the Well of Souls, (the anti-chamber where the Ark was hidden), the room is decorated with golden statues and ornaments and hieroglyphics everywhere. The ground was also covered with live snakes.

In the climax of Raiders, the Ark is finally opened after several thousand years. Any unholy person who watched or even took

a glimpse of the Ark whilst opened would be the next victim of the wrath of G-d. The Book of Samuels says that when the Philistines stole the Ark, they put it in a temple in Ashdod next to their god Dagon. The next day, they found Dagon lying on the floor face down. They put him back up again and the next day, they found him once again lying on the floor, but this time with his head and hands cut off.

Tudor Parfitt, dubbed the British Indiana Jones, has a nemesis, was shot at in

Ethiopia, was nearly kidnapped in the Yemen, and also has a hat similar to Indiana. About fourteen years ago, he got hooked into the mystery, and suspected that the Ark's location was in a small church in Axum, Ethiopia.

The Possibilities:

The Egyptians or Philistines or possibly a group of religious zealots who fought against the other Hebrews could have taken the Ark somewhere and the wrath of G-d is probable. The Map Room

is probably just the imaginations of Spielberg, a good Jew, and George Lucas, but there might be some sense in it. People who hid the Ark probably knew how special it was and could have sorted out some sort of security system.

If you are Mac formatted and you would like to see the actual presentation, please ask my Dad, Edward Green, for details.

An Interfaith experiment in the Holy Land

Samuel Danzig

After navigating the security labyrinth of the new Ben Gurion airport and (sof-sof) stepping out into the nostalgia of the windy heat and lush aroma of the Jerusalem night, I have an opportunity to begin in sleepy earnest the pioneering Scottish interfaith pilgrimage to Israel.

There are 30 Scottish leaders here from 7 different faith traditions-one Buddhist, one Hindu, two Sikhs, two Baha'is and a healthy portion of Abrahamism- and what is striking is ,the immediacy and ease with which we all come together; floating in and out of serious and light conversation with astounding fluidity and expanding our traditional comfort zone barriers without any awkwardness.

We journeyed without mental boundary from The Western Wall to a Muslim Sufi centre in East Jerusalem, from the Christian sites of the Galilee to the Kabbalistic world of Safed, from (perhaps most controversially) Yad Vashem to the Office of the Palestinian Minister for Information in Ramallah within about half an hour! For me, the most fruitful times were the in-betweens, the moments of shared reflection, trekking down the powerful, exquisite gardens of the Baha'i Temple in Haifa, or weaving our way through the culturally wild streets of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Visiting first the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and then the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, it was a surprise for me to find that these places only provided a profound experience for those who come from the more aesthetically conscious, Catholic background. The Presbyterians in the group kept a conspicuous detachment, and remained firmly as tourists. Actually, it wasn't hard to be cynical about the sanctity of the churches. As I was queuing up to see the supposed place of Jesus' birth, swimming amongst the grotesque crowds of caps, cameras and 10 dollar guides, I realised that I was consuming as novelty this place that really should be kept authentic, holy. The voyeuristic crowds were similar at the place of Jesus' death and as I followed the queue, 'Yala, one two three four five!' inside to the Sepulchre I noticed a woman hunched, yet young enough, with a look of awe and religious austerity. A little anecdote: that woman sneezed quite violently before entering the shrine and never before have I said 'Bless you' in quite the same way.



As symbols are important for orthodox Christianity so they are for orthodox Judaism and it was telling that the Western Wall can provide such a powerful spiritual experience for us- for me, anyway, it always seems to embody the struggle of Jews, the struggle of Israel. The Temple Mount could not have been more of a contrast. I wanted to find it moving and meaningful, after all, it is nominally the most holy place there is in the Jewish faith, but all the Jews on the pilgrimage agreed that without any stars of David, any prayer books, synagogues, judaica, people praying in Kippot and hats, it loses its power. I suppose the orthodox reaction would be that the Moshiach has not arrived yet and as such, the space is forbidden to enter. Either way, I came to the conclusion that tensions, particularly in Jerusalem, have a lot to do with frustrations regarding symbolic congruity. A Synagogue next to a Mosque; an Israeli flag next to a Palestinian one, it is all so confusing, what is the reality of this space?! Interfaith can go a long way in easing all the impossible contradictions.

We followed a path to the West of the Temple Mount and found ourselves, a few minutes later at the Naqshabandi Center in Jerusalem, a four hundred year old Sufi (Islamic mysticism) centre for travelling Muslim pilgrims and nowadays a space for all sorts of peace-making workshops and meetings. Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari spoke to us from his front room, his family having inhabited the space since its founding. The room had an aged aesthetic look about it- like an antique shop- but you could tell it was still in active use, and had a nice vitality about it- wisdom of old and energy of new. The main idea seemed to be that Sufism is all about learning to cultivate real love for G-d so that prayer

could transcend the routine and the conceptual. And learning to love G-d helps us love each other because the underlying reality of things becomes more important than their symbolic expression on the surface.

I had many interesting conversations with the two Baha'is in our group, and it seemed to me that they somewhat already inhabited the psychological space that all the rest of us were beginning to discover; that of a spiritual unity underlying the vast multiplicity of formal belief systems. The Baha'i faith is a monotheism full of energy and passion that perceives globalisation and technological advance as part of a contemporary global social revolution. We managed to gain access into the private space of the Shrine of the Bab at their famous temple in Haifa, a real honour, and recognition of the respect awarded to the group. The pilgrimage provided an intense, intimate, almost anthropological interfaith experience—we got a taste of what it really feels like to be of another religious persuasion, away from the doctrine, and codifications. Relations between the Monotheistic faiths were naturally

explored in more depth, but it was extremely important to have with us the Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu participants, partly because they gave us spiritual perspective on our own entrenched divisions. There were also many times when I was learning about some belief or practice which I had difficulty comprehending, not to mention subscribing to, and it was helpful to remember something fundamental to members of the Dharmic religions, that ego is one of the biggest hurdles to coexistence. We are all afraid of embarrassment or being exploited, and fear of losing grip on our understanding of truth characterises much of our inter-religious conflict. If we can learn to make conceptions of truth, a peripheral means of bonding rather than a cause for existential antagonism and seek instead to cultivate a universally accessible spiritual space that we may all inhabit, I feel we have a profoundly greater chance of living with one another. I have never before thought of embracing religious difference in an active way as I did on the Pilgrimage, and I would like to impress that I have returned to Scotland feeling inspired to work for coexistence and not simply bask naively in the cold, fragile fact of multicultural life in this country.

The Jews of Jamaica – a surprising tale

Françoise Robertson

A Jewish commandment is 'Zachor' – to remember – and there is a desire to remember the part the Jews played in Jamaica. In 2005 they celebrated 350 years of freedom to practise their religion. Where else?

How did Jews come to be part of life in Jamaica? In 1391 was the start of severe Spanish anti-Semitism and the spreading of false rumours and mass killings.

In 1415, Pope Benedict issued a papal bull issuing Jews to convert to Christianity, forbidding Jews to teach Talmud, the building of Synagogues and also ruling that Jews should not take part in many professions. They were also forbidden to socialise with Christians.

In 1494 Christopher Columbus, on his second voyage of discovery, found Xammaca, occupied by the Tainos and later known as Jamaica. He described it as 'the fairest Island eyes have beheld, the land seems to touch the sky'.

Jews financed Columbus' voyages, and some of his crew had Jewish names. Boarding a ship as crew was a good way of escaping anti-Semitism. At this

time Ferdinand and Isabella of Castille were trying to 'purify' their country. They wanted everyone to be Catholic. Those who weren't were labelled infidels, including the Jews and Moors.

Jews and Moors had resided in Southern Spain since the eighth century and had played a very important part in the cultural life of Spain; in literature, poetry architecture and learning. Iberian Jews had often been government advisors, tax collectors, and had held ministerial positions. A Jew had been a grand vizier, the highest possible position in the governing elite.

Jews and Moors had to flee, leaving behind homes and possessions. Those who stayed were forcibly baptised and became 'conversos', though many were secret Jews. They were also called Anusim meaning the forced ones and even referred to as Maranos, meaning pigs.

Some took Christian names to avoid the Inquisition. There were heavy punishments for those who continued to be Jews so many fled to Portugal. But in 1539 the Portuguese Inquisition started. The punishments for being a secret Jew included, beating, torture and being burned at the stake. Iberian Jews known as Sephardim went to Holland and other

European destinations. It was when the Inquisition moved to Brazil in 1580 that Jews started to travel as far as the West Indian Islands and some landed in Jamaica. They brought with them many skills such as the cultivation of sugar cane and indigo.

After the English conquest in Jamaica, Jews increased in Jamaica. An act of the Jamaican Parliament removed any restrictions from Jews and more arrived. Sephardic Jews came from the Middle East. In the 1930s and 40s Ashkenazi Jews fleeing from the Nazis arrived in Jamaica too. Ferdinand and Isabella welcomed the inquisition partly because it gave them an opportunity to grab the assets of expelled Jews. Conversos were tried and burnt. Some thirty thousand Jews left Spain for North Africa, Italy, France and the Low countries. But Sultan Bayezad of the Ottoman Empire decided that Spain's loss was his gain and between fifty and a hundred thousand Jews went to Portugal. In 1496 they were again expelled. Jews were fleeing for their lives in every possible direction. Jamaica was being settled by the Spanish and became Columbus's property. The Inquisition never came to Jamaica and Judaism was permitted even if not practised at all times. The Inquisition lasted some 340

years. The Jews who came to Jamaica came from many countries. Sometimes Jamaica was used as a temporary refuge for Jews who moved on when other opportunities became available. The English involvement in Jamaica became very important. From 1655 Jamaican Jews could practise openly and build Synagogues. In fact English law allowed them to reside in Jamaica before they were allowed to reside legally in England. Before Synagogues were allowed, sand covered floors were used in Jamaican Synagogues. The Spanish lost interest in Jamaica, disappointed by the lack of gold and paucity of free labour for cultivation. Jews started to establish themselves initially in Port Royal. It became a centre for trade and also for buccaneers and pirates, who took their booty from Spanish galleons to be converted into local money. Jews who were fluent in Spanish or had experience in commerce or banking were very useful. Port Royal became known for its riches and lawlessness.

Jewish cemeteries and Synagogues were established in Jamaica and also a Yeshiva. The earthquake of 1692 unfortunately demolished many Jewish buildings and Jews moved to Kingston, which was regarded as a safer place. In Kingston Jews were very prominent in trade; names such as Solomon, Moses, Isaac, Jacob and Samuel were common. Though Jews provided most of the wealth and successful businesses, they were not permitted to vote and were taxed more heavily than others. White people tended to die in Jamaica. There was

cholera, malaria and Dengue fever, but Jews were noted for being remarkably long lived due to their good diet and, according to Edward Long an Englishman 'due to their sparing use of strong liquors. Hurricanes, fires, floods and earthquakes made life perilous for everyone. Many Jewish records were lost in these natural disasters. In 1681 a law in Jamaica said only free holders could vote and be elected to the House of Assembly. Franchises could only be given to white Protestant freeholders owning property of a value of ten pounds or more. Roman Catholics, Jews and Africans could not vote. There was much jealousy because of the Jew's success in business. By the year 1700, 5% of the population was Jewish but paid 17% of the tax. There were attempts to exempt and even penalise Jews. They were however economically too important to Jamaica. In 1738, ninety-one people, not all Jews, sent a petition to the King complaining about the unjust treatment of Jews. Discriminatory taxes were removed but still no vote. In 1750 Abraham Sanches petitioned the assembly to be allowed to vote. This provoked a vitriolic attack and denouncement of Jews voting in a Christian state, which it was not. In 1826 the abolition of slavery was being discussed in the UK parliament. It became obvious that it would be ridiculous to have freed black men and white Jews still unable to vote. The House of Assembly in 1826 enacted a bill whose preamble started 'whereas the Jews of Jamaica had ever conducted themselves as good citizens and faithful and loyal subjects

and it is expedient that the disabilities under which they have hitherto laboured should be removed', but the UK took no action, the King's assent had not been granted. A following petition signed by a hundred Christians still didn't have the desired effect. It took many bills and petitions before in 1833 Jews gained full equality and the right to vote in Jamaica. Immediately in Jamaica, Jews were elected to prominent positions. By 1849 eight of the forty-seven members of the House were Jews and the House adjourned for Yom Kippur. The original Jews in Jamaica were orthodox and very kosher. They didn't let their employees work on the Sabbath. There was regular contact with other Jewish communities abroad with an exchange of Rabbis and cantors. But in 1921 after many years the last two Synagogues combined. Not many speak Hebrew, so services, now conservative or progressive, are in English or with transliteration. There were twenty-one cemeteries at one time and there still exist the remains of fourteen in surprisingly remote places. There have been recent attempts to maintain them. Gravestones have inscriptions in Hebrew, Spanish, English and Portuguese. Sometimes inscription on a single gravestone have been in two or three languages. Nearly 1500 gravestones have been documented. Some have a Magen David, others skull and crossbones. There has been no permanent Rabbi since 1978. There has been a high rate of inter-marriage and no recent Jewish marriages up till 2004 but three recent conversions took place in 2003. In 2004 there were one hundred and forty people at the Seder. There is a collection of old scrolls in the remaining Synagogue.

The Ashenheim family were in Edinburgh in the early 1800s. Jacob, a jeweller, was a prominent member of the Edinburgh Jewish congregation. Lewis studied medicine at St Andrews and he was the first Jew from Scotland to graduate in medicine. In 1841 he went to Falmouth in Jamaica where he died at the age of 42. Reverend Bernard Hooker, was a Rabbi in Jamaica 1965 – 1974 (was this the Reverend Hooker from Birmingham?)

It is heartening to know that in recent years there has been an increased interest in researching and documenting the importance of Jews in the life and economy of Jamaica.

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Festival Open Day 17th August 2008

By David Ian Neville
(Co-organiser, Jewish Edinburgh Group)

Four years ago we had this crazy idea – we'd open the communal hall up one Sunday during August and welcome Festival performers and visitors to Edinburgh to meet each other and our own community. We'd serve bagels and coffee and tea and luscious lemon cake and we would share some of the magic of Edinburgh's glorious festivals.



The Aluminum Show from Tel Aviv talked about their spectacular show and gave a display of their wonderful costumes! Ross

Every year we wonder if there will be many shows with a Jewish cultural interest. Then having identified relevant shows or events we ask if they would like to take part in our Open Day. Given how busy the Festival is and how hard performers have to work to get audiences and keep their shows going our next worry is will they all still be able to turn up on the Sunday?

Well four years on and we've had four fantastic Festival Open Days. Most performers who have agreed to come along have turned up and many unarranged have dropped in on the day. We've had world class entertainers playing on our modest little stage and enjoying the hospitality and the chance to meet with other performers and us locals!

One of the great ingredients of the Open Day is that unexpected element – spontaneity. And this year it was there in abundance. Just before doors opened at eleven I had the usual uneasy feeling: surveying the tables of freshly prepared open bagels and checking my running order of performers for the twentieth time, I thought what if no one comes? It was at that very moment one of our front door team called to say there was a coach outside full of teenagers with assorted musical instruments.

Within minutes the hall filled up with forty members of the Lavi Youth Wind Band from Jerusalem and their musical director and producers. We had been expecting only a few of the band



The Aluminum Show from Tel Aviv talked about their spectacular show and gave a display of their wonderful costumes! Ross

to come along and play, it was after all a free day for the band and they had plans to explore Edinburgh. But they all decided to come along and it was great! Soon they were joined by performers and producers from a diverse range of theatre companies. The party had started on a high and the momentum continued throughout the day.

The aim of the Open Day has always been to bring performers and audiences together, welcoming artistes of all faiths and none to share their interest in Jewish culture or events in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



The Aluminum Show from Tel Aviv talked about their spectacular show and gave a display of their wonderful costumes! Ross

Best Wishes for a Happy New Year and well over the Fast

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26 Terrars Croft
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Samuel and Ruth
31 Rosslyn Crescent, Edinburgh

Michael Adler and Sue Fyvel
9 Warriston Crescent
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Ena Amitai (née Dorfman)
8B/18 Nitza Boulevard,
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15 Arden Street
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Sally, James and Samuel Barker
23 Southover
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Clarice Been
80 Willifield Way
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3 Kirk Park
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Edinburgh

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Noam, Yonatan and Orrit Sinclair,
and the Bermans, Jerusalem, Israel

Sam and Rachel Skop
2 Greenbank Gardens
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Ida Skubiejka

Carolyn and Mervyn Smith
43 Shirley Avenue
Cheam, Surrey

Gladys and Laurence Smith
20 Cammo Road
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Nobby and Shelagh Smith
3/7 Nitza Boulevard
Netanya, Israel

Jonny, Joyce and Avigal Sperber

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and families

Jackie, Raymond, Lawrence
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Gatley, Cheadle, Manchester

Hilary and Graham West
Martin, Laura and Shlomie
14 Leighton Avenue, Pinner, Harrow

Madeleine Whiteson
28 Mayfields,
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Ruzena Wood

Sheila and Alfred Yarrow
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Edinburgh Summer School July 2008

Windows for Peace UK

Judy Sischy



The Beginnings

The first seed of hosting a Windows summer school in Edinburgh was planted during a visit to the Windows offices in Tel Aviv in December 2006 when I was on holiday in Israel with my friend and partner in crime, Brenda Beecham. She had introduced me to Windows through her sister who lives in Manchester and is a Trustee of Windows for Peace UK.

I was particularly inspired by the Middle East Windows programme because of its connections with young people, with education, with vulnerable situations, with resolving conflict, with peace and above all with hope. I had read some of the magazines put together by young people in the programme in the Middle East in which they exchanged stories about the difficulties, physical and emotional, that they experienced as Jews living in Israel, as Palestinians living in Israel or as Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. Their letters to each other were open, honest, unembellished and heart rending.

Developing the Idea

Talking to Rutie Atsmon, the founder of Windows, in Tel Aviv we began to



understand the difficulties of bringing together a group of young people for more than 24 or 48 hours in their own environment. We learnt that there had been summer schools in the recent past, three in Italy, one in Spain and one in France, so why not Scotland? Having planted the seed, Brenda and I set to work on our return to Newcastle and Edinburgh respectively. It was particularly important to talk to City Councillors, officials and other education organisations in Edinburgh, all of whom were unreservedly supportive.

Slowly but surely the plan began to germinate and become a reality in our minds. The biggest hurdle was to raise the

funds that were needed for the venture – around £35,000. This was done by selecting and approaching potential trusts, donors, individuals and supporters. We had to be sensitive in our approach, as we realised that bringing together Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Christians and Muslims, required a gentle, diplomatic approach focused on the aims of Windows and the educational and spiritual values of the project. To our delight, we raised the sum needed in a relatively short period of time, thanks to the support and generosity of over 120 donors.

The Reality

After eighteen months, we were ready to go. Accommodation was offered at Merchiston Castle School, one of Edinburgh's fine boarding schools, the funds were secure, the programme drawn up, permissions obtained from young people and their families in the Middle East, visas secured and flights booked. The event was now a reality and would take place from 14 to 28 July 2008.

The Windows team selected 15 young people who had been working in the programme for around two years, putting together articles for the Windows

magazine. The five Jewish Israelis were from the Tel Aviv area, the five Palestinian Israelis were from Jaffa and the surrounding area and the remaining five were Palestinians from the Bethlehem area. There were 13 girls and 2 boys, although the gender imbalance was not typical of other Windows groups.

The Summer School

During the two weeks of the summer school, the group was not on holiday – the young people were here to work, with three facilitators, a translator and Rutie Atsmon, the group leader. They had an intensive pre-arranged programme to follow, dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the realities of life in the Middle East, issues involving conflict, pain, fear, terrorism, discrimination and human rights. The facilitators encouraged communication through art, through writing, through music, through role-play and through dialogue so that the young people could reach a better and deeper understanding of the issues behind the conflict.

I had had the opportunity to meet some but not all of the young people and the facilitators in Israel in April 2008. Meeting them in the Tel Aviv offices reminded me that this was a group of 14 to 16 year olds who could be teenagers anywhere in the world. What would they like to do during their free time in Edinburgh? Harry Potter came the unified reply. Sadly, JK Rowling was unable to join us in Edinburgh so the next best idea was to take the group on an outing to Alnwick Castle to see the location of some of the Harry Potter filming. Like any other teenagers they were keen to visit trendy shops in Edinburgh (a maximum of three outings was allowed) and to buy gifts for their families and friends.

They much appreciated the grounds of the boarding school, the surrounding beauty of Colinton Village and Colinton Dell in Edinburgh and the greenery – everywhere. They coped well with the change of climate, with the change of diet, with being away from home – in some cases for the first time – with the language and the Scottish dialect, with sharing dormitories and living together on a daily basis. They were wonderful young people. Rutie and the facilitators - Avda from Tel Aviv, Maisalon from a village near

Nazareth, and Hwaida from Bethlehem - were equally wonderful, together with the amazing Tony from Jaffa, who translated continuously into Hebrew, Arabic and English. Occasionally stumped by the Scottish dialogue, he managed to make sense of the guides at Real St Mary's Close in Edinburgh, the City Chambers, the Scottish Parliament, Alnwick Castle and other tourist spots.

The group was joined one afternoon by a group of young people from Edinburgh and Selkirk and by a group from Rochdale near Manchester on another occasion. As these sessions were conducted largely in English, translated by Tony into Hebrew and Arabic, we were able to listen in on the exchanges between the young people about the conflict, about how they managed painful discussions about the future, their fears and hopes. In these sessions the tension was sometimes palpable, handled sensitively and caringly by the facilitators yet never impairing the bond that was growing daily amongst the group.

Open Day

Towards the end of the two weeks, the group invited around 60 donors, friends and supporters to an open-day at the school. The guests included the Rabbi from Edinburgh, members of the Orthodox and Liberal Jewish communities, leaders and members of the Church of Scotland and of other faiths, Quakers, Middle East Pilgrims, Muslims and others. The atmosphere was friendly, welcoming, informal and electric.

The young people divided into their three groups and each briefly told their story. We heard moving presentations from the Israeli Jews, from the Palestinians living in Jaffa and from the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. They eloquently described what they had learned and gained from being together for two weeks. We listened with rapt attention. No one could fail to be moved by the experiences of the young people, by their honesty and openness, by their maturity, their deep desire to improve life for their own communities and to see peace in the Middle East. They were immensely grateful to all who had helped to arrange this trip.

Farewells

The group departed tired, exhausted, eager to go home, tearful, emotional, happy yet sad. We were told that we had made a difference to 15 young lives and that if peace were to come one day to the Middle East, we would all feel that we had contributed some small part to the process. They taught us lessons that we wish we could share worldwide. It was a huge privilege to be part of the summer school.

Window Summer School Edinburgh 2008

Organisers' Diary

December 2006 – July 2008

Preparation, fund raising and organising the trip.

2008

Monday 14 July

The group arrives in Edinburgh from Tel Aviv via Frankfurt. Last minute difficulties in collecting visas for the group from Bethlehem were resolved. Fifteen young people and five adults arrived at the boarding house at midnight. They were met at the airport by the school's mini bus driver, Tony, who turned out to be a retired policeman with a sister who was a photo journalist currently in Gaza. Immediate tasks on arrival: supermarket for fruit, juice and provisions; collect gift of fleeces and cagoules from generous donor; check the heating; top-up mobile phones and sleep.

Tuesday 15 July

Sent to shops to buy materials – puzzled by the order – pens, paper, scissors, paint, 'plaster stripes' (elastoplast? plastacine? plaster of Paris!) Visit from Trustee of Windows for Peace UK.

Wednesday 16 July

Free afternoon and first trip to Edinburgh City centre. A tour of Real St Mary's Close, the town underground beneath the current City Chambers, full of stories, thrills and ghosts, followed by a reception at the City Chambers and welcome by the Vice-Convenor for Education, Councillor David Beckett. This was followed by a walking tour of the Royal Mile and the City centre led by a Scottish blue badge tour guide who also happens to be an Israeli living in Scotland.

Thursday 17 July

Prepared for home visit of the group the following day.

Friday 18 July

A personal tour of the Scottish Parliament, arranged through an MSP, followed by an afternoon in the open-air tour bus, courtesy of Edinburgh City Council. The first shopping expedition! Evening at house of Judy Sischy, with pizzas, ice cream, fruit and relaxation.

Saturday 19 July

Free day and trip to Alnwick Castle. Wonderful tour of the castle, specially arranged lunch in private annex to cafeteria and walk in Alnwick gardens. On arrival home, evening used to plan week 2.

Sunday 20 July

Full day of work for the group and day of rest for the Edinburgh organisers.

Monday 21 July

Group was joined by a group of fifteen young people from Edinburgh and Selkirk, who had been briefed and prepared on

previous occasions by an Edinburgh teacher and facilitator, familiar with the Middle East conflict. An afternoon of making new friends, of engagement, of further discussion and deepening understanding.

Tuesday 22 July

Date of work for the group.

Wednesday 23 July

The group was joined by a group from Rochdale Youth Group, consisting largely of local Muslims who were raising money for young people in the Middle East. Another fascinating day of exchanges, discussion and new friendships.

Thursday 24 July

Two more Trustees from Windows for Peace UK arrived. Much of day spent preparing and planning for the open-day.

Friday 25 July

Open-day. Over 60 donor friends and supporters, individuals and others from a wide range of organisations came to the Open Day. This began with a welcome and

introductions, followed by presentations from the young people. There was then a question and answer session, which continued long after the formal end of the open-day, when the visitors mingled and talked to the young people individually. It was a great success and a learning experience for all.

Saturday 26 July

Work day for the group.

Sunday 27 July

A day of relaxation, of visiting the Jazz Festival in Princes Street and of shopping.

Monday 28 July

A sad, tearful departure from Edinburgh. Although everyone was looking forward to going home, many would have liked another few days, another week or even longer. They loved Scotland, they loved Edinburgh and were returning older and wiser, strengthened by their experience and determined to continue their work in the Windows programme on their return.

We were left alone but full of hope.

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A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Synagogue The Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2008

Lord Julian Goodman

As the month of July drew to a close, and the balmy weather turned grey, wet and into a typical Scottish Summer, once again the population of Edinburgh doubled in size, the traffic slowed to a snail's pace and the largest arts festival in the world kicked into action. After last year's hugely varied programme of Jewish offerings, I decided to have a look and see how easy it would be to find a choice programme of just comedy to tempt the chuckle muscles once again as in years gone by. With only a couple of musical interludes, I was pleasantly surprised to see how much was on offer, and accidentally found a few hidden gems on the way.



My first show was **The Arab, The Jew And The Chicken** at C Central. A group of performers from Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Israeli, Palestinian and general Arabic backgrounds joined forces to combat the Middle East conflict through comic skits and sketches, and everybody was fair game and a choice of target. Roberta the Lebanese Tease of a TV chat show hostess, set the tone when she interviewed a Sheikh and a Rabbi on matters of great trivia before they accidentally came up with a perfect solution to conflict. Various checkpoint sketches came up throughout the show, and a whole array of characters (including a chicken) gently lampooned all sides in a brave attempt to find common ground through comedy. The performers didn't always hit the mark with the punch lines, but the effort they showed was amusing to watch until the belly laughs eventually arrived.

My next offering was a joy to watch. At The Stand, **Arnold Brown's** show,

Happiness – The Search Continues, showed why, after more than several decades on stage, they call him the 'Godfather of Stand Up'. Glasgow's most famous Jewish comedian was so laid back as he addressed his audience, one could have assumed he wasn't giving it much effort at all, but the constant gales of laughter were a clear sign of how much work it takes to give just that appearance. We were introduced to several anecdotes about his Uncle Harry, "A wonderful man. 99 years old and he's still got all his own prejudices!" Being Jewish was a huge part of his repertoire, as was growing up in Glasgow's tenements, but he tackled everything from technology to politics and Islamophobia with great integrity, but even more hilarity and mirth. It was a capacity audience, and they loved every minute of the show.

My musical interlude followed, but there was much fun to be had there too. At The Lot, **The Yiddish Song Project** were again playing to a packed house. Setting the tone of the evening, they kicked off with their multi-language version of **Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen**, followed by a mixed repertoire of some old favourites and some very impressive new pieces. In the middle, Stephanie Brickman's Fancy Festival Shoes took centre stage, (well, top of the piano to be precise), and while some people considered their performance rather static, I personally thought they sparkled! The singing by Stephanie, and playing by Jo Nicolson on clarinet and Phil Alexander on piano and accordion was as excellent as ever, and the addition to **A Yiddishe Mamma** of tongue-twisting verses to the tune of **W.O.M.A.N.** was simply quite wonderful to hear. The audience cried out for more, and they got it.



Over at Central Hall in Tollcross, The National Youth Orchestras of Great Britain were hosting their annual Festival of British Youth Orchestras, and after an absence of some years were hosting International guests. For one performance they "were thrilled" to welcome The Lavi Wind Band from Jerusalem. The oldest of three groups at the school there, which promotes co-existence between Jews and Arabs, had travelled to Scotland to perform as part of Edinburgh's Artists Without Borders scheme in this Festival. These highly talented teenagers wowed the audience with a very varied repertoire including Yerushalayim Shel Zahav, A Harry Potter Medley, Spanish Flamenco Dances, A Selection from Hello Dolly and Fiddler On The Roof and a wonderful tribute to The King of Swing, Benny Goodman, to name but a few. Of particular note were the soloist who played an excerpt of a saxophone concerto, and the clarinettist who led a small ensemble in Chassiddishe & Klezmer pieces. The audience loved it and were treated to two much-demanded encores. I was very proud as a citizen of Edinburgh to see the warmth and delight with which the FBYO welcomed The Lavi Wind Band here, (especially after some of the controversy in The Film Festival over the Israeli film director); however, as a member of the Edinburgh Jewish Community I wanted to bury my head in shame. When I was their age and played in The King David Wind Band at school, if ever we travelled anywhere in the country, it might be in Aleshvatz Yoren, we would always find local communities there to support us. These children had travelled thousands of miles, and while people had come up from London and Manchester to show their support, I scanned the audience and could not find another Edinburgh member anywhere else who had come to support them. I had found them solely through the e-mail I read from the Shul Secretary saying that they were only doing one performance here. I assume I am not the only person receiving these e-mails, and while some people may have been lucky enough to catch a small sample at The Community Centre's Festival Sunday, they

and the rest of the community missed out on a truly wonderful concert.

At The Pleasance Dome I saw my only play of this Fringe. **The Straight Man** was a really funny look at Jewish stereotypes. Simon Joshua Kay thought that to his orthodox Jewish parents, marrying out was bad enough, but coming out was something else. Simon wants to marry a nisht frum inzerer girl, but because his brother was totally cut off by his mother for doing this, he decides to pretend to be gay, reasoning that once they get over the shock, marrying out will be a lot easier. So he takes his best friend along to a Friday night meal where he has to endure the racist undertones of being a schvartze and asks him to pretend to be his boyfriend. Unfortunately his mother Miriam has other ideas, and has invited the social misfit Helen Needleman as a prospective shidduch. Simon puts his plan into action with dramatic consequences. His mother dies from the shock, his father freed from the shackles of the extremely overbearing Miriam, revels in the release and comes out as gay himself. He insists that the planned wedding goes ahead the next week, much to the delight of Simon's best friend, who is also secretly gay and in love with Simon. Simon's plans to switch everyone to another room in the venue so he can marry his real fiancée never quite come to fruition. He thinks he's won when his mother's birth certificate shows that she was actually adopted, and neither she nor he were in fact actually Jewish, only to get a message from his fiancée calling it all off as she'll never be as important to him as his family. To be honest, it was a nonsensical farce, but wonderfully so. The characterisations were extremely funny and well portrayed, and cleverly pointed out the dangers of intolerance within one minority to several others, and all in a rather fun way.



At The Pleasance Courtyard I went to see **Ian Stone – Where's The Down**. Life being a constant uphill struggle, he was looking for the down. I remember going to see his first show years ago and thinking that he only gave a cursory mention to being Jewish back then, now it seemed to play a much greater part in his act and it was all the richer for it. He talked about his Polish ancestry, immigration and typical assumed prejudices with great wit. He engaged the audience from the start and the interaction was just as funny as the scripted routine. There were some Jewish gems in his routine and some adult themes which he managed to combine skilfully and to great effect, and he had people laughing with him all the way. The hour passed by too quickly and I was really pleased I'd gone back to revisit this very funny man.



Over at The Gilded Balloon I found one of the hidden gems. I had gone to see **Learn to Play the Ukulele in Under an Hour (How George Formby Saved My Life)** purely on a whim and was delightfully surprised. 'The ukulele is the cure for depression', claimed **Sam Brown** and **Donal Coonan**, and having experienced the instant grin that greeted me all my working career every time I played the first chord on my ukulele, I have to agree! Sam was visited by the ghost of George Formby on the death of his father, and, stuck in a rut teaching in a Jewish Girls' school in North London, he started out on a discovery of Formby and all his works. After supplying the entire audience with a ukulele, he leads us on a tour of the bizarre spirals of depression he and his assistant fell into and the reasons behind them. The audience were taught chords and songs to play as they felt appropriate, while the story unfolded on stage and Sam set his life's aim upon teaching others to be happy by playing the 'happiest instrument in the world'. A slide show accompanied the history and

music lessons and the whole show had a wonderful sense of its own silliness as the lesson progressed. By the end (in only 55 minutes) the audience had learned to play the Britney Spears song **Baby One More Time**, which sounded delightfully ridiculous. Based on a true story, the bittersweet roots kept the show grounded, while the rest of it just let loose. Everyone left grinning after the most hilarious music lesson they'd ever had.

Of the other shows I saw, it is worth mentioning **Barry Cryer & Ronnie Golden** at The Gilded Balloon. Singing daft songs about aging, at 73 Cryer was revelling in his old age and squeezed in a lovely Jewish joke about a cow from Minsk told to him by Alan Coren.

Count Arthur Strong – The Man Behind The Smile at The Assembly Rooms was simply one of the funniest shows I have ever seen. I urge you to catch this wonderful character on his acclaimed Radio Shows on **BBC Radio 4 (and BBC 7)** and decide for yourself. I was platzing in the audience watching this veteran raconteur create mayhem and chaos with his cleverly crafted ineptitude, and it was so much funnier than I had imagined it when listening at home.

Lynn Ruth Miller was appearing in two shows at The Argyle, again about ageing. **Another Side of the Mirror** was another collection of her wonderful, warmly funny life stories, and **Ageing is Amazing** saw the return of Sadie the senile stripper with the Burlesque show of songs and parodies about getting Tzekrochen. On top of these two, she appeared on television, guested on several other shows, and I had the delight of seeing her wow a young audience in the wee small hours of the morning with her stand up routine. At 75 she was the second oldest performer at The Fringe, being narrowly pipped by **Joan Rivers**. On the last Sunday of The Fringe she was honoured by an Editors' Award from **Three Weeks** magazine who cited her sheer energy & consistent quality shows, and setting the standard to the youngsters by not taking a day off and performing beyond the call of duty. So this year my **5 Mogen Dovids** goes to **Lynn Ruth Miller**, and not least for the nachas one gets when seeing everybody fall in love with her the second she smiles!

Garden Open Day

Esther Mendelssohn

On the 25th of June, Harold and Esther Mendelssohn opened their garden for charity under the Scottish Gardens Scheme, raising over £600, split 60-40 between the cancer support charities of the SGS and the lunch club which meets twice weekly in the communal hall.

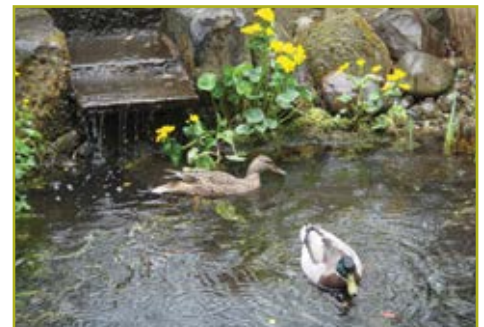


Despite the dire forecast of showers interspersed with outbursts of torrential rain, we were fortunate enough to get a totally dry spell between 1 o'clock and 6 o'clock in the evening. The 150 people who came through the gate were able to browse and enjoy a cup of tea with cake and even buy some plants to take home without a soaking. Quite something in a summer which up till then had consisted mostly of showers with only occasional sightings of sun.

Many thanks go to the lunch club ladies who came to help out serving teas and generally assisting with the smooth running of the event. We were also lucky enough to have the observation bee hive set up so that people could see the bees in all their stages of development and identify the queen and her brood in the egg chamber, while watching worker bees cap over the cells when they were full of honey.



Bees are vital to the garden since it is run on an entirely organic basis without the use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers. They help to pollinate the many fruit trees: apple, pear, plum and mulberry and the fruit bushes: gooseberries, red black and white currants, blueberries and brambles. As the name suggests the garden at Merchiston Cottage is a secret oasis surrounded by walls with a jumble of flowers, shrubs and decorative trees as well as some exotic and rare plants for the real connoisseur. The photos sadly do not do it justice, so anyone interested in gardening should watch out for the next open day, where they would be most welcome.



The Board of Deputies

A Message from the President, Henry Grunwald QC



This past year has seen both significant challenges both locally and around the world. Antisemitic discourse in the media, calls for boycotts against Israel and threats to our security all mean that the Board needs to remain as vigilant as ever. Yet, as we turn the page on 5768 and look to the future, we take pride that the Board has responded to these issues robustly, leading the community's anti-BNP electoral drive, playing a key role in the memorable Salute to Israel parade, heading a 'Diamond Delegation' to Israel for its 60th anniversary, pioneering the 'Shared Futures' schools linking programme and launching a new 'Jewish Way of Life' CD-ROM. All this is on top of our daily work in the key areas of education, communal affairs, civil society, as well as the international arena. With your essential support we will continue to represent our interests to the highest levels of government and act as the first port of call for those seeking to engage with British Jewry.

In this spirit I would like to thank all those who do so much both for their respective communities and for clal yisrael - our people as a whole. Without such generosity of time and effort - the tradition of service to the community - British Jewry would not be able to flourish as it does.

On behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, I wish you a Shanah Tova Umetukah - a Happy and Sweet New Year. May the coming year bring peace to us all.

Reviews

The Last Jews of Kerala by Edna Fernandes

Published by
Portobello Books
Janet Mundy



What happens to a Jewish community that has lived virtually without any outside persecution for nearly 3,000 years? The sad answer, described in this absorbing book, is that they discriminate between themselves to the point of extinction.

The First Book of Kings records Jews trading with India in the days of King Solomon, bringing glorious treasures back to decorate his sumptuous court. Scholars have identified similarities between the Biblical Hebrew and Tamil words for peacock and ape, two of the animals exported from India. Some of these traders and their slaves may have settled in Kerala, then India's trading centre. The possibility that the settlers intermarried with local women contributed to the rift within the community many centuries later.

More Jews arrived after the destruction of the first and second Temples and found Kerala to be a safe haven. In their first major settlement in Cranganore, Jewish culture flourished, both economically and spiritually – to this day, Kerala Jews are religiously observant although no longer wealthy. From the days of their first, legendary leader, Joseph Rabban, Jews were given privileges by the local rajas and other rulers. Rabban was given copper plates, still in existence, engraved with details of these privileges, including land, granted in perpetuity. Apart from a short period of Portuguese rule, these rights have never been contested by any other religion or culture.

The Jews were forced to leave Cranganore and outlying areas by a combination of natural disaster and war in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, and they gradually moved to Cochin, the new centre of trade and power in Kerala, and were granted two areas of land in what became known as the Jew Towns of Mattancheri and

Ernakulam where they flourished. It was at around this time that a new wave of Jews arrived from Europe, escaping the Inquisition. At first these Paradesi, or 'White', Jews mixed freely with the native, Malabari or 'Black', Jews. However, it soon became clear that in order to retain their powerful relationship with the royal family, each community needed to claim Joseph Rabban and the 'copper plate' privileges as their own. Also, the influences of the Hindu caste system made themselves felt, and the White Jews claimed that they were the only 'pure' Jews, suggesting that the Black Jews were tainted by slave and local blood and were not halachically Jewish. Black Jews were ostracised by the White Jewish community, barred from marrying, being buried and eventually even entering the main Paradesi Synagogue in the Mattancheri Jew Town, and intermarriage was banned. Over the centuries, many noted Rabbis ruled against this discrimination, but the White Jewish community consistently ignored these rulings.

It took an inspirational Black Jewish lawyer, Abraham Barak (A.B.) Salem, in the 20th century, to begin to restore equality to his community, using Gandhi's policy of non-violent protest. Both his sons, Balfour and Gamy, progressed matters by becoming the first Black Jews to marry White Jews, although it was only when Balfour's son married in 1978 that the wedding was allowed to take place in the Paradesi synagogue.

Unfortunately, as this book shows, the reconciliation between the two communities took place too late, as there are now only 12, mainly elderly, White Jews and 22 Black Jews left in Kerala, and the Jew Towns have become 'souvenir' tourist attractions, with so few of the original inhabitants that they often rely on visitors to make up a minyan.

The irony is that the creation of independent India in 1947 and the State of Israel in 1948 precipitated the most rapid decline of the community. Thousands of the Cochin Jews emigrated to Israel, and have flourished there, particularly in the Negev, where they became successful flower exporters. Unlike the Jews left behind in India, they are mainly comfortable with the idea of marrying

outside their own community, and many are confident that they will be able to inculcate the 'Kerala way' of Judaism into their spouses. One family is even trying to establish their town as a 'Little India' tourist attraction, complete with a replica of one of the Kerala synagogues. Their main concerns are the secularisation of life in Israel compared to Kerala and the stress of regarding Muslims as 'the enemy' when in India they had been neighbours and friends.

Edna Fernandes visited the White and Black communities in Kerala and Israel during her research for the book, and describes many of the individuals she met, including Yaheh, the last White Jewish woman of marriageable age; Gamy, A.B. Salem's son; Anil, a young man torn between his love for his home in Kerala and his desire to find a Jewish 'wife who will not give me headache' in Israel while his grandfather, Abraham, has decided to move 'home' to Kerala after 30 years in Israel.

The book could easily form a series of newspaper articles (the author is a journalist) and is never less than interesting. I would have liked to see some illustrations, particularly maps showing the areas where the Jews settled in Kerala, and photographs of the Black and White communities and the synagogues – even the uncredited cover photograph (which I discovered through the Internet dates from the early 20th century) is cropped so that the children in the original picture are not visible. I would also have been interested to know why the Bene Israel Jews of Bombay, who also apparently discriminated between 'fair' and 'dark' Jews, continue to thrive despite the Cochin community's demise. However, there is much to intrigue other Diaspora Jews in this book. While the history of Jews in Kerala is very different from our own, Edinburgh Star readers will recognise many of the tensions in the choices that the Cochin Jews, both those who remained in Kerala and those who moved to Israel, have made in the past and are still facing today. The vivid descriptions of food and festivals and the stories from the past and present paint a fascinating picture of a unique Jewish community, one which I, like so many others, would like to visit before it disappears for good.

Obituaries

Isa Zack (Buzak)

1914 – 2008

Isa Zack (Buzak) was born on 7th February 1914. She was the fifth child of the seven children born to Isaac and Jeannie (Mashkie) Buzak and the first to be born in the UK. Isa's name was shortened to Zack the details and reasons of which are unknown.

Isa was brought up in Richmond Street among the other immigrants from Europe of all races and creeds. She left school at 14, as did everyone in those days, and went to work first in a shop in Stockbridge, walking both ways because the return tram fare was a penny. She then got a job in the Scotmid Co op (then St Cuthbert's Co op) in Nicholson Street where she stayed until her enforced retirement at age 60. She was well thought of by her employers and her workmates with whom she shared many a night out and with whom she kept in touch after she retired.

Neither she nor any of her brothers and sisters, except her sister Lena, married. They all lived together at first in Richmond Street, at 113 Marchmont Road, then at 39 Marchmont Crescent where her nephew Ivor was born. They later moved to 34 Marchmont Road. By the end of the 70's only three members of the family were left so Isa, Lena and Reubie moved to 24 Roseneath Place, still in Marchmont. First Reubie, then Lena died and Isa was left on her own. By then she was effectively housebound and had very little vision left, but still had a brain as sharp as ever and enjoyed a good chat.

She doted on her great nieces Rebecca, Deborah and Susanna and great nephew Jeremy, to whom she was a second grandmother, and loved to hear their news. With the help and support of Ivor, Frances his wife, her great nieces and nephew, but especially her neighbours, Lily and Vyvyan Hughes, who became close friends and were simply wonderful to her, she had five very happy years at home until in early January this year when she became too ill to remain at home. After eight traumatic weeks in hospital in St John's hospital, Livingston, a place was found for her at Camilla House in Grange Terrace, only a few minutes from home,

so she finally moved to Marchmont where she settled in well. She had recurrent chest infections and other problems but remained cheerful most of the time. She was still enjoying her visitors when out of the blue last Tuesday she took a stroke and at the age of 94 and 5 months, died peacefully and painlessly the following day.

Zalkind Banks

3rd January 1921 – 14th June 2008

When my father passed away in June I



was very comforted by the kind words, cards, phone calls and e-mails that were sent by friends and acquaintances from the Community. As my father lived in Glasgow I was surprised that so many people knew him and then I took stock. I realised that over the 27 years that John and I have lived in Edinburgh Dad often came to Shul here with the family and enjoyed many Edinburgh community functions. I would like to quote John's eulogy that he gave at the funeral as I think it encapsulated the essence of my father very well.

'Tradition has it that those who pass away on Shabbos are singularly virtuous. This applies in abundance to my father-in-law, Zalkind Banks.

Zalkind, or Solly, to all who knew him, was one of the most self-effacing people I know. He had huge integrity – what you saw was what you got, and this complete honesty created an enormous affection for him from family and friends alike. You knew you could trust him- he did not have a deceitful bone in his body.

He was also enormously talented musically – amazingly he only first picked up a musical instrument when he was 17. From his twenties, he became well known in the big band scene playing tenor

saxophone and clarinet, in Glasgow and beyond. He toured with such famous bandleaders as Roy Fox and was a regular fixture in the ballrooms and theatres of Glasgow including the Locarno, Plaza, Pavilion, Empire, travelling through to Edinburgh to play in the Kings orchestra for the Pantomime and the Gang Show. He was also a popular teacher in flute, saxophone and clarinet and taught a whole generation of Glasgow musicians. This included many with physical difficulties. He was particularly proud of teaching to an advanced level a young lady suffering from anorexia.

He was an uncomplicated man who liked nothing better than to walk in the countryside. Armed with his binoculars he loved the naming of names, whether some obscure seabird or telling the tree from its leaf. Lesley and Solly loved comparing notes on such matters during our many walks in the countryside. I also know how much he enjoyed his Munro climbing and in later years, just hill walking with his good friend, Natie Barnes.

He had a great, often dry, sense of humour, which he retained till the very end, doing a little unexpected jig to the amazed nurses. He loved children and animals and seemed to have an extraordinary rapport with both. I remember for example, Solly running along beside some wire fence in a countryside zoo being chased by an entire gaggle of geese, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, to the considerable amusement of all who watched him.

Throughout his life he was a committed Zionist, enormously disappointed when his attempted emigration in the early sixties did not work out. However he loved his year on Kibbutz Galed and often played to the chickens and cows that were in his care.

But his supreme passion was for his wonderful wife Hetty, who passed away 8 years ago, and his devoted daughter Lesley. If any marriage was made in heaven this was it and if any residue of pleasure can be derived from these sad proceedings, it is that today is their 60th wedding anniversary and that they will be reunited now once more.'

Letters

Dear Editor

I would like to bring to your readers' attention the Cosgrove Library, which for many years has been a feature of the Succah. The 1600 books are wide ranging and will, I am sure, delight those interested in Jewish history, customs, biographies, art, drama, cooking, novels and humour all with a Jewish theme.

Recent additions include an excellent pictorial record of life in Eastern Europe prior to the war. Entitled "A Vanished World" by Roman Vishniac, we are most grateful to Mr Albert Morris for donating this to the Library. Also kindly donated by Mrs Barbara Kwiecinska is a volume commemorating the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel by historian Martin Gilbert. Other most recent welcome additions from Mrs Esther Mendelssohn and Mrs Rosa Massie include excellent books of varied interest. Many thanks to all.

These add to the quality of the Cosgrove Library and the purpose of this letter is to bring this facility to the notice of your readers. Books can be seen or borrowed at a mutually convenient time by contacting me on 332 2324.
Yours Sincerely,
Ian Shein (Hon. Librarian)

It is with dismay that I learn that the future of the 'Star' is threatened by financial problems. The magazine is dependent on donations from its readers. I believe that out of all community member recipients, less than a third contribute.

I would urge those, who do not as yet contribute, seriously to consider doing so.

The publication is the 'Jewel in the crown' of Edinburgh Jewish Community. It would be a tragedy if it were to founder for financial reasons.

Yours sincerely
Berl Osborne

Thank you

Ms Sharon Finley, Mrs Rosa Massie and families wish to thank the Edinburgh

Hebrew Congregation for the in memoriam page in "60 days for 60 years" in memory of their brother and nephew Maurice Katz who was tragically killed in the Sinai during the Yom Kippur War.

On behalf of the Scottish Friends of Alyn, I should like to thank all those who responded so generously to our appeal to help the children in this hospital. In addition I should also like to thank everyone who marked the celebration of birthdays, anniversaries and other happy events by making a donation to Alyn.

The request this year is for a defibrillator at a cost of £3,000. Patients in wheelchairs, who have a ventilator attached to their wheelchair to assist their breathing, can be found in all areas of the hospital – it is important that they have immediate access to a defibrillator in case of an emergency. We are slightly short of our target, but are optimistic that the shortfall will be made up; I trust that you all feel that your donations have been wisely spent.

I hope that the New Year will bring real peace to Israel, and good health and happiness to all our friends and donors.

Clarice Osborne
(Chairman – Scottish Friends of Israel)

In January of 2007 it became clear to the Honorary Officers of the Edinburgh Jewish Burial Society that due to vandalism and the ageing of some of the older headstones, the ambience and dignity of the final resting place of our forebears at Piershill Cemetery in Edinburgh was deteriorating and required attention.

With that in mind, as the first stage of what was to be a lengthy project, lists were made of those families whose headstones were involved.

It was only after the compilation of this list that the Society discovered that indeed there were few in Edinburgh remaining of the families concerned.

It was clear that not only the present congregation, but indeed all those who had made aliyah and indeed many who by way of marriage and career found

themselves in far flung parts, would have to be contacted with a view to giving financial aid to restore the headstones and area to a proper and dignified state.

The additional difficulty which then ensued, was the fact that due to weathering, the inscriptions on some of the headstones had been obliterated. The cemetery authorities were most helpful in searching their records in order that the Forty-Seven headstones in the area adjacent to the Prayer Hall could be identified.

Having resolved to commence the project the next stage, not unnaturally, was the anxiety of funding. To the Executive it appeared not to be a complex job to uplift a headstone and replace it on its base. This thinking of course was somewhat erroneous. The cemetery authority guided us through the mechanics of the problem and it was soon realised that new bases and dowelling of a modern nature would be required. Regrettably some headstones were beyond repair and it was agreed that a marker showing name and date of death be placed for each such headstone.

The society is indeed not only indebted to all who contributed. Funds have been received from former members and families from all over the world. Contributions and expressions of interest created new ties and renewed older ties. As a result of this generosity the appeal raised the sum of £16347 towards the final costing of £19975.

Once again Piershill Cemetery is a fitting and dignified resting place for our forebears. The Honorary Officers and Committee would thank all who responded so generously.

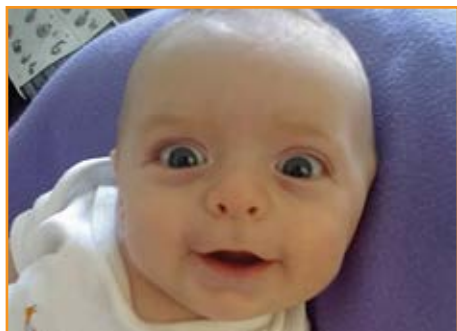
Mickey Cowen
Hon. Treasurer

I have just returned home after spending an amazing month in Israel on tour with Maccabi GB. A few of my many highlights of the tour include watching the sunrise over Massada, sleeping on the beach at the Kinneret and staying in a Bedouin tent in the Negev. Thank you very much to the community for supporting me on this trip.

Issy Kelpie

Congratulations

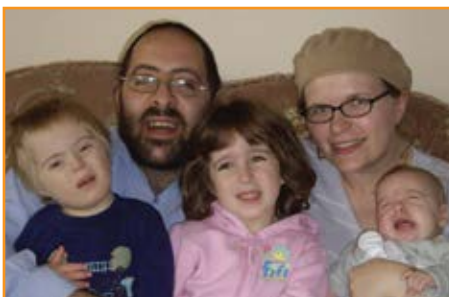
David and Elisheva Mason on the birth of Akiva Meir 31st May.



Paul Gilbert and Leah Selkowitz on their recent engagement.



Jonathan and Deborah Mason on the birth of Benjamin Carl 16th June.



Pearl Shein on her son Jan being proclaimed Lawyer of the Week by "The Times" Law Supplement. Jan Levinson specialises in sports injuries and secured a record payment of £4 million pounds compensation to an injured footballer. When asked who has been the most influential personal in his life, he replied the Dean of the Law Faculty at Newcastle University "and I should also mention my mother ; her effortless skill of putting everyone she meets at immediate ease is one I have tried to emulate, with varying degrees of success".

Shari Cohn-Simmens on completing her postgraduate diploma and becoming a fully-fledged counsellor.

Mazel tov to **Rabbi David Mason** on taking up his new position as the Rabbi of Muswell Hill Synagogue. We wish him, his wife Elisheva and their children Hodaya, Netanel and Akiva all the best for the future.

Forthcoming Events

September

17 Wednesday

WIZO
Ladies Lunch £12
Barbara & Leslie Bennie,
5 Cammo Place

30 Tuesday

First day Rosh Hashanah

October

9 Thursday

Yom Kippur

14 Tuesday

First day Succoth

22 Wednesday

Simchat Torah

26 Sunday

CCC
Social evening: Quiz night 7.30 pm

23 Thursday

WIZO
Theatre & Supper Evening £40
'Can't mile without you' – Barry Manilow
Supper: Kate & Ronnie Goodwin,
2 Mayfield Gardens

November

3 Monday

WIZO

12 Wednesday

Ladies Lunch
Venue TBC

17 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00 pm

22 Saturday

CCC
Social evening: Race Night 7.30 pm

December

15 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00 pm

20 Saturday

CCC
Social evening: Chanukah function

January 2009

19 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00 pm

25 Saturday

CCC
Burns Night 7.00 pm

The Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society meet during the Winter months on Sunday evenings. Dates are not yet available.

Senior Maccabi meet on Sunday evenings in member's homes. For further information contact James Hyams or Maurice Griffin.

The Luncheon Club meet every Tuesday and Thursday at 12pm.

All meetings take place in the Community Centre, Salisbury Road unless otherwise stated. All are subject to alteration.