

THE EDINBURGH

# STAR

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY



# Contents

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Rosh Hashanah Message – Rabbi David Rose	4
The Man who Volunteered for the Six Day War – Howard Lewis	4
1967 and all that – Geoff Lindy	5
Six Day War – Judith Sischy	8
Afterwards... July 1967 – Anthony Gilbert	9
Volunteer – Andrew Harwood	10
Fond Farewell to Christine Burns	12
Around & About	14
Changing Faces, Changing Places – Micheline Brannan	17
Changes to the Board of Manaement	18
Happy New Year Greetings	20
Interviews – Micheline Brannan:	
Yiddish Genes? – Stephanie & Josh Brickman	25
Hanging up the Apron! – Doreen Cohen	26
Yiddish Project – Micheline Brannan	28
Festival Fun – Lord Julian Goodman	28
Challenging Times – Rabbi David Rose	32
Society Reports	33
Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society:	33
The Periodic Table – Chemistry or Literature? – Anthony Gilbert	
Remote Jews? Small Jewish Communities – Gillian Raab	35
Jets Walk 10th July 2011 – Anthony Gilbert	35
Edinburgh WIZO Garden Party – Sylvia Donne	36
Windows for Peace – Judith Sischy	36
The Laying of 'Stolpersteine' in Orsoy, NW Germany – Ruth Fluss	38
Ecuador Field Trip – Richard Rifkind	40
Lemba – the Lost Tribe of Southern Africa – Taya Charakarisa	42
Obituaries	44
Reviews – Janet Mundy	45
Letters – David Gonshaw	46
Mazel Tov	48
Forthcoming Events	48

## Thank you

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We would like to ask our readers to support the people who have kindly agreed to advertise in The Edinburgh Star, in return for the support that they themselves give us.

\* Norma Brodie played the piano and Avery Meiksin played the clarinet as accompaniment for the Purim Spiel presentation. Their names were unfortunately omitted in the last edition of the Star.

# From the Editor

**After seventeen issues of the Edinburgh Star I'm finally hanging up my editor's hat. My tenure has had the excitement of a roller coaster; some troughs with the anxiety (usually unfounded) of not being able to get the articles and then the peaks, when at the last minute it all comes together. Euphoria!**

Editing the magazine has brought me into close contact not only with my immediate community but with their families and friends who are spread throughout Israel and the Diaspora. I have had the privilege of learning about the Edinburgh community of the past through the expats who maintain the same link that I now feel so strongly.

This issue is a fine example of all the above and indeed there is a theme of contact and communication that runs through many of the articles; past conflicts in Israel remembered through the eyes and experience of volunteers who demonstrated practical solidarity with our historical homeland by answering a call for help at a time of need; the 'Six Day War', and the 'Yom Kippur War', all of which are more than just a passing memory.

Communication figured boldly in the recent riots in Tottenham that snowballed completely out of control and began to seep into neighbouring cities. These were not, in my opinion, just an expression of frustration that some apologists tried to suggest. Opportunist agitators, wanting nothing more than senseless violence against innocent people, created untold misery. Modern technology can be dangerous in the hands of the mindless and it was this that was partly responsible for the spread of unprecedented violence; a kind of hysteria that got out of control. It seems such a pity that a modern method of communication with so much potential to be constructive, can also be used in such a destructive way. Though messaging escalated pointless malice in recent riots in pockets of Britain, we must not forget its more commendable side, clearly demonstrated when a call went out for support during the recent revolution in Egypt.

Modern life has much to recommend it but there always seems to be payout time. Health and the environment seem to be in the news again with obesity on the increase and renewable resources on the decline. It is pertinent, then, that we can read an uplifting, but at the same time thoughtful, report outlining an exciting fieldtrip to Ecuador which touches on both these points.

While we are in the realms of 'abroad' we can learn about a little-known community in Zimbabwe called the Lemba. I became interested in this community when in a chance contact, I found myself sitting beside one of its representatives in Shul and became curious to know a little more. We also bring you a record of an unusual way of remembering the Shoah, through the 'Stumbling Stones' laid down in Germany, to commemorate an episode in history that needs no further elaboration. Still away

from home, and to balance sadness with optimism, we hear good news in the 'Windows for Peace' project.

Although it is always the Rosh Hashanah edition of the Star that feels comfortingly heavy, this one is truly weighty with community contributions as well as some from further afield. The unusual number of pictorial records illustrates how even a small community like ours continues to flourish. The best tribute to Mrs Burns, our recently retired caretaker, is the two page spread of people who attended the tea given in her honour. The number that came speaks volumes and no text is necessary. And while we are sad to say goodbye to another family, the Brickmans, whose farewell interview will be found in this issue, we are happy to keep reporting the numerous activities outlined in 'Around and About' and 'Society Reports.'

Our Scottish-Jewish connection is once again reinforced by sparkling descriptions of the Jewish contribution to the Edinburgh Festival.

We have looked into the past and a thoughtful article, 'Challenging Times', is presented to encourage us to ponder, in a more general sense, on the spiritual side of future Jewry. In the next edition of the Star, and addressing a rather more parochial issue, we hope to be able to outline how the bricks and mortar side of our Community will be changed to benefit and enhance the Community.

I wish Micheline Brannan, who will edit the next issue, all the best in her new role and in my new hat.

The Board of the Edinburgh Star wish all our readers a happy and fruitful New Year.

Judy Gilbert





# Rosh Hashanah Message

The Jewish Year contains within it two festival cycles; that of the Three Pilgrim festivals and the festivals of Tishrei.

The four festivals occurring in Tishrei each have a different focus and each encapsulates a different value that we can take with us throughout the rest of the year. Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgement that teaches us the value of introspection, the ability to honestly examine our actions. Yom Kippur teaches

us that we can change. No matter what we have done we are able to change direction and chart a new path. Succot encapsulates the value of joy and being satisfied with what we have. When we can rejoice in what we already have, we can overcome any adversity and look to the future with confidence. Simchat Torah teaches us the importance of dedication and commitment. As we end one Torah cycle and begin again, we show our commitment to the values we believe in. These four values, then, are ones we

can carry with us into the New Year. With honest introspection of our actions, belief in our ability to change and be better, joy in the things we already have and dedication to the path we have chosen, we can look forward to the New Year, whatever it may bring, with confidence and hope.

A Happy New Year  
Rabbi David Rose

## The man who volunteered for the Six Day War

Howard Lewis

I was once introduced at a Round Table Conference as Howard Lewis, the man who volunteered for the Six Day War and arrived on the seventh. That about sums it up!

Unlike Geoff, Mike Bindman, Edgar Prais and Mark and Judy Sischy, I went firstly to a moshav and then to the army in company with Melanie Marks (nee Been). After arriving on the day after the war finished, I was sent to a moshav (a privately owned small farm) near Netanya to replace a farm hand who had been called up. I worked for a retired Argentinean diamond merchant who considered himself a "gentleman farmer". I watered and picked his oranges from 5am until 2pm, when his wife, who was barely older than me and had legs that went up to her ears, made lunch for the three of us. Then he went for what he still insisted on calling a siesta. I called it a 'shlof'.

After two weeks of this dire temptation, I volunteered along with Melanie to be attached to a tank unit who were just returning from the Sinai. They were based in Mansura a camp beside the small town of Yokneam about 15 miles from Haifa. The site is now a centre for Israel's hi-tech industry. My job was servicing and painting the tank radio systems. This does not sound arduous. However the month was July. The outside temperature was about 40°C. but the tanks were inside corrugated sheds, where this rose to about 50°C. However inside the tank itself was like being in the hottest sauna ever. There were four very long screws that held the radio in place and it was not possible in one visit to remove all of them. I showered and changed my fatigues twice a day. The showers were all cold and next to the latrines which were dug conveniently 500 yards from our tent! The only time my life was endangered in my 3 months there was

when visiting said latrines in the middle of the night, my torchlight showed up a scorpion running across my foot, no laxatives required!

Many marvellous weekends were spent with Melanie's wonderful Auntie Sheila in Herzlia. She was also a Been, two brothers having married two sisters. Her kindness and hospitality to all the Edinburgh clan was amazing. I met up a couple of times with all the other Edinburgh volunteers and we all enjoyed the fact that we came from the "secular" wing of the community. The fervent Zionists and the ultra frum as usual had disappeared at the first smell of trouble. I also had dinner with Rose Levinson and her husband who were marvellous hosts. Another Edinburgh connection was when I ran out of money. We were only allowed to take £50 in cash out of the country at that time (the V. form). My money had run out and my parents had given cash to a professor of physics at the University in Jerusalem, Asher Kaufman, who was visiting his family in Edinburgh. He kindly invited me to his home for dinner to give me the cash. To his chagrin his wife related his war exploits to me. He was called up in the normal way by coded signal on a radio broadcast. He was sent to a checkpoint 400 yards from his home in central Jerusalem. His wife gave him a packed lunch. He saw nothing, but heard gunfire whilst the IDF took the eastern part of the city. As darkness fell his sergeant asked him if he had eaten dinner. When he discovered he lived round the corner he told him to go home for his meal. Unfortunately on the way he fell over the kerb and badly twisted his ankle. The end of his war contribution!

After a month at the camp there was a major celebration when the entire unit returned to base. After a slap up meal (by IDF standards) and much boozing we retired to our tents. Just as we were nodding off there were a series of explosions. The officers came running and told us Yokneam was under attack from

terrorists. We were loaded into vans and armed with our Ouzis. We had only had one training day with them. I had an urgent longing for my favourite latrine. When we got to the main square there was a lot of shouting and confusion and all the volunteers were scared out of their wits. It was a set up. The officers had arranged for some of the sergeants and corporals to set off dummy and smoke grenades and the locals, Jews and Arabs, were killing themselves laughing at these terrified kids with machine guns.

There were some amazing characters amongst the regulars. One was my Corporal, a real Noo Yoiker called by the name Sydney. He married a Yemeni girl and I was invited to the wedding. It was quite the most amazing ceremony I have ever been at. The 'chupa' was held on two rifles and two pitchforks. There was no cutlery used at the meal, and the dancing and music were from another planet. Sydney was paid about \$500 for taking a Yemeni bride, but no bribe was necessary - she was lovely.

I did make an interesting friendship with one of the lads in my tent; a young lad from Birmingham called Mike Brown. He had just started six weeks before the war with Marks & Spencer and was the envy of the rest of us as he was getting paid! I kept in touch and many years later Elaine and I had him for dinner at our home, a lovely lad. However I went right off him when he became the director in charge of furniture and came to Edinburgh to open that department here. My assassination attempt failed and I ended up chatting away to him.

Israel was transformed by the war. From being a supposedly weak and frail state surrounded by powerful Arab forces that could crush the country in 48 hours they became the regional

super power. The re-unification of Jerusalem was the icing on the cake. A week after East Jerusalem was annexed I went with the rest of the Edinburgh contingent to the Wailing Wall. We all agreed that this would have meant more to our fore-fathers than to us. It then occurred to me that my paternal grandfather, Abraham Lewis, had fought with the Camel Corps in the British Army in WW1. In 1917 he was posted to Palestine and may indeed have stood in this very spot! The effect socially on the nation was electric. The atmosphere everywhere was euphoric and the music reflected this. The number 1 tune was Yerushalayim Shel Zahav. In the army trucks we endlessly sang 'Heenay ma tov umah Nayeem', wonderfully uplifting.

We all volunteered because when the war started we honestly believed that Israel was going to be destroyed and we were going to fight. When the war finished the Jewish Agency turned the entire project into an attempt at mass aliyah. It was very tempting, the atmosphere was infectious and for a young man the prospects of a new life were attractive. However even though there was no prejudice against me because I was a Jew, there was prejudice in abundance. A group of South African Jews refused to sleep in a room with an Indian Jew as he was a 'shvartser'. Mark Sischy came to blows with them. A German Jew on a kibbutz told me I was an 'untermench' as a Russian Jew. The Ashkenazim hated the Sephardim and thought of them as Arabs. As my father once said to me "If all the world had one God and the same colour of skin, the folk with the brown eyes would fight the ones who did not". How true.

Jerusalem was fantastic but it neither had a castle nor Tynecastle Park!

## 1967 and all that

Geoff Lindey

It is easy to forget in today's febrile political world that in the 1960s Israel was not seen in the media and popular opinion (let alone the then non-existent social media) as a quasi-imperialist proxy for the USA, a perception which seems to be the mantra of 2011. In fact in the build-up to what became known as the Six Day War, Israel was seen outside the Arab world and the Soviet-aligned bloc as the victim rather than the aggressor; the victim of terrorism and a wish by its enemies to drive the Jewish population into the sea.

This was the tone which determined the attitude of the general public, not just the Jewish Diaspora, to the events of early 1967. In the Spring of that year Egypt began a build-up of troops in the Sinai and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. It was perfectly clear to all that, in the absence of effective UN intervention, it was a matter of when - rather than whether - war would commence and in the event it was Israel that launched a pre-emptive strike against Egypt and its allies. The response to this was an out-pouring of support throughout the West with fund-raising (inevitably) and, unusually, mass volunteering of supporters.

Edinburgh was not immune to this mood. In the run-up to the outbreak of war there was much discussion about what should be done and eventually a number of

Edinburgh people did indeed volunteer. My own personal journey was odd in that I was at best lukewarm in my commitment to religion and had never been a Zionist. In fact, one of the few things about which I had argued with my father, Louis, was my belief that the creation of Israel, although justified by the horror of the Holocaust, had been a grave injustice to the indigenous population. Imagine, then, my father's surprise when I told him that I was volunteering for action in Israel's defence.\* This was no act of heroism on my part but was the opposite, a reaction to my fear that another Holocaust would result from an Arab victory over Israel. In this I was hugely influenced by my father's own behaviour during World War 2 when he had volunteered for service in the British Army and by his telling me in my youth of the scenes he had witnessed in concentration camps. His feeling was



that one is a Jew whatever one's belief; assimilation is no defence against anti-Semitism and denial of one's heritage is an act of unforgivable cowardice.

I recall vivid discussions about volunteering with Mark Sischy, Judith Lewis (now Sischy), my cousins Howard Lewis and Michael Bindman, Melanie Been (now Marks) and the irrepressible Edgar Prais, their enthusiasm for the cause being greater than mine. Once the decision was made, however, I told my parents, bought basic equipment and waited for the call. Of course, I also told my employers at the Scottish Life Assurance Company where I was training to become an actuary, expecting that my offer to resign would be accepted. It was a sign of the universal support for Israel, the underdog, that I was told to go, do what I could and if I ever returned my job would be waiting for me.

By chance the first two from Edinburgh who were told to report were Edgar and me. We flew to London late one night (there still was a midnight flight to Heathrow in these days) and we waited to be taken on a chartered El Al flight. Heathrow was overflowing with Jewish and, it is often forgotten, non-Jewish volunteers, a rag-tag army of people on a mission although we knew very little about what that mission would be. All Israeli pilots had been on military service but, as soon as enemy air forces had been destroyed, the Israeli government made it a priority to get El Al planes in the sky and volunteers flown in. Thus Edgar and I found ourselves flying to Tel Aviv on the fifth day of the war. It was a normal flight until we passed Greece whereupon we flew at very low altitude in order to be below radar level despite the fact that no air attack seemed possible.

On arrival we were held in Tel Aviv for a while until it was decided where we should be sent and then we were dispatched to Kibbutz Gevim about a kilometre from the border with Gaza. The men were all away on active service and, as was the case in most border kibbutzim, most were in tanks or other front line roles and were expected to be held on duty for longer than the regular infantry. We were all committed and enthusiastic but totally untrained and our role was to keep the kibbutz ticking over until the real men returned and also,



Right to Left: Edgar Prais, Geoff Lindey, Howard Lewis, Michael Bindman, Mark Sischy, Sheldon Rappaport

one imagined, to protect it in the event of an attack. Fortunately for all concerned that attack never came and we simply worked hard, very hard, in the fields. The only time that we really appreciated the possibility of danger was when we were working in the fields one morning and there was a massive explosion about 500 metres away. We learned that a worker in a neighbouring kibbutz had trodden on a mine laid by infiltrators overnight and had been killed. The following morning as we jumped into our Land Rover we assumed that it would be driven very gingerly but, on the contrary, the kibbutznik put his foot hard on the accelerator and drove off with us. This was a lesson that in a war it is pointless being afraid and avoiding danger; it will either find you or it won't.

Gevim was a very old settlement and had been started by a lady called Shoshanna and her late husband. I adored the life-style of the kibbutz and was so impressed by Shoshanna that when my first daughter was born my late wife and I called her Susannah. Had she been a boy she would have been called Zohar after the young son of a kibbutznik of whom I was very fond, although I am not sure that the

cabbalistic significance of the name was uppermost in my mind.

Our co-volunteers at Gevim were a mixed lot, American, French, South American, South African and Rhodesian and even Welsh. One of the English volunteers was a committed Christian (the term "born again" had not yet been invented) who told me that he wanted the Jews to have all of the Promised Land to themselves so that the Messiah would come again.

When the scale of Israel's victory became clear, an air of euphoria developed. On the radio one heard the song "Yerushalayim shel Zahav" (Jerusalem of Gold/ the Golden) all the time in celebration of the capture of that wonderful city. We began to be allowed to travel on Sundays and met up with other Edinburgh folk. Everywhere we met jubilant Israelis but there was a widespread feeling that the opportunity must be taken to make a lasting peace. I can only recall one individual who did not want peace; he was a contemptible man who claimed to have participated in the abominable Dir Yassin massacre in April, 1948. He and the born again volunteer and a very aggressive

South African volunteer were the only people I met who wanted to retain the whole of the occupied territories on the West Bank.

Our travels took us to Jerusalem, Haifa and the North, all of which are beautiful. We also went to Tel Aviv which I thought then and continue to think now is like a brash and ugly Florida city which is totally out of place in the Middle East. Very often we would hitch lifts which on one occasion was more exciting than we expected. Some off-duty soldiers told us that the quickest route from Jerusalem to Gevim was along a route which started through the West Bank; what they didn't tell us was that they were only going part of the way. So as dusk fell we were dropped at a cross-road in the middle of nowhere in occupied territory. We were reasonably relaxed as the soldiers had told us that we were bound to get a lift from other military personnel and that is indeed what happened.

The oddest event occurred when we and hordes of other volunteers from round the country were bussed to Jerusalem by the Sochnut (the Jewish Agency) for a two-day session entitled "What is a Jew?" The issue was whether Jewishness was defined by religion, culture or birth. Of course no answer was given and this is an issue which continues to trouble Israelis. The real agenda of the Sochnut, now that the post-war period had allowed them to sort themselves out, was to get as many volunteers as possible to settle permanently in Israel. In fact I was

tempted to do that myself. I loved the kibbutz life and I found the people in the kibbutz wonderful for their philosophy and the intellectual rigour of their lifestyle. Unfortunately, I could not contemplate living in any of the Israeli cities where I could have found employment. The internal debate - to stay or not to stay - was resolved when a message came for me from the British Embassy. It told me that my parents were on holiday in Italy and my father had had a severe heart attack. My mother had no Italian and needed my help and so I packed my bags and left directly. I brought my parents home and recommenced my actuarial work and did not return to Israel until 2006 when one of my daughters married an Israeli and made aliyah.

About 8 months, I think, after we had all returned to Edinburgh, the Community organised an event in the Communal Hall where the widow of Major-General Orde Wingate spoke. Her husband had been a deeply committed Christian officer in the British Army who was also a Zionist and is remembered as a hero in Israel to this day. All the volunteers were present, I believe, and although we appreciated the Community's support, I think that we all felt that we had done little to deserve this recognition. We had volunteered to help in a war but we had arrived when it was effectively over, had worked hard and had had a lot of fun. Of course all that we did is trivial when compared with the tragedy of Morris Kaye who had previously made aliyah and was killed on active duty during the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

For me the message of this experience is that Israel is a country which had won a stunning victory, whose people were mostly desperate for peace and which was widely admired throughout the West. For reasons that are not well enough known, the chances of peace were squandered. Certainly unforgivable mistakes were made by Arafat and the PLO but terrible errors were also made by Israel. The most interesting exposition of this is in a book "Scars of War, Wounds of Peace" by Shlomo Ben-Ami. Ben-Ami was Ehud Barak's Foreign Minister and was present at the 2000 Camp David summit. One might think that he would give a biased depiction of events but prior to being a diplomat he had been and remains a highly respected academic historian who has not pulled his punches in telling his story. I conclude with his realistic but depressing statement that "Jews and Arabs have a special reverence for the past. But they are also fatally trapped in its lies."

I have written this by request. It is a personal reflection and is subject to the frailty of my memory. I apologise if I have omitted events involving other members of the community or if I have neglected to mention other volunteers.

Louis Lindey was chairman of the committee he formed, to raise money to buy an ambulance. He would go from house to house collecting, and eventually bought an ambulance in the name of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.

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# Six Day War

Judith Sischy

It is strange to be writing about the six day war, just as President Obama is calling for a return to the pre 1967 borders. Israel, insists Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “can’t go back to the 1967 lines”. The proposal is “indefensible”. At the same time, ironically, to mark the anniversary of the end of the six day war, pro-Palestinian protesters are again infiltrating the cherished Golan Heights border – resulting in more casualties and Israel reinforcing its defence lines.

What was it all about, one wonders, thinking back 44 years ago to the urgent calls for volunteers from the diaspora? The world, and in particular the middle-east, has changed dramatically, yet here we are in 2011 once more debating the 1967 borders. At that time, in '67, Israel was the underdog, surrounded by the sea and by hostile neighbours, with friends and supporters in the west; the sea and the hostile neighbours remain but the friends abroad have dwindled; there have been more wars, the deadly rise of terrorism; a global surge for a Palestinian state and, of course the Israeli settlements.

In June 1967, by the time the volunteers had arrived and were settled in Israel, the war was virtually over; victory was in the air, hope was everywhere. The men were still away on active service, so we were put to work in the fields, on kibbutzim and moshavim around the country. We were young, full of energy and hope; the land was rich with milk and honey, bathed in sunshine and full of song. We were seen as potential for aliyah and treated to visits, tours and information about Eretz Israel. We worked hard, rising at dawn to go to the fields, wearing our kibbutz clothes proudly, we hitched lifts everywhere and despite being in a war zone, it felt so free.

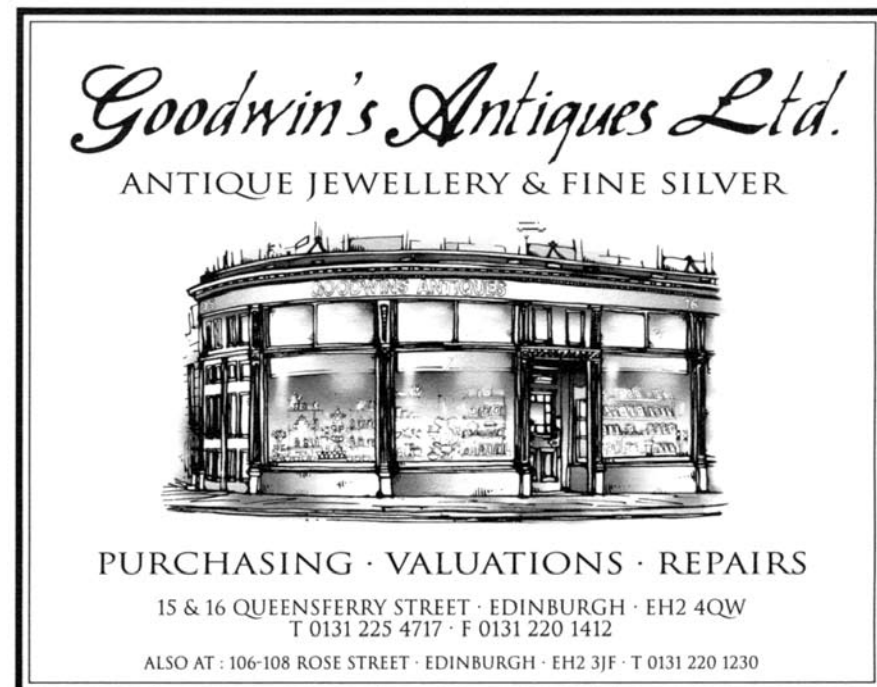
I arrived in Israel from France, where I had been studying, and was posted to a large volunteer centre near the Beit Lid junction, not far from Netanya, the site of a terrorist attack in 1995, when two Palestinians detonated suicide bombs, causing a number of deaths and injuries. In '67 it was a great spot to hitch a lift to almost any part of Israel. The volunteer centre was crammed full of young people from across the globe, including several from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle and London; it was an international centre with volunteers from France, Spain, America, South America, South Africa and Rhodesia as it then was; and there was also Jo, an ardent Roman Catholic from Ireland, whose love for life on a kibbutz surpassed all else in life.

Some of us spoke pigeon Hebrew, whilst most of

the time we managed to communicate in Franglais or whatever came to hand. Most of us were Jews but there were others who came for idealistic reasons, for a belief in the kibbutz way of life and in the ideals that Israel represented for them. We sat around camp fires in the evening, talking, arguing and singing, united by the '67 war. We soon realised that we were being wooed by the Sochnut, the Jewish Agency, universally known for its bureaucratic skills – woe betide if you had to queue at the Sochnut. We were encouraged to travel around the country, admire its beauty, enjoy hospitality on kibbutzim; we were openly invited to consider staying and settling in Israel. Many of us were sorely tempted but for most of us, rightly or wrongly, the realities of life were more pressing, in my case to do exams and finish my studies at Bristol University.

The memories are still there, but more in spirit than in detail. How could you forget the first time you flew into Tel Aviv to what was then known as Lod airport, totally unrecognizable from the beautiful Ben Gurion airport of today? As the plane drew closer and the lights went out, the passengers burst into Israeli song, increasing the nervous excitement in the plane. On arrival, there was chaos, people with notices, volunteer leaders and noise, lots of noise, but soon we were despatched to our various destinations. The friendships we made, the experience of living in an international centre, the welcome on the kibbutzim, not to mention the rising at dawn, working in the fields, the heat, eating under the trees, the ride back in the trucks and above all, the songs.

Who could forget being struck for the first time by the sheer beauty of Jerusalem, the dazzling white stone, the drive up the hill, the Wailing Wall, the old city, the souks, and the unexpected eastern feel of the country, the mix of peoples, the sea and the beaches? Subsequent visits have blurred these initial memories but have not lessened the bond that I feel for Israel. My current involvement with young people from different parts of the middle-east through Windows for Peace has given me a broader perspective and I look at recent events with sadness. Like everyone, I can only hope that there will one day be peace.



# Afterwards... July 1967

Anthony Gilbert

In mid 1967 I was coming to the end of my 2nd year as a student. I no longer remember the precise timing of events, but I do recall that throughout that spring and into May the world had watched aghast at the diatribe of threats and bullying that had been emerging from the Arab countries that abutted Israel.

The lead for this appeared to come from Gamal Abdel Nasser, the then President of Egypt, who had huge designs to be top man in the Arab world; he had ordered out the blue-beret UN troops who had acted as a buffer between his country and Israel as a prelude to a clearly impending conflict. At some point in that period I hitch-hiked across to Oxford to see my student friend Steven. I can remember us being out one warm Oxford evening when the extraordinary news broke: in a daring and completely unexpected coup, Israel had practically destroyed the entire Egyptian air force in the space of a few hours. This of course precipitated the 6-day war in which a kind of latter-day miracle occurred with Israel, not merely holding the armies of 5 inimical states at bay, but seizing land (hopefully to be used as a bargaining chip for secure borders in future negotiations). By the time I returned to Cambridge the course of the war was largely run.

I completed my term in Cambridge finishing, I guess, around mid-June. The war was won, but a cry had gone up for volunteers to make their way to Israel to act as volunteers to fill the role of men and women who remained on war duty. My cousin Laurence, who had spent much of that year on a kibbutz in Israel before he started university, suggested that we answer that call. So we duly made our way to Endsleigh House near Euston, home of the NUS, and bought ourselves a flight from Athens to Tel Aviv. To get to Athens (which we had visited the year before by car), we now hitch-hiked. It was a memorable trip; we had allowed about

ten days, but in fact it took about four and a half days, and included among other things, my being punched by a German policeman for not getting off his nice autobahn as quickly as he wanted, a 600 mile lift overnight from Munich almost to Belgrade, being picked up by more Germans, who seemed like gangsters to us, ferrying two Mercedes cars for sale in Turkey, and spending my most uncomfortable night ever in the back of a canvas covered lorry full of empty wood and wire tomato boxes which jabbed and pricked us all over as we bumped our way up to the Greek border in a violent electric storm.

After about a week in Athens, our stay lengthened by a delay to our flight, we arrived in Tel Aviv. I don't think we had planned anything in advance and my recollection is that we made our way to the offices of the Jewish Agency, which seemed to be over-run with volunteers. Laurence duly returned to his kibbutz, Kfar Hanassi, and I was posted to a moshav, Balfouriya, close to Afula, which I made my way to by bus. I spent about four weeks there and had the most wonderful time, largely I think because of the delightful family that I was billeted with. My hosts were Reuven and Dina Shehtman, both sabras, I think. Reuven was 38 at the time and they had three children, Ronit who was about 11, Doody about 8 and Shlomo about 3. Reuven spoke a certain amount of English and he had to act as interpreter. They had their own farm, but of course, they bought merchandise and sold their produce as part of the cooperative effort of the moshav. I know they produced a variety of crops and possibly they produced dairy items; I certainly recall that they had a bull, because on one occasion it managed to get out of its pen, and Reuven and I, armed with long sticks had to persuade it back whence it came. But while they may have had varied produce, the thing I remember is melons...melons to the left of us, melons to the right of us, melons ad nauseam and ad infinitum. We seemed to pick them every day (can't remember what happened on Shabbat!) in that stifling heat, and though I completely failed to

learn any serious Hebrew, I picked up one word that has stuck: written phonetically, it is 'nigmar'...finished! (Thank heaven!)

Though the work seemed hard and physical with an early start to beat the full heat of the day, there was much leisure too. The volunteers had laid on for them a number of marvellous excursions in which we were accompanied by the teenagers of the moshav, with whom we happily mixed. Among various places, we visited Kinneret and the caves of Arabel, Mount Tabor, Nablus, the Dead Sea and the Golan Heights, the last of these clearly revealing the detritus of war with abandoned tanks and other military vehicles in profusion.



Anthony with a shell

I recall having long chats with Reuven as we seemed to be tuned to a similar wavelength. On one occasion I accompanied him on a walk through local fields to a nearby electric substation; it turned out he was an electrical engineer and was qualified to inspect and service machinery up to a certain power. In connection with this, he told me that at one point he had had to take an oral exam and when he presented himself for it found himself in a long queue of applicants waiting outside an office to be interviewed by the examiner. When he reached the door and it was his turn to go in, he waved on the man behind saying he was in no hurry, and he kept doing this. Gradually as he waited outside he learnt more and more from the conversations he overheard going on inside the room, so that when he did eventually present himself he performed as a star candidate. He also told me that he had not fought in the recent war, being considered too old for frontline duty, but instead he had been among a group of older people charged



with observing movements in a range of local hills, and obviously reporting back, had they seen anything suspicious.

After four very happy weeks there, I moved on to do some touring with Laurence and also to pay visits to relatives in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, I had an indecently long sojourn with relatives: Laurence had gone on an organised tour to the south, but I was somewhat crippled by a gippy tummy, so was rather compelled to stay put. But this enforced stay was not without its compensations: I had a truly wonderful time exploring the newly liberated Jerusalem; the Wailing Wall was impressive (though I was less impressed by the ultra orthodox as they pushed and barged their way through with regard to no one), but I was completely bowled over by the Dome of the Rock – now that was architecture as I had never seen it before. During all this touring we met various Arab people repeatedly, and what strikes me now in the light of all that has happened since, is how friendly they were. Maybe it was because they saw Laurence and me as British much more than Jewish, but I

cannot recall an unfriendly word.

And suddenly it was time to go. We had a second flight to catch, to Istanbul, where quite coincidentally I met Nicky de Lange, who had been a year ahead of me in our school days, and is now the distinguished translator of Amos Oz. In Turkey, Laurence and I had more adventures, and yet more again in our lengthy hitch-hiking return from the Heel of Italy, but that would draw us too far afield.

So how did I feel about the Israel that I had just left? My own Jewishness was not particularly strong, so I felt no strong emotional bond to the country as a whole, but I certainly felt a personal bond to Reuven and his family. I also sensed a great feeling of excitement and optimism. Against all the odds, the country had won this stunning victory; the country, less than 20 years old, faced with the prospect of complete annihilation, had somehow won through; it felt like being born again. I believe I encountered this feeling time and time again talking to friends, to relatives, to strangers and I have no doubt that it infected my own feelings. I also think that

because of the circumstances, the country felt much more unified then than it does now. I think that the socialist ethic that lay behind the kibbutzim still ran strong, that it informed the views of many Israelis and was a part of that unified feeling. And how do I feel now? A partial answer is that I have never been back. In the 40 plus years since my trip, Israel has changed, rather more than I think I have. My feeling is that after those heady days of 1967, a return now would just feel rather flat; perhaps better to leave me with my memories. The one thing that would draw me back would be to meet up again with my wonderful host, Reuven and his family. We kept up a correspondence for 10 years after my return and then sadly it died; to renew it would be a delight.



Melon boy

Arriving in Israel, I remember vividly leaving the plane, unsure of where I should go, and with no one to meet me, I made my way to an area allocated to volunteers. I was then taken to the Kibbutz registration centre where I was instructed to go to Kibbutz Givat Hashloshar in Petach Tikva in the morning. I had no Israeli money, only sterling, and had no means of exchange to shekels until morning so where should I stay the night? I had to find my own way to the kibbutz and no assistance was offered.

As a volunteer and with very little support on arrival, I felt there was no outward display of appreciation for what I had given up. However I was very grateful when a very kind Israeli, and complete stranger, offered to lend me money to stay in a hotel. Though more hostel like than hotel, I thankfully slept under cover for my first night's stay.

The next morning I made my way to the bus station and travelled to my allotted kibbutz. Volunteers were never enlisted into the army. Instead we took the place of soldiers in their civilian life. Arriving at Givat Hashloshar, I was to share a very basic wooden cabin with a Canadian volunteer and a deserter from Vietnam who had assaulted his senior. Both were gentile and having formed a bond, my entrance was regarded as intrusion.

My good friend Michael Winant alleviated the lonliest of the first weeks by arranging for friends to send letters; happily they arrived daily.

I was aged 26 feeling slightly on the outside, among UK volunteers who consisted mainly of teenagers, who had never left home before; however I got used to this and soon made friends.

My first duties were to pick oranges, leaving short stems to maintain flavour. I still found time to eat the big juicy oranges during this satisfying work. The best oranges were exported leaving the poorer ones for the domestic market. Sometimes my ladder and I made a sudden but, thankfully, gentle descent through the numerous trees and I never seemed to get hurt

As a vegetarian then and now, I did not find the prospect of collecting chickens and preparing them for their transport to market appealing. I asked the man in charge of orange picking if I could continue with that job. I was a hard worker and he happily agreed. Despite this at dead of night a delegation came to fetch me for chicken transportation. Disregarding the former agreement and with my friend the six foot deserter's fists raised, I acquiesced. Working with mutilated chickens was unpleasant and the whole episode was unforgettable. My request to move resulted in an invitation from a young asthmatic and a Jesus fanatic with the words 'One way only' above his bed but I was welcomed and no longer felt an intruder.

I enjoyed evening activities such as chess and I gradually felt more at peace with my surroundings. The special Friday night meals of fishes, heads with eyes, was regarded as a delicacy; not very appetizing for a vegetarian, so I made do with whatever else I could eat.

The shop in the kibbutz stocked most things and we were given a small allowance to spend. When the first weekend arrived, I visited cousins in Tel Aviv. I wished to acknowledge the kindness extended to me by my sponsor, also from Tel Aviv, whom I had met on my first night in Israel. Sadly I did not find him in so just had to leave my token of appreciation at what I hoped was the correct address.

Israel, not famous for its rain lacked proper drainage. One night, however, ferocious rain, (apparently not unusual here) and water from the surrounding hills helped flood our low lying kibbutz. Water completely encompassed the dining area and thigh length boots were provided as essential evening wear.

On my way back to my sleeping quarters, I encountered two young boys who were too small to walk across the rising water level. I came to their rescue, or so I thought. 'Don't worry, I said, 'I will take one of you on each arm and carry you across to dry land.' With one on each arm and half way across, their weight started to take its toll. Not to worry, I thought, just two feet to my left was a comforting piece of dry land. Though not the most direct route to my cabin, I decided to change direction. Little did I know that the only drain in the whole of the kibbutz lay two feet to my left and, yes, the depth of water immediately increased and I lost my feet. The two young boys flew into the water, one to the left and the other to the right. In hindsight this must have appeared quite comical with me between two irate young Israeli boys both teaching me some new Hebrew vocabulary!

A trip had been arranged for the volunteer groups to Israel. They were to visit the South of Israel including Masada, Ein Gedi, the Dead Sea and Eilat travelling by coach and stopping along the way at various historic sights. Although not officially invited, I was reluctant to forgo this opportunity and decided to tag along. No one noticed the interloper who greatly enjoyed his visit. Along the way to Ein Gedi I spotted some warm and inviting

pools. As there was no one else around I decided to have a swim. I had just disrobed and entered the water when to my horror some fellow travellers appeared and decided to remove my clothes. They took pity on me... after I threatened to throw them in. They handed back my clothes and my dignity was restored. The coach stopped along the way when we encountered a family of Bedouins. They showed us where they slept, the men on one side of the tent and the women on the other. The children were offered sweets which they eagerly accepted in return for their parents' hospitality.

I remember an interesting trip to Jerusalem where we stayed at the University. Here we visited an Arab market in safety despite the very recent end of the war. While queuing for the crowded but inexpensive bus, I was at the front. The bus arrived, there was a great surge forward of Israelis and I suddenly found myself at the back!

I still have a wooden chess set and bomber jacket that I bartered down at a market close to the bus station. Though bartering appears to halve the price of goods, it is often the skilful trader rather than the shopper who gets the desired price.

Never having travelled north, I was pleased to be invited to travel with a friend to a kibbutz in the Galilee. A combination of hitch hiking (easy and not unusual then) and bussing quickly brought us to our destination. I remember seeing an Arab tending sheep in vast fields and not much else. Armed Arab soldiers on the rocky border were visible from the kibbutz. We returned to Petach Tikva the following day.

I recall that the mood of the people was fairly negative, with many young Israelis wanting to leave Israel for a less troubled life.

Midway through my stay I received an SOS from an English friend staying on a moshav north of our kibbutz. A moshav is like a village with a communal structure but retaining independent living. Everyone knew each other and they owned their own houses not knowing what the problem was I immediately set off to find her. I hitch hiked in a milk float and arrived to discover no real emergency, but my friend was feeling a little lonely.

After two months it was time for me to return to England so I used most of my unused shekalim to buy Israeli pottery as gifts for family and friends. Everything was carefully packed for the journey in a box with paper in between to avoid breakage. There was no weight restriction at that time. When I got to the airport I was delayed at the check-in where the official took every item of pottery out of the box in total silence and did not crack his face until the end when I was given a smile. I recall my mother meeting me at Heathrow, and failing to recognize me because I had not shaven during the whole of my stay. Her first words to me were "Oh my G-d".

Having arrived in the beginning of Israel's winter, the weather was not particularly good though we did get some sunshine and it was never as cold as London.

It was very strange being back home after such a long stay in Israel. It felt that I was never actually away from home and that my experiences were all part of a dream. I resumed my employment as if I had never been away.







# Around and About

## Community Activities

### ROBIN SPARK – ART EXHIBITION



Robin with his work entitled 'Shabbat'

Robin Spark held his latest art exhibition at the art centre 'WASPS' between 2nd and 13th June. Exhibits included life studies, geometric abstracts, line drawings and vibrant photographs. Among the paintings was one entitled 'Shabbat' that was a mixture of symbolic shapes in rich primary chalk colours.

### MONDAY 2 MAY

#### YOM HASHOAH – HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY IN PRINCES STREET GARDENS



At least 60 people participated in the Yom Hashoah ceremony in the Peace Garden at the Holocaust Memorial Stone on a warm evening in May. Vice Chair, Raymond Taylor, opened the service with a moving speech and Isaac Ansell Forsyth lit the remembrance candle. Prayers from Rabbi Rose followed with Kaddish sung by David Goldberg in memory of all who perished in the Holocaust. The Lord and



Lady Provost attended with Councillor Cameron Rose representing Edinburgh Council. The Lord Provost spoke of the poignancy of his recent visit to Auschwitz in his address to the assembled congregation. This annual service brings together Jewish (and indeed some non-Jewish) residents of Edinburgh from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life, all in their desire to remember and mourn the millions who perished in the Holocaust.

Lesley Danzig

### SUNDAY 8 MAY

#### PRE-SHAVUOT COFFEE MORNING

Pay at the door and you would be treated to a corner with tasty snacks, coffee or tea; a table heaving with home-made cakes for the ever popular auction; plants willing you to take them to a good home; a second table creaking with books,



DVDs, and videos and most important, cosy tables to sit at and chat to your friends.

Everyone was presented with a name badge but if you didn't already know all the people there you soon would. A friendly atmosphere and a constant buzz of enjoyment filled the Marian Oppenheim Hall and speculation as to who would be lucky enough to win the ginger, the date and walnut, the yummy chocolate and numerous other's cakes and home bakings.



If you were not lucky this time don't worry, there will always be another chance to attend the well-loved coffee mornings put on at regular intervals by the EJCCC and manned by a willing crew of helpers, both young and young at heart.

### YOM HA'ATZMAUT



Yom Ha'atzmaut was celebrated with events for all ages. Art activities were organised for the children, along with Israeli food for all with falafel and salads. This was followed by a fierce battle of wits over an Israel Quiz.

### CHEDER PRIZEGIVING 27 JUNE 2011



I always approach the annual cheder prizegiving with a mixture of pleasure, apprehension and relief. Apprehension because a lot of preparation is involved, and things can go wrong on the day, and pleasure because it is a wonderful opportunity to show the fruits of all the children's hard work during the year to their parents and other members of the community. The relief, I must admit, comes from the knowledge that everyone involved gets a break over the summer!



This year, I had an additional reason for approaching prizegiving as a significant event, as I was resigning after three years' organising and co-ordinating cheder activities, and twenty years' involvement overall, first as parent, then as teacher. As always, the preparations did not go absolutely smoothly – prizes are particularly difficult to source (for example, chanukiahs are not always available in the middle of the summer!). However, on the day, everything went according to plan and it was a wonderful end to the year and to my time in charge.

Each class presented their work then received their prizes from Dr Carol Levstein and Mrs Christine Burns, both wearing splendid hats as is the Cheder tradition. Merav Gardi, the main teacher for the younger classes, displayed examples of their work over the year. Then the Rabbi and Benjamin Griffin led Kitah Daled in a multimedia presentation about Shabbat – the Rabbi will be taking the presentation itself into schools in the future. Finally, Kitah Hey performed a time travelling news report based on a project they have done on post-Biblical Jewish history over the year.



Two special prizes were given as usual. The boy's prize was awarded to Omri Gardi, and the girl's prize to Miriam Brickman, who will be leaving with her parents to move to Copenhagen later this

year, and will be much missed.

Raymond Taylor addressed the audience as chair of the Education Committee, and the Rabbi as Cheder Principal. Then Hilary Rifkind praised the work of the Cheder, the high standard achieved by the children and the contributions by the teachers, helpers and parents. I was very touched by her words, and surprised to receive a lovely gift from her on behalf of the congregation. I gave a rambling, but heartfelt response and bid a very fond farewell to everyone.



May I repeat here my thanks to my colleagues – The Rabbi, Merav Gardi, Isaac Ansell Forsyth, Benjamin Griffin, Sarah and Claire Levy and Jessica Spencer – to the parents for their excellent support and, most of all, to a wonderful group of children who make all the hard work worthwhile. I'm sorry I will no longer see them every week, but I'll continue to follow their progress and to take great pride in their achievements.

Following the prizegiving, we all decamped to the annual Cheder picnic hosted by Sharon Ogilvie. The sun miraculously appeared as the picnic started and lasted until we left. Thank you to Sharon and the other parents for a lovely relaxing afternoon with delicious food – a great finale to the year.



Friday 9th - Sunday 11th December 2011

YEARS P7 & S1

Join us for this inspiring and fun-packed weekend for everyone having their Bar or Bat Mitzvah this year or next. You will enjoy a great Shabbat experience, learn lots and have incredible activities too.

This accredited weekend is a requirement for all those in the Challenge Programme or taking the Bnei Mitzvah Test.

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# Changing Faces, Changing Places

## Report of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation AGM

Micheline Brannan

The EHC AGM on 29 June had a record attendance of over 60. Hilary Rifkind welcomed everyone. Giving her fifth annual report as Chairman, she reported a busy year in which the main event was the retireral of Christine Burns as caretaker, to be replaced by John Masterson on a part time basis. Hilary noted that John is working long hours and said that more help is now being considered.

During the year, the membership had been consulted on the possibility of the EHC joining the United Synagogue. Mrs Rifkind said, 'The United Synagogue

consultation proved highly controversial and lead to considerable discussion and debate. Some members misunderstood the purpose of the discussion and questioned the integrity of the Executive. Some Executive members seriously questioned whether they wanted to carry on serving.' The consultation has now been put on hold, but the Star believes that the conclusion is likely to be negative.

Paying tribute to the support she has had as Chairman, Mrs Rifkind said, 'A lot of work is done behind the scenes. I would like particularly to thank Malcolm Cowan, our Treasurer, for the enormous amount of work he does and for dealing with OSCR [the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator]; also Jackie Taylor, Secretary, who works for the community on a daily basis, along with Raymond Taylor, my Vice Chairman, Convenor of Community and Welfare, Steven Hyams, the Buildings Convenor, and Arnold Rifkind, Religious Affairs Convenor, who also deals with all aspects of security.' Mrs Rifkind expressed her gratitude to Morris Kaplan, who was re-elected as Senior Warden, alongside Malcolm Cowan, who continues as junior warden.

Malcolm Cowan spoke to the financial report. The deficit had been reduced thanks to savings on insurance, increased income from the mobile phone mast, and terminating the contract with the security company. A compensation order had been partially paid by those convicted of vandalising the synagogue premises. The main heads of expenditure were wages (50%), insurance (12%) and energy (12%). There were currently 45 family members (down from 50 in 2009-10), 49 single female members (down from 52), 30 single male members (up from 27) and 13 country members. The Community Security Trust (CST) had

awarded a grant of £4,400 for a Perspex seal over all ground floor windows, part of a programme financed by a donation to CST for similar measures at all UK synagogues. Steven Hyams gave a brief report on the activities of the Community Centre Committee. All events had gone smoothly apart from the Chanukah Dinner had had to be cancelled owing to the snow. The Committee would welcome ideas for more varied functions.

There was considerable buzz about the elections to the Board of Management, an annual event but usually an uninteresting one as everyone is re-elected nem con. It was the first time in many years that the Board of Management had had a contested election, with 17 candidates standing for 12 seats. Two members had stood down voluntarily. Anita Mendelsohn, having served 37 years, felt that the time had come to make way for younger members. David Neville also stood down, owing to pressure of other commitments. Three other long-standing members were displaced by candidates who had not previously served, leading to a Board with 5 entirely new members and 7 female members, an epoch-making development. Some outgoing, continuing and incoming members have volunteered their reflections (given below).

The final item of the evening was a presentation by Edward Green about the next stage of the EHC's building project, to enlarge and develop the Bet HaMidrash into a winter shul, to accommodate 40 men and 30 women. It would be warm and accessible without the need to climb stairs. It was expected to cost £30-£40K of which the Treasurer confirmed the EHC was prepared to contribute a maximum of £20K. The rest would have to be raised by grants and donations and some had already been pledged. There was a discussion in which support was generally expressed but some members had reservations. As one member stated, "We already have a beautiful shul. Why not use it?" Our members were reassured that the shul would continue to be used for larger events and between April and October. After discussion the proposal was put to the vote and was supported by 52 members with 4 against and 4 abstentions. The next stage is for a group chaired by Edward Green to seek to raise the remaining finance, following which final proposals will be put to the community.

The meeting closed with light refreshments and plenty of discussion continuing round the tables.





# Changes to the Board of Management

Changes took place in the membership of the Board of Management (BoM) during the recent AGM of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. The Star thought it would be interesting to hear from those who continue to serve and the in-coming members; they were asked if they would like to pen a few thoughts for our readers. At the same time, with thanks and acknowledgement of the role they have played, we asked for a few more words from those leaving the Board.

## BoM Members 2011



**Edward Green, married to Maryla with one child, a son Freddie (15 years) born on their arrival in Edinburgh.**

I am very keen to assure that we have the systems in place to make certain that all are cared for within the community, mindful that we are now an ageing group, and that we, as the synagogue and the centre for Jewish life in Edinburgh, are welcoming, continuing to offer and indeed increase our events and social occasions in addition to improving and making more attractive the religious services for our members and visitors.



**Jane Ansell**

I arrived in Edinburgh almost 20 years ago with Robbie and Andrew, and my third,

Isaac, who is a true Scotsman, was born and bred in the Edinburgh community. My background ranges from social work and health to education and community work. My present job is Director of Sleep Scotland and Teens Plus. I developed these projects out of the gaps in sleep and education services for these children and young people and their families.

We go to Shul most weeks, and to other parts of the community programme when possible. I very much wanted to use the skills I have gained from developing and running national charities and bring them to my own community. I also wanted to make our Shul more accessible to the different people in the wider community, bringing their skills and talents together.



**Joyce Sperber**

I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to have a second year on the Board. Last year I was involved in the recruitment of our new caretaker along with other 'regular' (if there is such a thing) Board business. I hope I can continue to bring the day job skills and experience to good use. As Fundraising Manager for the largest national charity in Scotland working with older people - dare I say this? - work meets Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation!...



**Marcia Berger**

Hi there! I am Marcia Berger. I arrived in Edinburgh one cold winter's day in January 1970 after marrying Leonard Berger, part of the well known Berger clan. Leonard and I have two wonderful daughters, Yvonne and Gillian, who is married to Gary. Oh! I had better not forget my two gorgeous granddaughters Talia and Hannah.

I chose to become part of the Board of Management because I want to ensure the longevity of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Given that the Edinburgh Community is a small congregation, I feel that we have to do everything possible to ensure that we will continue to have a thriving community and that we safeguard the shul for future generations. I am an enthusiastic, friendly and positive person who is willing to help and think outside the box. I would like to embrace new initiatives and work as part of a team to help to guarantee the continuity of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.

**Steven Hyams**



My name is Steven Hyams, I have lived in Edinburgh all my life and been a member of the Shul for many years. Over that time I have served on various committees and helped at numerous events, giving older members of the community lifts to various functions, setting tables and helping out.

Having been on the Board of Management before, and having been part of many discussions, and hopefully given some helpful comments, having been part of the community for many years, I know the problems we face in the future and perhaps can help to solve some of these.

## Outgoing Members



**Anita Mendelssohn**

I was elected to the Synagogue Council in 1974, the first lady ever to serve on the Council. I attended my first meeting with some apprehension. It was a little strange being the only woman but I may say I was treated very nicely and soon got used to being the only lady among all the gentlemen.

During my 37 years on the Council and more recently the Board of Management many, many subjects were discussed but, if I was asked what stands out in my mind, I must say it was the completion of the alteration in 1981 to the Synagogue giving us a large Community Centre with excellent kitchen facilities and still managing to retain our beautiful Shul. I have enjoyed the 37 years of being of service to the Community but felt I should step down and let the younger members become involved.



**Anthony Gilbert**

I came onto the Council about 7 years ago, when Philip Mason was President. I think it was much more a case of the office seeking me than me seeking office, as I was very unsure that I had much to offer, and I certainly did not feel qualified to play any sort of executive role. Despite that, I believe that I was of some use supporting Jackie, who had many other duties to perform, in that I took and wrote up the minutes of all the meetings I attended; I don't suppose my minutes will go down as great literature, but I like to think they give a pretty good record of our meetings, lightened by the occasional touch of humour.

It wasn't a star role, but it did serve the Community; now I will need to find another duty.

I wish the new Board, much success.



**David Goldberg**

I would like to reflect on the years I spent on the Board of Management. I consider it a privilege and an honour to have served the Edinburgh Hebrew Community by taking part in the Yom Hashoah service in Princes Street Gardens, taking the services before the 'Omed' and many years serving as Junior and then Senior Warden.

Just think, I sat in the box where our illustrious predecessors sat; Reuben Cohen, I G Cowen, and Nate Oppenheim to mention but a few.

Some of my pleasant duties were to take school parties round the Synagogue, and most importantly to speak to various schools about my life and the Holocaust. These have given me great satisfaction and, G-d willing, I trust that I will continue to serve the Community in any way I can.

I would also like to express my good wishes to the new Board of Management.



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

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

Jonathan and Susie Adler Samuel and Ruth	Michael Adler and Sue Fyvel	Joe and Margaret Aronson 15 Arden Street Edinburgh	Betsy Dorfman	Fay, Max and Rodney Dorfman	Rachel and Bernard Dorfman and family
James and Sally Barker (née Cowen), Samuel and Sadie London	Martin Been 24 Nightingale Lane Coventry	Shirley and Peter Bennett	Sara and Maurice Dorfman Jerusalem	Norman Dorfman	Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation
Barbara and Leslie Bennie	Avril and Norman Berger 3 Kirk Park Edinburgh	Marcia & Lennie Berger, Yvonne, Gillian, Gary, Talia and Hannah 19 Springwood Park, Edinburgh	David Ellison	David, Gillian, Richard and Jonathan Field	Ruth and David Fluss 49 Parkside Drive Edgware
Allen and Anna Bloom (née Brown) 450 Hounslow Avenue Toronto, Canada	Doreen and Laurence Bowman, 16 Dunsmore Way Bushey	Micheline, Duncan, David and Shrutee Brannan 31/3 Rattray Grove, Edinburgh	Fransman family 41 Morningside Park Edinburgh	Caroline and Lennie Freedman	Einan and Merav Gardi Omri, Lotem and Shlomit
Stephanie and Josh Brickman and Miriam	Douglas and Rosalind Brodie 25 Park Crescent Elstree, Herts	Norma Brodie, Simon, Sarah, Caitlin, Eilidh, Maia, Daniel and Michael	Judy and Anthony Gilbert and family	Arnold and June Glass	Sylvia and Gerald Glass 1/14 Kinellan Road Edinburgh
Angela and James Brydon	Christine and Dave Burns	Jo and Joyce Capek (née Stoller) and family, Oxfordshire	David and Philip Goldberg 22 Mid Liberton Edinburgh	Lord Julian Goodman Foot o' the Walk Edinburgh	Kate and Ronny Goodwin 2 Mayfield Gardens Edinburgh
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Best Wishes for a Happy New Year and well over the Fast

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# Interviews

Micheline Brannan

## Yiddish genes?

**Wishing the Brickmans well on their move to Copenhagen**

"We were welcomed with open arms and met a wonderful bunch of people. We found the Shul extremely tolerant of Miriam as a 2 year old. We felt supported by everyone." This is how Stephanie Brickman describes her family's involvement in the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Her husband Josh adds, "I walked into the Edinburgh Shul and seemed to see all my aunts and uncles sitting around." This is why, for the last six years, Stephanie, Josh and Miriam have been regular attendees at EHC's services, but, sadly, they will be leaving later on in the year. The Star took this opportunity to meet up with the Brickmans and ask them to reflect on their experiences.

Sitting informally in the kitchen of their traditional tenement flat, Stephanie, from Harrogate, said, "I first came to Edinburgh to study German, moved to Paris for four years, but ultimately Edinburgh felt like home." After returning in 1997 she worked in public relations and journalism and was Deputy Director of Communications at the University of Edinburgh for eight years. Since going freelance in 2008, she has worked mainly on Higher Education projects and as Scotland Correspondent for The JC.

Meanwhile, back in 2001, Josh Brickman had arrived at The University of Edinburgh to work on the means by which cells in the early embryo make choices. As embryonic stem cells resemble these early cells, Josh uses them as a tool. Following a PhD at Harvard, Josh had spent four years working at the National Institute for Medical Research in London with one of the greats in the field of early mammalian development, the late Rosa Beddington FRS. Rosa had spent several years in Edinburgh previously and at the time was ill with the cancer that was to eventually kill her. Over the years she had

made a number of important discoveries about groups of cells that tell the forming embryo where and when to start forming its head. These observations were to be the basis for a lot of Josh's future work and Rosa felt that these would best be pursued in Edinburgh. Josh says, "I could have gone to a number of different places, but here was a renowned scientist and my mentor, on her death bed, telling me to go to Edinburgh to develop my interests in embryonic stem cells. Six months later the centre in Edinburgh was renamed the Institute for Stem Cell Research and it became one of the world's leading centres for embryonic stem cell research.

But Stephanie and Josh did not meet through work. Stephanie tells me, "We actually first met in a Salsa Bar. My first words to Josh were, "Do you chah chah chah?". If you know the warm, outgoing redhead that is Stephanie, it is not hard to imagine how Josh would be chah chah charmed.

Stephanie's spiritual search had already led her to Judaism. She explains, "I was warned by a rabbi that I was limiting my chances of meeting someone suitable by converting, as Edinburgh is not exactly brimming with single Jewish men. Just a few days later I met Josh." One can't help feeling it was 'bashert' that she and Josh should meet. By 2004 little Miriam had also arrived.

So how has life in Edinburgh been for the family?

Josh works long hours and demands a lot of himself and his team. He describes an academic quest at the leading edge of stem cell research. "My focus has been on how the patterning and organisation of embryos takes place in the first days after conception, when an identical set of cells can become anything, start to differentiate into different types of body tissue. These early embryonic cells can be expanded in a dish to make embryonic stem cells and we have recently found evidence that embryonic stem cells are plastic, meaning that the process of differentiation starts and stops in the dish or in the



early embryo. Their ability to continually progress in and out of differentiation may explain their capacity to make all the cell types of the future body. I am interested in what triggers the progression of these cells into particular pathways, what prevents them from initially progressing into differentiation and what allows a cell that has progressed part way towards a particular fate to continue down that path instead of reversing itself. Our focus has been how these cells make the signaling centres originally described by Rosa Beddington. As the cells that make up these centres go on to make organs like the liver and pancreas, there has been considerable interest in the efforts of my group to make embryonic stem cells differentiate in these directions."

It is this interest that has led to Josh's planned move to Denmark [to take up a chair in Stem Cell and Developmental Biology]. He explains, "The Danish Government has put aside resources to research foundational stem cell science and I will be working with a multidisciplinary team with the best available facilities."

Alas, Stephanie's work for The JC will come to an end with the move abroad. She says, "It's been wonderful working for The JC, I've managed to substantially increase the coverage for Scotland and it has been great fun. It's a privilege because in the future historians will study The JC in order to understand the UK's Jewish community and I'd like to think they'll know a little about Scotland." Everyone knows her as the glamorous lead singer and originator of the Yiddish Song Project. She tells me that this started in 2006 when she and Phil Alexander of Moshe's Bagel agreed to team up. She met third member, Jo Nicholson, the clarinetist, at Klezfest in



2006. [Jo has now been succeeded by Gavin Marwick on the violin.] The group had its launch at Yom Ha’atzmaut 2006. Stephanie says, “David Goldberg and Sheva Lurie, our local Yiddish speakers, have been very encouraging and I enjoy performing duets with David.” Stephanie hopes to keep the Yiddish Song Project going from Denmark.

Linked to the project has been Stephanie’s interest in the Yiddish language, which she has pursued by being a founder member of the Yiddish class, under Heather Valencia. Between them they have done so much to preserve and develop interest in Yiddish in Scotland.

Stephanie’s creativity and facility has been shown through many projects. She has enjoyed organising the annual Purim Spiel, a joint event between EHC and Sukkat Shalom. She has composed some of her own songs in the Yiddish tradition, such as the popular ‘Chicken Soup Freylakhs.’ She also came up with several songs for the pre-schoolers, such as ‘The Rabbi wants a strudel’ that teaches the children the Jewish festivals in their proper order and what foods the Rabbi might want for each one.

She has become increasingly involved in the life of EHC. She says, “The day I found myself buttering bridge rolls in the kitchen, I knew I had really arrived. In a

small community you can get involved very quickly.”

The couple were open about the fact that they had crossed the bridge to EHC from Sukkat Shalom. They tell me, “We first ventured into 4 Salisbury Road to meet other Jewish parents at the toddlers’ group. From this it was natural to proceed to Morris Kaplan’s family service and finally to attend the main Shul.” Josh adds, “I immediately felt at home. It was familiar, reminding me of my Jewish New York roots.” Both of them decided to take on board Kashrut and observe Shabbat and Festivals. Josh says, “Orthodox Judaism forces you to do things because they must be done. Previously I could not have imagined taking 24 hours off my research, but I find that I work more effectively after the rest so I am achieving everything I need to in less time.”

Josh has gained fame as our Ba’al Tekiah, using the largest shofar ever seen in EHC, which had been given to him by his mother. He tells me, “I only ever meant to blow it for the Family Service but people could hear me from upstairs and I was asked to blow for the main shul. I got out my trumpet and started practising again in order to prepare. I can produce 3 or 4 pitches on the shofar and can play the elements of a few tunes. I remember being auditioned by Hilary Rifkind and Philip Mason, and think I must have been

a disappointment in the beginning as I can do better off the Bima than on, because when I am up there nerves do get in the way.”

For those of us who have heard Josh as Ba’al Tekiah, it is a real tour de force, and his Tekiah Gedolah is so long, the congregation, holding its breath, feels it might swoon before the note ends.

Miriam has enjoyed attending our Cheder and Shul. When asked what she will miss, she says, “the kiddushes”. She will also miss her friends from Bruntsfield Primary School.

Moving to Copenhagen, Stephanie, Josh and Miriam will join a Jewish community of 2000, with a school up to age 16, and a kosher shop. There is also a shtibl five minutes from where they expect to live, where Josh will be able to daven on Friday nights.

Their departure is our loss. It has been rare in recent years for whole families to join EHC and to be regular attendees. Stephanie, Josh and Miriam are much loved and have really made an impact during their six years, making many friends and enriching our Jewish life and traditions. It remains to wish them well in their move to Copenhagen and to envy the Danes their acquisition.

Gorbals, a famous meeting place and venue for Jewish soldiers to court the young ladies of the Glasgow Jewish Community. My mother’s sister was Annie Cooper, who ran Cohen’s delicatessen in Burnfield Road, Giffnock.” She relates, “I began, when my children were young, with baking for other people.” She took over *Simcha* Catering from Maureen Lipsey and overlapped only briefly with the renowned Henry Wuga, who retired a few months afterwards, leaving her the only kosher caterer in Scotland.

*Simcha* Catering is based at Barrland Court, a sheltered housing complex of 25 units for frail but still semi-independent residents aged roughly 85-90. The facility supplies a kosher tea and dinner every day for those who want it, enabling residents to socialise and have their meal handed to them instead of having to shop, cook and wash up for themselves.

Barrland provides Doreen with the core of her daily work, and a kitchen in which she can provide services to the whole Jewish community. On a daily basis she cooks and bakes items to be sold in Mark’s Deli and Hello Deli, Glasgow’s two wholly kosher shops. To have everything ready for 9.00am collection time, her working day starts at 6.00am every single day except Shabbat, and a notional one day off a week.

While Barrlands provides a base, often Doreen has to set up her kitchen elsewhere. Kitchens in unsupervised premises, such as hotels, have to be made kosher, but Doreen has this down to a fine art. The hotel staff will scrub before she comes, then ovens will be burnt out, oven racks covered in foil and all kitchen surfaces covered before use.

There is no such thing as a typical week. The largest type of event is a JNF dinner with an international speaker, like Simon Weisenthal, Henry Kissinger, Ruby Wax, Bill Clinton and Colin Powell, or attracting maybe 750 guests. The smallest might be to prepare a set of kosher meals to tide a visiting American couple over Shabbat. Between these extremes lie *bar mitzvahs*, weddings, *kiddushim*, private parties, Glasgow Representative Council functions, WIZO lunches and the like. Some require her to be there and others to send ready-made food.

Asked how she manages to juggle all her commitments and deadlines, Doreen says, “I am very organised. Every Monday I go through the diary for the week, listing everything that has to be done, and setting a timetable. I work through all the tasks methodically.” This organisation ensures that deadlines are met to the highest quality. It all sounds like hard work and leaves little time for her to rest or have a private life, but Doreen stresses, “I love the work, and it will be hard for me to leave; only my body is now telling me that it is time to hang up my apron.”

Doreen is noted for being able to turn her kitchen skills to any kind of cuisine requested, including traditional Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Israeli, Chinese, French, Moroccan and Indian to name but a few. She explains, “I have hundreds of recipe books at home and watch cookery programmes, so that I can always keep up to date. My favourite programme is ‘Masterchef’ because it shows how the ordinary person with no training can be wonderful under pressure.”

Adapting international recipes for kashrut is easy. Non-dairy unsweetened cream is now readily available. Tofutti provides a *parev* alternative to sour cream. Soya milk and non-dairy cheese can be used in meaty or *parev* recipes. If anything is not routinely stocked in Glasgow, supplies can be sourced in Manchester.

Organisation is essential to serving hundreds of people at a *Simcha* and typically Doreen will work with 5 chefs and 6 kitchen assistants, who are used to each other and work well as a team. No-one else is Jewish but they are very experienced and

committed. Irene Yonah supervises the *kashrut* and is integral to the team.

How will Doreen look back on her connections with the Edinburgh Jewish Community? She says, “I love going through to Edinburgh. The community is always very friendly, welcoming and appreciative. You have an excellent kitchen which is convenient to work in. Your waitresses are experienced and I rarely need to bring my own.” Particularly striking memories in earlier years have been catering for a whole weekend for the Rifkind family reunion; and for the Board of Deputies’ visit to Edinburgh. She also remembers the many *bar mitzvahs* and *bat mitzvahs* of our children and the occasional weddings, including one, many years ago, that was so large a marquee had to be added on to the community centre to accommodate all the guests.

Her only complaint is that there are not enough occasions for her to be here in person. More often she is asked to send supplies via her son Mark. Recently she has provided food for special *kiddushim* for the Gilberts’ Ruby Wedding and the Sperbers’ ‘120th birthday’.

The most significant highlight in 2011 was Christine Burns’s farewell *kiddush* which Doreen donated as a retirement gift to Christine, a generous and touching symbol of the long association that both these ladies have had with celebrations in Edinburgh over the last 25 years.

In the interview, Doreen demonstrated passion and focus that would be hard to match and it is difficult to imagine her definitively leaving her kitchen. Her plans in retirement are uncertain, and could include continuing to help out her son Mark two days a week. The Jewish Telegraph has recently announced that there is a successor taking over *Simcha* Catering, which is excellent news. The new owner will have to have loads of stamina, and be as formidably determined and organised as Doreen herself, a hard act to follow, but one with lots of good will attached.

In the meantime the Edinburgh Star wishes a long, enjoyable and happy retirement to Doreen, in celebration of all she has meant to our community over the last 25 years.

## Hanging up the Apron!

### Interview with Doreen Cohen

A *Simcha* in Glasgow or Edinburgh is unthinkable without the reassuring, authoritative presence of Doreen Cohen, who for the last 25 years has run *Simcha* Catering. The news that Doreen will retire in November heralds the end of an epoch. For a quarter of a century we have enjoyed not only great menus, beautifully presented, but also reliable, wise advice about every aspect of putting on an event. Sadly, however, it was inevitable that at some time this heroic lady would have to step back. She kindly gave an interview to the Star so that we can celebrate in this issue someone who has so enriched Edinburgh’s *Simchas* and communal events.



Doreen says, “Catering is in my blood. My great aunt was Sophie Geneen, who ran Geneen’s hotel and restaurant in the

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# Yiddish Project

## The Ballads of Itsik Manger

Micheline Brannan

On Sunday 12 June eight members of the Yiddish class met at the home of Elaine Samuel for a day seminar of Yiddish poetry conducted by our teacher Heather Valencia. Itsik Manger (1901-1969) was one of the few Yiddish poets whose work spans most of the 20th Century. Born in Czernowitz, a town in Bukovina, to a very poor family, Manger served in the Rumanian army in the 1st World War, after which he started to move in literary circles and published his first book of ballads ("Shtern afn Dakh") in 1929, when he moved to Warsaw. His subsequent homes included Paris, London (where he survived the Second World War), the USA and Israel, where he was given an enthusiastic welcome in 1966 and where he published his final collection "Shtern in shtoyb". As well as five poetry collections, his literary output included "Dos bukh fun gan-eydn", his own version of Megillat Esther, and the film script for "Yidl mit dem fidl". His work can be characterised as dark, fantastic, gloomy, charming, mysterious, whimsical and humorous by turns. In the early period it reflects the sad and deprived life of his own community; later the sorrow was intensified by the tragedies of the Holocaust with which he sought to come to terms in his writing. The theme of Stars in his titles probably reflects G-d's promise to Abraham, and his



Heather Valencia, centred

bewilderment as to how to understand the Biblical promises in the light of the actual fate of the Jews in his lifetime.

The study day was almost entirely conducted in Yiddish and involved studying several poems by Manger, listening to some of his songs set to music, and tracking down on the Internet an original reading by Manger himself. We benefited from the intensive study of one particular author, and being guided through this by

Heather's thorough knowledge of his life and work.

The Yiddish class currently runs at the Jewish Community Centre on Tuesday evenings from 1830 to 2030 from September to June. Beginners are welcome and will be given every support to reach the reading standard of the class. For more information contact valencia@deepstone.eclipse.co.uk

# Festival Fun

Lord Julian Goodman

The sun came peeping out, schvitzing hot for half a day, Americans stood on Princes Street and asked where the castle was, and the traffic came to a grinding halt, and that was just on the pavements! You guessed it - Edinburgh ignored world news and politics, England's riots and the collapsing economies as the world's largest Arts Festival got under way again for another year.



Lord Julian Goodman

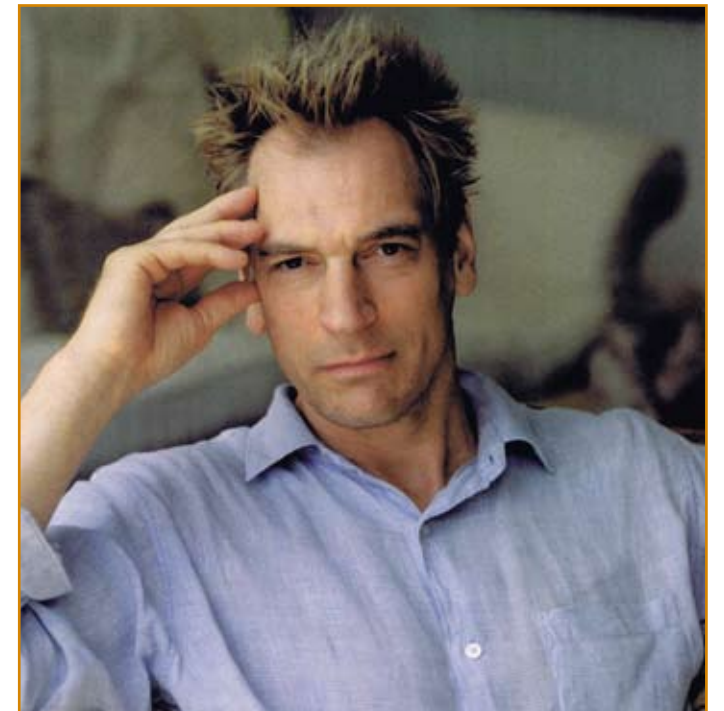
I had scoured the programme, and noticed that although there was plenty of Jewish involvement in The Fringe, there wasn't quite as much new Jewish content or flavour in the actual themes of the shows. As I've said in previous years, there are wonderful gems of secular interest that often only get a cursory mention, so this year I decided for a change to view whatever shows were suggested by all and sundry, and see what came my way.



Tom Rosenthal

My first show, **Tom Rosenthal: Child of Privilege**, was at The Pleasance Courtyard. A star of Channel 4's Friday Night Dinner, and son of TV Sports pundit, Jim Rosenthal, this was Tom's first solo Edinburgh show, and what a good job he made of it! On arrival at the venue, to the strains of classical music and assisted by a tail-coated butler, we were assisted to our seats. The audience were divided. Half sat in ordinary seating, the other half into cushioned seating. Those of us lucky enough to be in the latter half were treated to a running order programme, and Ferrero Rocher chocolates from Leonard the butler. This was later explained as an example to show us that while we were all privileged just to be there with him, some of us were more privileged than others. The show was about Tom's privileged upbringing in Berkshire, through two private schools, and a host of other examples in his life. He explained the difficulties of growing up as the child of someone famous, likening himself to Peaches Geldof, and went on to send up his father very cleverly in a series of real life incidents. This included his father's unsuccessful suing of Heston Blumenthal over a £1300 meal that left him and his wife "disastrously" sick after food poisoning in "The War of the Enthals", and the furore over his father being branded a racist for using the 'javelin throwers' own jocular phrase of "spear chucker" whilst referring to Tessa Sanderson. The irony was highlighted by Tom as one commentator pointed out that "he IS a racist, and the only reason he was still on telly was because he's a Jew, and they run the media"! Other themes that were sent up included Tom's university life, his degree in Philosophy, the Prime Minister and his own TV appearance in Friday Night Dinner. The show was cleverly thought out, with great technical imagery including his maltreating of Leonard the butler exposed through Leonard's picture superimposed on Tom's own photographs through life and an "accidental" showing of a video of the maltreatment. His jokes were funny and well executed as was the whole theme of "privilege", and I look forward to seeing a lot more of his comedy in the future.

My second show was also at the Courtyard, and was **Julian Sands** in a **Celebration of Harold Pinter**, directed by **John Malkovich**. I have to say that I'm not a huge fan of Pinter's plays, and it'd take an awful lot for me to go and see one; however, I do like poetry and biographies and, out of curiosity, this was the draw for me here. I freely admit that I was pleasantly surprised and was so glad that I went to see this. Using personal anecdotes from their work together, and from Pinter's widow Lady Antonia Fraser, amongst others, Julian Sands gave a very passionate performance of his poetry and political prose as if they were plays. Along with the stories and explanations of the chronology of the writings, it was such an informative and fascinating show, that while I'm no more particularly interested in his plays than I was before, I'm certainly much more interested in Pinter than I was.

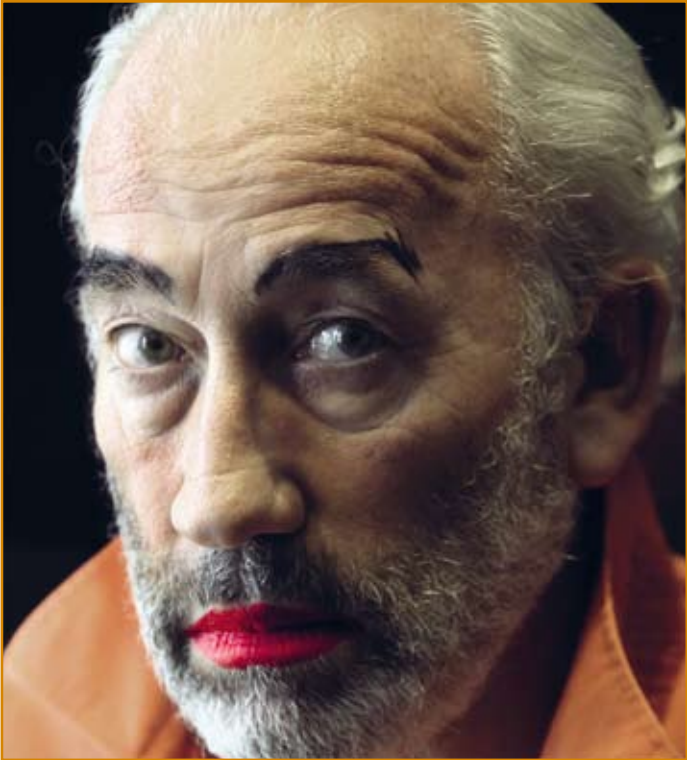


Julian Sands starring in Celebration of Harold Pinter

It was round about this time in the festivities that the Scottish sun went on its annual summer holidays, and torrential rain joined the rest of the visitors to Edinburgh, but failed to dampen my spirits. However, leaky plumbing from the flat upstairs causing it to rain in my flat, did dampen my spirits, along with everything else for that matter, and I thought my Fringe might well have been prematurely over. Having divested myself of the snorkel needed to get to the kitchen however, and unexpected family visitors a week later soon got me back into the swing of things. The unexpected break did have one advantage though. It allowed me to attend the **Jewish Edinburgh Group's** annual **Festival Open Day** at the Community Centre which I don't always manage to see. This year's offering was a great occasion. It looked to be one of the best attended, and the ruach was wonderful, as were the refreshments, or what was left after ridiculously early arrivals managed to devour monumental amounts before the event had even started. Being a Jewish function though, very few people would have noticed any strain at all on the catering demands. I am however gifted in such matters! David Neville presented a rich array of the Jewish participation in the Fringe. There were a few well kent faces delighting the audiences as per usual, such as **Dean Friedman**, **Jack Klaff** and **Daniel Cainer** to name but



a few. The new talent as well had the audiences fascinated and entertained, including **Bennett Arron**, **Alon Nashman** and **The Jewish Community High School** of the Bay (that the Shul had been host to over Shabbes), and David Neville's own acclaimed play Kaddish For Pinter had all been well received by the culture hungry audience.



Simon Callow

My cousins took me to the Assembly Hall on The Mound to see **Simon Callow** in **Tuesday at Tescos**. Specially commissioned for Assembly, this was the English language premier of the French sensation **Le Mardi Monoprix**. Simon Callow starred as Pauline, loving daughter, carer and transvestite. It was a very moving portrayal of a child caring for an ailing father after the recent death of the mother. Travelling by train once a week from another town to do the household chores and shopping for a man who has ground to a halt after the death of his wife, Pauline has to keep correcting her father's use of "Paul" amongst other things, but revels in the description of "here comes the domestic goddess". Having started a new life elsewhere, once a week she must endure the critical gazes of all the people who knew her growing up as a man amongst all the everyday problems of caring for her father. The sole character in the play, he was mesmerizing and totally believable as a woman and, with quite a twist at the end of the play, was incredibly moving. The audience was strewn with famous faces and other actors all of whom had made an effort to see this amazing performance. Despite the controversial nature of the topic, this brilliant actor had the whole audience totally enthralled in this extraordinary tale. This superb piece of theatre was rewarded by standing ovations from many in the audience.

One of the highlights of the Festival Open Day was **Bennett Arron**, appearing in **JEWELSH** at PBH's Free Fringe at The Canon's Gait. "As you can probably gather from the title, I am both Scottish and Muslim" was one of his opening quips. Being both Jewish and Welsh was the main theme of his show, with some rather interesting responses he confided. "Are you half



Bennett Arron in JEWELSH

Jewish and half Welsh, or is it the other way round?" was one of his most bewildering questions from a member of an audience he admitted. He told of his grandmother coming over from Russia, and after settling in a little village having a young Anthony Hopkins as a Shabbes Goy. He had loads of material poking fun at being both Jewish and Welsh, and although he anglicised a lot of the Yiddish phrases he'd used at the Open Day for his mainstream audience, he kept hitting the mark with them. His discourses on atheism and 'Jews For Jesus' were both clever and hilarious, as were his forays into audience participation with questions on things people had been arrested for. He had some great lines about his family and couples.

"I haven't met THE one; which is sad for me, sad for my parents, and devastating for the wife!"

"I thought she was Israeli when I met her. Long dark hair, olive coloured skin and REALLY rude!"

"She's actually from Spain, but she converted – to Islam!"  
"We have two kids, she chose our daughter's name, I got to choose our son's – Yasmine and Wolverine!"

"He came home from school and said that the teacher had given him a gold star. I wrote a letter of complaint!"

"Being both Jewish and Welsh, I'm the biggest pessimist in the world, but knowing my luck, there'll be a bigger one!"

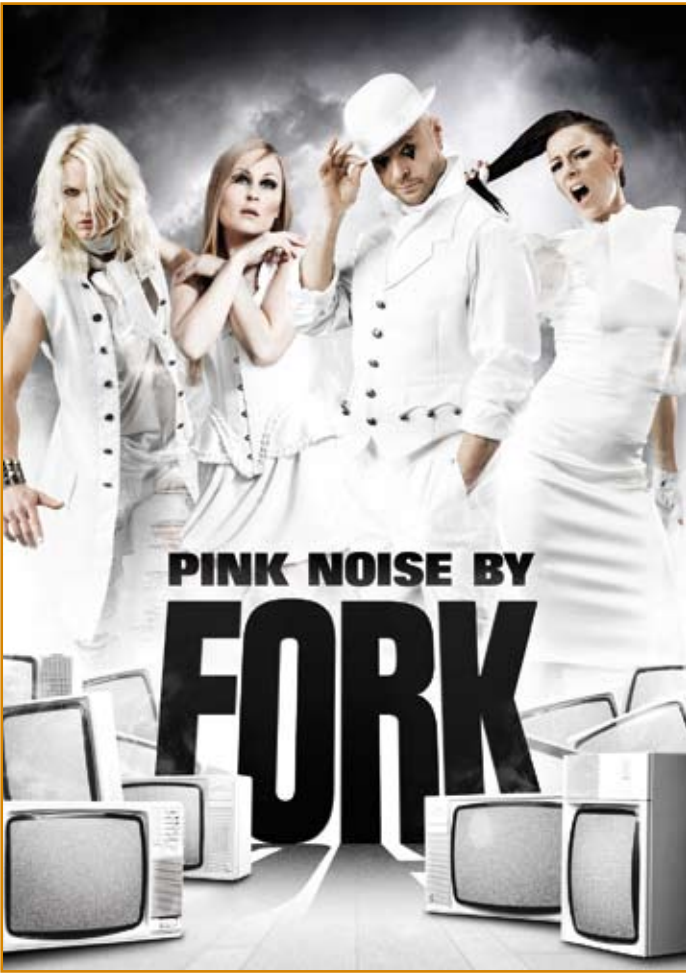
All in all it was a great show, with universal appeal for everybody to enjoy.



Ayelet Schrek & Jake Rosenberg with director centre from Kafka's Metamorphosis

Another show that had featured at the Open Day was **The Jewish Community High School of the Bay** in **Kafka's Metamorphosis** as Performed by the Actors of the Nowy Teatr Kameralny at The Church Hill Theatre. The school had been chosen to perform in the American High Schools Theatre Festival which brought over a number of schools to perform here in Edinburgh. A play-within-a-play, specially adapted by the school, it used the idea of theatre performers in the Warsaw Ghetto using Kafka's theme of a human turning into vermin to dangerously satirize the Nazis, as members of the troupe go missing every day. It was excellently performed by talented youngsters giving a powerful portrayal of life in the ghetto, and Kafka's Metamorphosis itself. I caught their very last performance by the skin of my teeth, but was very glad to have done so.

The very last show I went to see was **Edinburgh Tonight with Joe Simmons and Lorraine Chase** at SpaceCabaret @ Venue 54. This is worth a mention just because the show totally captured the absolute essence of The Fringe. Joe Simmons (Butch of Topping and Butch fame) and Lorraine Chase (of Campari's "Luton Airport" advert fame) hosted a 'best of The Fringe' showcase, and I went on the last night when they had a 'best of the best of The Fringe' show. All their favourite acts had come back for this final show, and it was spectacular. All the acts I had heard on the radio, and thought I really must see if I have the time, were all in this final line up. **FORK**, a Swedish four member a cappella group, did a stunning rendition of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody. **Voices** was another a cappella group with a brilliant African song. **Michael Topping** (of Topping and Butch) performed a trademark risqué song about a taxi journey to the tune of Poor Wand'ring One. There were three excellent comedians,



a flamenco dancing duo, a sketch show, and headlining the whole show, having just been named winner of the Spirit of The Fringe Award 2011, was **Kev Orkian** with a clip from his hilarious **Guilty Pianist** show. It was a perfect way to end The Fringe.

My Five Mogen Dovid's this year go to Bennett Arron for JEWELSH, but if I could award five stars too, it would go to Edinburgh Tonight!



Appreciative audience on Festival open day in Edinburgh Shul



# Challenging Times

Rabbi David Rose

As we enter a new year and gear up for the election of a new Chief Rabbi, it is maybe appropriate to consider some of the challenges facing Orthodox (or Halakhically faithful), Judaism. These challenges revolve around some of the radical change in the Jewish situation in the last hundred years and it is by way of examining these changes and the challenges they throw up, that we can plot a course for the future.

## 1. Democracy and Acceptance:

As little as fifty years ago many Jews lived under dictatorial regimes where they were at best tolerated and at worst actively persecuted. Today the situation has changed beyond recognition. Jews overwhelmingly live in democratic societies where they are full and equal citizens, able to participate fully at every level of society and government. This change has profound implications for the way Judaism regards the outside world. The organs of the state, rather than persecuting Jews, actively protect their rights. This means that, in contrast to the past, Jews need to co-operate fully with the institutions of the countries where they live, for their mutual benefit. So, for example, if in Tsarist Russia, it was understandable to cheat on your taxes and not to co-operate with the police, today Jewish law mandates full strict adherence to the laws of the state and working with, rather than against, the authorities. Unfortunately, as various cases in the United States have recently shown, certain supposedly religious people have continued to act as if the law doesn't apply to Jews. Worse, when caught, they have been defended by part of the Orthodox community. This lack of understanding of the world we live in and its Halakhic implications has resulted in bringing the Torah into disrepute and

a massive profanation of G-d's Name. The challenge for Orthodoxy is to have a religious community that behaves better than its neighbours, not worse, and sees its participation in the wider society as a religious imperative, not something to be avoided.

## 2. Israel:

The re-establishment of a sovereign Jewish State after an interval of almost two thousand years throws up profound questions for those who see the Torah as their guide to life. What is the nature of this state in Halakhic terms and what is the loyalty Torah observant Jews owe to it? Does the establishment of Jewish sovereignty increase the obligation of all Jews to live in the Land? How does one reconcile or adapt the requirements of Halakha with the need to run a modern state? These are but some of the questions that religious authorities have been grappling with in the last sixty years. Again we have an unfortunate division between those who openly embrace the state and confront head on the questions it poses, and those who do not really know how to deal with the new reality and seem to want to go back to the ghetto. An obvious example of this type of thinking is the refusal of certain Rabbis to permit their followers to serve in the army, or the decision of another prominent Rabbi that an observant policeman should swap his shift on Shabbat with a secular colleague; a decision that profoundly misses the point of having a Jewish police force in a Jewish state, where all the policemen are equally obligated by Jewish law to keep Shabbat and defend the public. The confusion among parts of the Orthodox community about how to respond to the State of Israel is a major factor in the increasingly bitter relations between the religious and secular and a major challenge for the whole of the Jewish people.

## 3. Women:

One of the major, if not the major, societal transformations that took place last century was the change in the status of women. From being basically second class citizens, subservient to their

husbands, and without many political or social rights, in the countries in which Jews live, women have been transformed into the equals of men, able to pursue any career or hold any position. Responding to this transformation is another major challenge facing Orthodoxy in our time. Much progress has been made in virtually all parts of the Orthodox community. The status of women's education has been transformed and virtually all Orthodox women are religiously literate. Indeed with the establishment of what are women's Yeshivas in all but name, women's Torah learning has exploded in both quantity and quality. The top modern Jewish commentators on the Bible, for example, have all been women. Women have also come to hold leading lay positions within Jewish communities and while there are as yet no official Orthodox women Rabbis, progress is also being made in that direction. All this has been achieved within the boundaries of Halakha. Yet in this area as well, there are those within the Orthodox community who wish to take us backward not forward. A major American Orthodox organisation has recently passed a resolution banning women presidents of its synagogues, and is seeking to expel a community that has one. Here too, the argument is one between those who live in the modern world and those who seek to reject it.

## 4. Globalisation:

In past times Jews lived in self contained communities which rarely came into contact with each other. Communities evolved their own unique customs and newcomers to a community accepted the ways of their new home. Children obtained their Jewish knowledge primarily through the home or a local Heder and thus preserved the minhag of their parents. This has all changed. Today mass immigration, the ingathering of the exiles in Israel and modern communications have created a global Jewish community that threatens to swamp local communities and their unique way of being Jewish. Young people often learn Judaism in schools that teach a certain version of Halakha from a certain Rabbi or Yeshiva, without taking into

account local usage. Rabbis are trained in Yeshivas in Israel or America and often have scant respect for the customs of the communities to which they are sent. Global Jewish organisations, whose loyalty is to themselves rather than the communities they are in, threaten to take over small communities and turn them into merely part of the global franchise. All this threatens to create a uniform Judaism, based only on a few dominant Halakhic voices, with the traditional variety of local minhag and Halakhic diversity being lost. One of the greatest challenges facing Orthodoxy today is how to accommodate difference within the Halakhic framework and enable the greatest number of different customs and usages to be contained within Judaism, thus preserving the essential 'dignity of difference' that the Chief Rabbi has so eloquently argued is the unique Jewish contribution to today's world. We cannot argue for acceptance of Jewish difference in a globalised world if we don't ourselves practice what we preach and accommodate difference within traditional Judaism itself.

## 5. Secularisation, Inter-marriage and Conversion:

Related to the last issue is maybe the most important challenge facing Orthodoxy today, and the one where the battle lines within it are most starkly drawn. How does traditional Judaism relate to a Jewish world where on the one hand secularisation and inter-marriage are rampant and, on the other hand, conversion more sought after, than ever before? Do we follow a path of drawing up the drawbridge and closing the gate or do we, while remaining loyal to Halakhic principles, seek to include as many Jews into the fold as possible? Do we create homogeneous communities of likeminded 'frumers' or do we welcome all Jews, irrespective of their religious practice? Do we push away intermarried couples with both hands or try and integrate such families within the Jewish community? Do we see conversion as a danger to Judaism and make it progressively harder, or as a way of creating more observant Jews to strengthen our ranks? These are some of the most important questions facing

Orthodoxy today, and in their answer lies the future of Judaism.

As we contemplate these challenges, none of which are simple or easy to solve, we need to think about the type of Orthodoxy we want to build. The modern world may have presented great challenges to traditional Judaism but it also has created tremendous opportunities. Freedom, a Jewish State, the equality of women and modern technology have provided observant Jews with a range of possibilities that our ancestors could not have conceived of. Our challenge is to engage with this world in a way that enables us not only to survive and thrive as Halakically observant Jews but, by doing so, to enrich the world around us. To create a modern, engaged, inclusive and dynamic Orthodoxy, without in any way diluting our fidelity to Halakha, is the challenge G-d has set our generation. It is a challenge that we should not flinch from, but embrace, and in doing so, enrich ourselves and the world.

# Society Reports

## Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

### The Periodic Table – Chemistry or Literature?

Anthony Gilbert

On March 27th Professor Alan Shenkin spoke to the Lit on Primo Levi's book, The Periodic Table. The book was published in 1975, long after Levi had achieved fame for his remarkable book, 'If this is a Man', chronicling in an extraordinarily dispassionate way his experiences in Auschwitz.



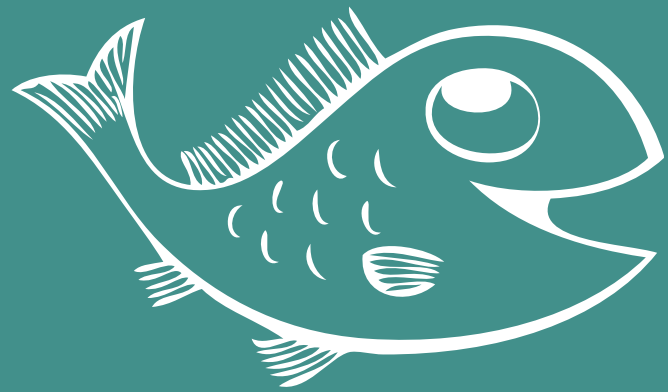
In the years shortly before World War II, Levi trained as a chemist. He worked as an industrial chemist in the early years of the war until he was transported to Auschwitz in 1944; there he was fortunate that his chemical skills eventually allowed him to be selected to work in a laboratory and he says that this almost certainly saved him from destruction. After the war he returned to work as an industrial chemist, but driven by the need to record his experiences in the Holocaust, he published 'If this is a Man' in 1958, which from the outset was regarded as a truly remarkable account. He retired as a chemist in 1974 and thereafter devoted himself to full-time writing until his death in 1987.

'The Periodic Table', is another remarkable book. Professor Shenkin told us that in a competition held among members of the Royal Institute for the best science book ever written, it emerged

as the winner, beating among others, such giants as The Origin of Species. The book primarily draws on Levi's experiences as a chemist; he does not really dwell on his experiences in Auschwitz, these are recorded elsewhere, but he gives us delightful vignettes of events in his life as a chemist from his student years, his early war years and finally in the years after the war. Each episode is entitled with the name of an element; hence the witty title, referring to Mendeleef's Periodic Table in which each element is placed according to its properties, which in turn depends on its atomic structure, so that similar elements occupy similar locations. This labelling of the chapters by elements mirrors Mendeleef's Periodic Table in that, to a greater or lesser extent, the events or people described in the chapter are reflections of the element itself. Professor Shenkin told us that the book works at several levels. At the most superficial, there are simply these very compelling stories told with a lucidity and truthfulness that commands attention from the reader. This was certainly how the book, which was my first introduction to Levi's writing, struck me, and it immediately impelled me to read more of his works. But Professor Shenkin showed how the book works at a deeper level too and that the stories contain moral lessons drawn from philosophy, history, religious ideals and in all likelihood Levi's own bitter experiences in Auschwitz. Analysed like this, it makes it clear that the book deserves closer scrutiny than I gave it on my first reading.

Professor Shenkin's title posed a question: Chemistry or Literature? Well, it's certainly not Chemistry; Levi says as much himself towards the end of the book, but, my word, it surely to be regarded as literature; it isn't Jane Austen, but it is a remarkable account of humankind from one of the most luminous chroniclers of the events of the last century, and isn't that what literature is all about?





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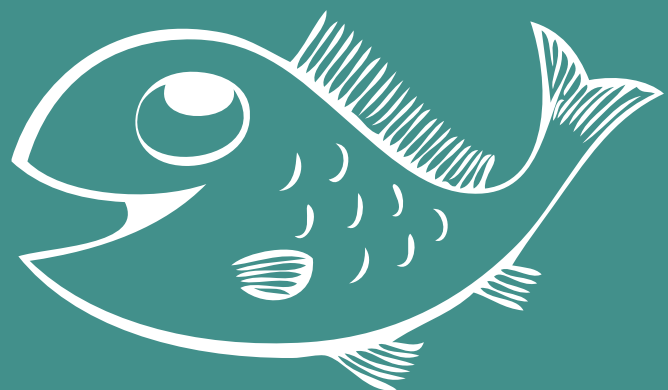
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### Remote Jews? Small Jewish communities

Gillian Raab

On 6th February Dr Nathan Abrams addressed the Literary Society on the history of the smaller communities in Scotland and North Wales. Early evidence of Jews in North Wales and remoter parts of Scotland is scant. Jews may have helped build Edward I's castles in North Wales after they were expelled from England in 1290. A mysterious letter describes how in 1665 a ship with sails of white satin was washed up near Aberdeen harbour bearing the banner "THESE ARE THE TEN TRIBES OF ISRAEL". But it was in the late 19th

and early 20th centuries that the small communities in Scotland (Aberdeen, Ayr, Dundee, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Greenock and Inverness) and in North Wales (Bangor, Llandudno, Colwyn Bay, Rhyl and Wrexham) became established. Most of the members of these communities were pedlars who then established businesses, many highly successful, for example Wartski's of Llandudno which is now a very successful Bond Street jewellery store. By the next generation many were established in the professions and had moved to larger centres. At their peak the seven small Scottish communities had a total membership of 750 but virtually no records from any of them remain. Only two Scottish communities, Aberdeen and

Dundee, still have synagogues. In North Wales the only synagogue still functioning is that in Llandudno which has been purchased by the Chabad organisation and incorporates holiday flats for Chabad members to use, although their minhagim are not always to the liking of all of the few remaining Jewish residents. The talk was illustrated by many interesting anecdotes and images that Dr Abrams had found during his researches. As the author of the book "Caledonia Jews" and having worked in the University of Aberdeen and now Bangor University she was very able to bring his subject to life for us both from scholarly work and insider knowledge.

### Jets Walk 10th July 2011

Penicuik to Flotterstone Inn and back

Tony Gilbert



This was Jets best attended walk yet with 15 of us setting out on a distinctly damp-feeling sort of a Sunday morning up the road and across the fields that lie close to Carol and Tom's home in Penicuik. Given how wet the weather had been prior to this particular weekend, we were lucky; one little spot of drizzle towards the end of our outward journey was the worst that befell us.



It wasn't a very adventurous walk. From Carol and Tom's house we set off westwards through the Penicuik Estate, crossing the A766 road that connects Penicuik to Biggar Road at Silverburn before entering Lowrie's Wood and working our way up to the Biggar Road about half a mile south of Rullion Green. There then was a rather unpleasant stretch of walking on the pavement along the Biggar Road accompanied by fast moving traffic until we turned off in the direction of the Pentlands up the track leading to Rullion Green. The house there is now owned by the couple who used to run the antique furniture shop in Causewayside. Their geese gave us a noisy welcome and we had a pleasant break there talking to them (the couple, that is, not the geese!); Louis, who seemed knowledgeable, had a particularly



erudite conversation with them about such matters as the finer qualities of horse-hair to be used for stuffing; I was impressed!

The OS map shows crossed swords close to Rullion Green and we were directed to a monument erected at the site of a battle that took place in 1666. What we gathered about it sounded a sad affair: 14 covenanters arrested, taken to Edinburgh and hanged, while about 30 local people died in the proceedings. The monument is discrete but sported a wonderful display of foxgloves.



From there we curved away from the Pentlands eventually picking up the track that leads up from the Flotterstone Inn to Glencorse Reservoir. Descending the track, Tom pointed out to us a plaque commemorating the life of the physicist Charles Wilson, who lived locally, and who invented the Wilson Cloud Chamber, which played an enormously important experimental role in the study of elementary particles throughout the 20th century. Finally we arrived (late!) at the Flotterstone Inn for a pre-arranged lunch; how we had taken so long to get there was an impenetrable mystery.

Return was broadly a retracing of steps with an even longer stint along the Biggar Road, so not







all that memorable, but it took us once again through the Penicuik Estate which has enough towers, bridges and landscaping to hold anyone's interest. Finally back to Carol and Tom's by which time the weather had brightened and we revived ourselves with tea in their sun-filled garden.

## Edinburgh WIZO Garden Party

Sylvia Donne

The Annual Afternoon Tea Party at the home of Kate and Ronnie Goodwin was held on what was surely the sunniest Sunday of the year, 24th June.

The beautiful garden, adorned with stylish tables, was soon filled by around 60 guests. A delicious old fashioned tea was much enjoyed and the guests' plates were replenished by waitresses and younger members of the Goodwin family.

We were delighted to see so many of our faithful WIZO supporters and also welcomed some new faces. Our grateful thanks to all for helping us fund vital social work projects in Israel.

The event raised over £600.



# Windows for Peace

## Edinburgh Summer School 2010

Judith Sischy

Conventional wisdom tells us that it is not the same second time round. After such a successful Edinburgh summer school in 2008, were we unwise to embark again on such venture in 2010?

The first key question was whether we could again raise the funds, by returning to the original donors and approaching others. The economy had taken a turn for the worse and, following the Gaza war, the climate in the Middle-East was even more tense than two years before. Nevertheless, we decided to go ahead and try. After all, Windows for Peace was a very special organisation that brought together Jewish and Palestinian young people to promote dialogue and understanding:

"Windows is a joint organization of Jews and Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line. It was established in 1991 with the aim of promoting acquaintance, understanding and conciliation between people from both nations, through educational and cultural programmes, media and art. They believe that in order to reach a just and lasting peace, it is important to understand and to deepen mutual knowledge of the other". ([www.winpeace.org](http://www.winpeace.org))



Thanks to several charitable foundations, generous individuals and supportive communities, we managed to raise the £33,000 needed for the trip to cover flights for 15 young people, 5 adult professional facilitators and translators, accommodation and activities in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Summer School (ESS) 2010 was going ahead!

The 2010 young people formed a more diverse group than the 2008 group, comprising 4 Palestinians from the Jenin area in the Occupied Territories (the "1967 Palestinians"), 5 Jewish Israelis from Tel Aviv and 6 Palestinians living in Israel, in Tamra in the Galilee (the "1948 Palestinians").. They were all aged 15 to



16, excited but understandably anxious about their trip to the northern climes of Edinburgh. As the summer school took place in July, the group was able to stay in a boarding house in the beautiful, spacious grounds of Merchiston Castle School, where the green lawns offered a peaceful environment with space to play, talk and be private. The sunny weather of a British summer was described as invigorating, with its "cold fresh air".

In the weeks leading up to the summer school, members of the group had communicated with each other, largely through e-mail and the occasional weekend together, talking about their own family stories, sharing personal experiences and journeys into the past. They spoke about grandparents who had fled Europe before the Second World War and about the horrors of the concentration camps; they spoke about grandparents who were uprooted from villages in Palestine, forced to leave their homes and become refugees; and about grandparents born in Israel when Christians, Jews and Muslims lived together in relative harmony. It was not always easy to hear these stories.

"We don't come from different parts of the world, but come from different things inside us", to quote one of the youngsters.

The teenagers spent nearly two weeks in Edinburgh, a luxury that is not possible in their homeland. This was not a holiday but an important opportunity to work together, "to understand and to deepen mutual knowledge of each other" and also to have some fun. Most of the time was dedicated to an intensive programme of activities so that the young people could talk in a safe environment and study the impact that past history had on their lives today. The first few days were dedicated to building up trust through art, drama and outdoor activities, carefully planned by the facilitators. Building trust is the key but it is a difficult, sensitive and often painful process. How did the Palestinians feel when they watched the film "The Pianist", the story of the Warsaw ghetto? How did the Jews feel when they watched the film "The Key" about Palestinian refugees longing to return home? "We carry the pain of our parents and grandparents", said one of the group, "we carry the past in our hearts and our blood".

The tensions within the group were often palpable; there was guilt, shame, anger and sadness; they saw each other as the oppressed and the oppressor; they talked, they argued and sometimes



they cried well into the night. The facilitators, one Jewish Israeli, one Palestinian living in Israel and one Palestinian from the Occupied Territories, had to cope with the tensions, the doubts and a range of contradictory feelings themselves; they organised separate and joint sessions to work through the issues, relaxation time to overcome the tensions and games to build on the growing friendships that the young people were forging.

Making the journey to Edinburgh; sharing new experiences; speaking different languages in a foreign country; living together in a boarding house; coping with daily tasks over a two week period, and enjoying the tourist attractions of a beautiful city helped to create strong bonds of friendship and of mutual respect.

Towards the end of their stay in Edinburgh, the young people organised a well-attended open day, when they spoke of their experience of living together in Edinburgh. They explained how they had learned about each other; they answered lots of questions and spoke about their plans to continue their Windows programme on their return to the Middle-East. Their stories were moving, touching and courageous. Was it good to expose the youth to so many questions? The maturity gained from the summer school was evident and they did not shrink from the difficult issues of identity, religion, equality and hostility. They appreciated the opportunity to meet local young people from Edinburgh, Christians, Jews and Muslims. "Before the meeting, I was excited but also nervous because I knew there were hard stories to talk about – they are important subjects and I am excited to talk about them with these people".

On the way home, the group visited Liverpool where they spoke movingly and answered questions about their Edinburgh experience to a diverse audience of around 100 people. Finally they spent a day in London visiting an East End mosque and spending time with RSY youth leaders (from the Movement for Reform Judaism). They acknowledged that they were returning home with on-going challenges and much still to process. Now, months later, they are still working on the many questions that the amazing trip to Edinburgh raised; they are writing about their experiences in the Hebrew-Arabic magazine Windows and they are continuing to wrestle with the "tragic history of our peoples".



Perhaps there will always be more questions than answers but hopefully the dialogue will continue. Hopefully it will be possible one day to overcome the travel and other restrictions that make it impossible for the three groups to be able to spend two weeks together in their homeland. Meantime, two year-groups have benefited in many evident and untold ways from the experience of ESS 2008 and 2010. Grateful thanks go to all those who supported the ventures.



# The laying of ‘Stolpersteine’ in Orsoy, NW Germany

Ruth Fluss



Ruth with the Stone

On 11th November 2010, we were present at the laying of ‘Stolpersteine’(memorial stones - literally stumbling stones - for Jews deported and murdered by the Nazis) on the pavement outside the home of my grandparents in Orsoy, a small town in N.W. Germany, on the river Rhine, the house where my mother grew up.

The background: my mother, Herta Lowenthal, nee Friedemann, grew up in Orsoy. Her parents had a textile and haberdashery shop. She was the youngest of seven children. There had been a small Jewish community but when she was a child they were the last remaining Jewish family and the synagogue had been closed. In 1939 my mother came to England with me; two brothers and their wives managed to leave Germany but her parents, two other brothers, their wives and her sister perished in concentration camps. When she was in her 80’s my mother, persuaded by her grandchildren, wrote the story of her life. It was published only for family and friends, with some copies sent to various libraries.

In August 2010 we received a phone call from a young man called Martin Schmitt. He explained he had been doing research in the Munich library and had by chance found my mother’s book. There was going to be a meeting of the Orsoy literary society in November devoted to Israeli authors and the librarian (who organizes the meetings) wanted my permission to read extracts from the book describing my childhood in Orsoy. Of course I agreed. He added that, by the way, a week later they were having a ceremony to lay “Stolpersteine” in front of my grandparents’ house. Once I got over the shock I asked him for details as we would try to come. He put me into contact with the librarian, Mrs. Gehnen. She became our main contact and looked after us when we were there. It transpired that the driving force behind the project was a couple in their fiftie’s. They cared passionately for justice and wanted those that had been murdered to be remembered. They had been working on the project for four years and had researched those people who had been killed, but it had not occurred to them to try and find any survivors; a shame, because my mother would still have been alive and it would have been very meaningful for her. The local municipality was very supportive of the project.

The “Stolpersteine” project is the brainchild of an artist by the name of Gunther Demnig. He wished to commemorate victims of the Nazis. He started by marking the routes used by the Nazis to deport the gypsies all over Europe. Then he developed the idea of the stones. He wanted people to be aware that in this house lived human beings who were deported and murdered - mostly Jews, but also communists, clergy, among others. The stones are 10 x 10 cms covered in brass and inscribed: ‘here lived...born in...deported on...to...where he was murdered.’ They are set into the pavement at the entrance to the house, and this he does himself. The stones are commissioned and paid for by private individuals, not by organisations. Of course permission must be given by the

municipality and not every town allows it. We actually saw these stones for the first time when we were visiting my cousins in Berlin in 2009. We informed my cousins of the “Stolpersteine” ceremony and one of them came with his two adult daughters.

We were sent a schedule of events...

Wednesday 3.11.10. A literary society meeting. Readings from books by Israeli authors & from Herta (nee Friedemann) Lowenthal’s account of her childhood in Orsoy.

Wednesday 10.11.10. An evening with the artist Gunther Demnig.

Thursday 11.11.10. The ceremony to set the “Stolpersteine” Performance by a brass band. Speeches (a long list).

Of course we missed the literary evening. Mrs Gehnen told us it was extremely well attended, about ninety people. I had at once posted her three copies of my mother’s book and people were queuing up to borrow them.



The delegation

We had hired a car and arrived in Orsoy on the Wednesday afternoon. It looked like a typical small town. In the centre was a square in which stood the church. Round about were houses well over a hundred years old looking very solid and old-fashioned. The mayor’s house was now the library and two houses away was my grandparents’ house and shop. The original house had suffered bomb damage and was rebuilt so of course it looked different. Our hotel was in the same street, very convenient. There was

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a café and a baker’s shop still owned by the same families as in my mother’s time – amazing! In the evening we went to the meeting with the artist, and about eighty people attended. He explained how his ideas had evolved and showed a film of himself in action. We were introduced as guests of honour and we met the couple who had initiated the event. At the end the organisers invited everyone who was interested to the local café to meet us and all food and drink was on the house! About thirty people came. They all wanted to know more about my mother and her story, about Israel and how it was to live there. The organizers wanted one of the family to speak the next day. I asked my cousin, but he said “no – you do it”, so when we returned to the hotel late, I had to draft a speech in German!

On Thursday morning the weather was cold but sunny. The ceremony started at 9am. Outside my grandparents' house they laid down seven stones for those who were killed. The artist lays the stones himself. He brings all his own equipment; buckets, tools, cement, spare cobblestones etc. He gets down on his knees wearing knee pads, breaks open the pavement, arranges the stones artistically and fixes them with cement. Then the ceremony started. The brass band played the victory march from Handel’s “Judah the Maccabee”. They played a few times between the speeches, of which there were many! The vicar made a particularly moving speech. He said that as a religious Christian he could never understand how human beings could behave so cruelly to their fellow men, and this question will remain with him for the rest of his life. His only answer is to teach tolerance wherever he can. Then he spoke on the theme of

# Ecuador Field Trip

Richard Rifkind

This past spring I had the opportunity to spend three months living, working and studying within the Ecuadorian Amazon. It was an amazing experience, some may say a trip of a lifetime; I say it was more a trip of a life change. It was a very spiritual trip for me as I am very passionate about conservation, nature and photography but it was especially so for my Jewishness.

Why Ecuador? I felt that I wanted to be outside my comfort zone and challenge myself physically, mentally and educationally. Also as a keen naturalist and photographer, Ecuador made me feel like a child in a sweet shop sampling its diversity and vast numbers



The Stones in position

stones: as weapons of destruction, as on “Crystal Night”; as a link to one’s ancestors and out of respect for the dead he described the Jewish custom of placing a stone on the grave; and as a memorial, as in” Stolpersteine”.

When it was my turn to speak I told about my grandparents, their shop and their children. I told how on “Kristalnacht” no one in Orsoy would damage the shop as they had too much respect for my grandparents, so the next day the Nazis imported thugs from another town and they smashed up the shop. This was when the family finally realised that there was no hope for the Jews in Germany and persuaded my mother that for my sake she should leave. She found work as a domestic help with a non Jewish family in England and she left with me in June 1939 (I was two) not knowing when or if she would see her family again. I told what had happened to her family and how my father in 1942 was deported from prison to Auschwitz where he perished. I spoke of her happy second marriage and of my decision to live in Israel to bring up my family in a Jewish country. This was very emotional for me and very meaningful. I saw that many people had tears in their eyes. At the end a bucket of roses was

produced and we all laid roses around the “Stolpersteine”. After the ceremony many people came up to me to say how moved they were by my speech. Three elderly ladies told me they remembered my mother’s family when they were little girls and said how sorry they were at what had happened. Some people thanked me for coming as this gave them an opportunity to apologise. It was all rather overwhelming. After this the family was invited to the library where we met the press and were given a most welcome cup of hot coffee! Subsequently several newspaper articles were written which Mrs Gehnen kindly sent me. Once again we were invited to the café and many people came to speak to us. The organisers presented us with a tome – “Rheinberg under the Nazis, 1933 – 1945”. There is a whole chapter about my family. Then the lady representing the municipality arrived with the Golden Book for important visitors and we all signed it with great ceremony.

One final incident. We were taken to see the old Jewish cemetery and suddenly an elderly man came rushing up clutching a coat-hanger. Apparently his father had once bought a suit from my grandfather’s shop. The hanger was still clearly inscribed with his name S. Friedemann! It was probably the only surviving artifact from the shop - quite eerie. We gave it to my cousin who has the same surname.

All in all it was an intensely emotional two days. I felt I had somehow closed a circle and made many new friends.

Ruth Fluss nee Lowenthal, was a student at Edinburgh University 1956-1959 and Married Barry Fluss, from Edinburgh. They made Aliya in1959.

of habitats and climates. Its National Park is an area of extreme biodiversity, with what is thought to be the greatest variety of tree species anywhere on the planet. In just 2.5 acres, you will find nearly as many tree species as in the US and Canada combined. The number of species of birds, bats, insects, frogs, fish, and aerial plants in Yasuni also represent global records.

At first I did find it all a bit of a culture shock as Ecuador is a third world country so you do have to switch off to a degree, but I did find that everyone there was happy with life and what they had, rather than what they did not have.

Life at camp was basic but very liveable. We slept in wooden huts that had a tin roof and just wire mesh for a window. There was no electricity as such and though we did have a small

generator it was only to charge equipment. Food was mostly beans or rice as it was easy to store in dry bins, and vegetables had to be used quickly before they went off. Every week day breakfast was at 6:30am in the dark and then work began at 7am once it was light. There was a rota and timetable, so I was doing a mix of going out on surveys. As part of the training I had to plan, prepare, brief and lead a scientific survey. I chose to do mine on Butterflies, Work parties, Research, Camp Maintenance and Camp Duty such as cooking and cleaning.



Glass Frog

I did have a few scary experiences like walking in chest high murky swamps while looking for monkeys, and I also came across some deadly poisonous insects, for example the Brazilian Wandering Spider (a.k.a Banana Spider) which is one of the most deadly in the world; I came across this spider on the first night, sitting on top of the toilet eating. Even though it was deadly, it did not faze me and I was able to get extremely close to get a fantastic photo. Whenever I had the opportunity I handled everything I could no matter how slimy or weird it was.

I also had the chance to go to a small local community which was twenty minutes, walk from camp to teach English at the school which consisted of two rooms one for children over eight and one for children under eight. I really enjoyed the experience and was one of the few people to do it three times during my time at camp.

Even after the end of camp I was able to have a couple of amazing experiences. The best one was being able to stand at 4500 metres above sea level at the base of a glaciated extinct volcano peak. My whole experience was awe inspiring and life changing in many ways.

## Conservation and Judaism

From the opening verses of Torah, environmental awareness is presented as a core Jewish value. Many of the passages in the Torah are really asking us to be thoughtful, to recognise that we are all inter-connected. Our survival depends on the survival of the land and all the species. The Torah addresses animal conservation in the form of two Mitzvot, or commandments.

1. A mother and its calf may not be slaughtered on the same day (Leviticus 22:28). One of the reasons for this is, as Nachmanides, one of the greatest medieval Rabbis pointed out, to ensure that the species is not wiped out.
2. One may not take chicks or eggs while the mother bird is still in the nest. She must first be sent away. One of the reasons for this mitzvah is to guarantee that the species will not die out. After sending away the mother bird, she will be able to start a new family and preserve the species. Maybe that's why the stated reward for this mitzvah is long life (Deuteronomy 22:6).

The Torah tells us that in the beginning, when G-d created all living creatures, the Creator placed the animal kingdom under the dominion of man. Man was given permission to employ animals

in useful services, such as helping him plough his field, carry his loads, and provide wool for his clothing. But meat-eating was not yet permitted.

Only after the Flood, when the animal world was given a new lease on life through Noah's diligent care for the animals in the Ark, did G-d give man the right to kill animals for food. But to quote Nachmanides, “while G-d gives us permission to slaughter individual animals, we are not permitted to bring an entire species to extinction.”

But since mankind has the power and the potential to do the most damage, it is our responsibility to make sure we use that power and potential to do the most good. Sadly this is not the case. It is human traits like greed and vanity that makes humankind the true beasts on the earth.

When lions hunt for food they go after the weak the young or the old. They ‘know’ the healthy prey will be harder to hunt and the healthy ones will bring in a constant renewal of future generations; they hunt as a necessity to survive. In contrast to this, some people live on nothing but fatty, but affordable foods, others try to eat healthy ones, and still others buy luxury items that are partly the cause of a vast number of species having become extinct over the last 200 years. This is partly due to hunting for pleasure; intensive farming; over fishing; wearing animal skins (my view is that if you are not willing to eat it, you should not wear it). Last but not least the destruction of forests and other natural and non sustainable resources can’t be ignored.



Non poisonous snake

## Our Responsibility

So you’re sitting reading and thinking “it doesn’t affect me”, this is where you are wrong as it is everyone’s responsibility be it large or small.

You may only eat fish every so often but do you know where it came from or if it is wild or farmed or how it was caught. Currently there are many types of edible fish that are on the endangered species list some which may be extinct within the next ten years; for example two species of tuna are dangerously close to extinction.

We can all help by eating sustainable and ethically caught fish i.e. those that are line caught. In this way only specifically permitted fish are caught. Using a line also has the advantage of avoiding waste as opposed to trawlers that use vast nets which are dragged across the sea floor and destroy everything in their path. (Research has shown it can take up to ten years for an area of sea that is left untouched to start to develop a healthy habitat.) Currently the law states that any fish catch exceeding the quota or including other fish not part of the quota, must be thrown back to sea; at this juncture, however, the fish are already dead and the damage cannot be undone. These returns are called ‘discards’ and at present Europe is looking into ways of stopping this barbaric and wasteful process.



You may be wondering why I have not mentioned farmed fish such as salmon; do we really know what is in the pellets that they use for food? Currently around 70% of the UK's anchovies population, (which is a lovely fish) are caught for human consumption and whereas the majority of that gets exported, the remainder is turned into powder and can be used in fish farms as food for fish that are in greater demand. I am sure most people would agree with me in thinking that this must be wrong.



Over Equator Line

Buying local produce is very important where possible, but when it comes to food miles consider both sides. In a report on 'Jimmy's Food Factory' on BBC1, green beans from Kenya are locally grown by communities who run the whole business themselves. Profit goes into the community to help build schools, water pumps etc so you are indirectly helping people survive from famine and stay away from war.



Squirrel Monkey

We live in a consumer driven society and if enough people ask for ethically produced food then suppliers will start providing it and on a larger scale.

### Other Advice

It does not matter if you don't have a garden; a window box will be a great help to nature.



Swallowtail Butterfly

- Do not use peat based compost, as peat is not sustainable at all. Only use peat free and make sure the company only sells peat free.
- Rather than using pesticides on your plants, try 'Companion Planting' (Growing plants together that like or benefit each other, and that can repel pests or attract things to kill the pests.) [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_companion\\_plants](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_companion_plants)

### Legacy

We all want to leave a legacy for future generations, but just what type of legacy exactly? If we don't act now we are going to destroy so much for future generations.

Yes all charities need money to survive but to quote American Journalist, Tom Brokaw, "It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference." So yes, donate money but if you can, donate your time as well, whether it is planting trees or bracken bashing.

I know what legacy I want to leave, and if I can do it, I am sure you can.

## Lemba – the Lost Tribe of Southern Africa

Taya Charakarisa

A few months ago I was sitting next to a visitor from Zimbabwe who told me that she was a member of the Lemba Community. They believe that they are genetically connected to the tribe of Israel. Scientific research into this claim has been done and though not conclusive deserves some consideration. This article is non-scientific but has an interesting enough slant on an oft made assertion to Jewish descent, to be given air here.

The 'Lembas' were led by Buba and went into Yemen and built Sena in memory of their ancestor SENAAB who had more than 3000 descendants. The ark of war and the box of sacred objects were mystical and a big secret. How did the Lembas triumph? Elohim spared them and spoke to them through the temple ark and defended them through the ark of war which emitted fire. There was yet another fighting tactic; the use of a cloud to cover the soldiers in war and to confuse the enemy. Since the Lembas were priests

and kings, their property was not land, but ELOHIM himself was their property. They were destined to travel. All their descendants have always had the urge to travel to Babylon which is the present Iraq. Elohim said the following about it:

*'A nation from the north has come to attack Babylonia and will make it a desert. Men and women will run away and no one will live there' (Jeremiah 50:3)*

The original scrolls were destroyed in Jerusalem. In Yemen, the Lemba scribes wrote on goatskin. These writings were respected and read by many nations who bore witness that they obtained them from Sena in Yemen. While in Sena, there was famine and many died. There was a star that guided them all the way to Southern Africa under the leadership of Solomon and the chief ancestor was Baramina who was a miracle man whose powers were associated with the chameleon. They went to Mozambique and built Sena 2. They were protected by the ark; they fought and won battles along the way. They maintained the ark of the temple, and the ark of war, until they arrived in

Mberengwa at a hill there. Solomon was a great miracle man who used the power of 'Elohim' and it manifested in the form of a cloud. During war this cloud would prevail and confuse the enemy. Solomon had power to be invisible to the enemy too. So many Southern African tribes admired this and hailed Solomon as their king in order to obtain mercy and protection. The ark of the temple is believed to be on a hill in Mberengwa including precious minerals, and many have attempted to loot it and they lost their lives. Only a true descendant of Solomon can obtain the ark and the minerals. Remember, the ark of war is a replica of the original one. This is the replica that was found in a cave and later taken to a museum in Harare where Professor Tudor Parfitt discovered it and although it is not the actual temple ark, both arks have similar traits. Professor Parfitt explains this with clarity.

Taya has offered a future article describing how his own community follows the Jewish tradition as kept by the Lemba.

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- Text WIZO18 to 70800

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# Obituaries

## Sam Skop

21st March 1938 – 21st May 2011

Cyril Ruttenberg



Sam....a man who had two lives – one in South Africa and the other here in Scotland.

Sam was always the real gentleman, smart and softly spoken.

When I first met Sam in 1960, he was a shy young man, sitting in a comfortable chair and smoking. Over all the years we did many things together and he was always smartly turned out, as befitting someone who was in the clothing trade.

Sam and I used to enjoy sunbathing in our youth, rubbing olive oil on our bodies and smelling like the local chippy! He used to love playing cards, and he was good. In those early days ‘clabejas’ or poker games could go on all night; Sam never seemed to tire.

In the 1970’s a mutual friend asked if we knew of somewhere that a young lady could stay, and as he had a spare room he took

her on as a boarder. After a number of months, he said she was leaving to go home. He was lonely and soon followed her on a holiday to Scotland. He returned with the news that they were married. That was the start of life number two and the reason why we are in Scotland today.

It was here that Sam started in the clothing trade, but soon with his wife Rachel’s help, moved into the jewellery business – the rest is history. The couple worked together and retired together and Sam always had nice things to say about his Rachel.

On retirement, he worked in the garden and, to further pass the time, helped with the ‘Court Witness Support Programme’.

Sam was a loyal friend and could be trusted with anything. He was involved in ‘Free Masonry’ and always looked forward to attending the meetings.

There was nothing more that Sam loved than sitting in a comfortable chair, watching TV and puffing away on his pipe...as always.

He will be missed by everyone who knew him well; shalom Sam.

The stone setting will take place at Piershill Cemetery on Sunday 25th September 2011.

## Myrna Rochelle Kaplan (née Levine)

8 May 1943 - 22 June 2011

David Kaplan

Myrna Rochelle Kaplan, nee Levine, (Minky Rochel bas Baruch Tvi Halevi) was born in May 1943 to Sonny and Esther Levine in Glasgow.



As an only child, Myrna grew up at the heart of her mother’s family, the Morris’ family. Laughter and fun was always in abundance, despite some ups and downs, and at those times the Morris clan would always bounce straight back using its own brand of unique humour.

Myrna’s dad, Sonny, as he was known to nearly all who knew him, was from Sheffield, where many of the family still live today. Myrna became close to her family in Sheffield and she was so proud in the past few years that she was able to sit down for Seder at David’s with them.

Myrna’s mother Esther was determined that Myrna would be educated and so she was sent to the Glasgow High School for Girls.

After school, Paisley College and a science degree beckoned and then her working life commenced. This included scientific research connected to the development of heart transplants and then she moved on to work for many years at the Medical Research Council at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.

In between times Myrna achieved an Associateship of the London College of Music for her work in speech therapy. She had a great love for amateur dramatics and her friends used to thoroughly enjoy watching her talented performances.

Myrna married Morris in March 1967 and then moved to Edinburgh into the heart of the Rifkind family, where her son David was born in 1971. Just as Myrna grew up with her Morris cousins, so did David with his Rifkind cousins. This has forged strong and close family ties, which today still unite, across the globe, the extended family networks.

In Edinburgh, Myrna joined the team of “Rifkind wives” consisting of Myrna,

Hilary Rifkind, Edith Rifkind and Leila Goldberg. She also had fun and gained great pleasure from the infamous ‘Card School’. The trials and tribulations of the Edinburgh community, as well as many world issues, were discussed at this lofty forum.

Myrna had been active in Edinburgh WIZO when she first moved to Edinburgh and in the latter years was at the forefront of the launch of Edinburgh Hillel and had spent time on the Editorial Board of the Star.

Myrna was never more proud than at David’s Aufruf and at his wedding to Sheryl White in August 2004. She kvelled even more than normal as she had always wanted a doctor in the family!

Unknown to many who attended these simchas, Myrna had just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer for the first time and had just undergone a major operation. In many ways Myrna beat the odds back then nearly 7 years ago, and she has had 7 extra years with us all.

These last few months have seen Myrna determined to fight on against the onset again of the terrible disease, but sadly it was too much for her to overcome this time, despite her tremendous fighting spirit and bravery.

Sadly she was diagnosed before Pesach this year, which prevented her from journeying to London for Seder at David’s with her Sheffield cousins. However instead she spent a very special last

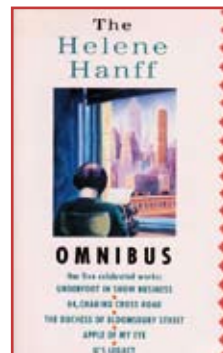
Seder night at home, with the Scottish family, reminiscent of days of old where large “Rifkind” Seders would take place in Edinburgh. Myrna always had a very strong Jewish identity and for her Seder night was the most important night of the

year. David recognised his mum as a highly intelligent and politically astute woman, as well as being a supportive wife and loving mother. She will be sorely missed by all her family and friends across the world.

# Reviews

## A Review of 84 Charing Cross Road – the book and the adaptation by Edinburgh People’s Theatre in March 2011

Janet Mundy



It is many years since I last read 84 Charing Cross Road in an edition given to me by my late, much-loved, Aunt Cynthia. That book included a letter sent to my aunt by Helene Hanff herself thanking her for her interest. Sadly, the book and letter have long gone astray, but it was a joy to return to the compelling story of Helene Hanff’s love affair with a secondhand bookshop through the production by the Edinburgh People’s Theatre earlier this year.

84 Charing Cross Road is a surprisingly moving story of the transatlantic correspondence between Helene Hanff, a radio and TV scriptwriter, and the staff of an antiquarian bookseller in London, particularly Frank Doel, from whom she purchased books and exchanged cultural ideas for over 20 years. There is a Jewish connection to both sides of the correspondence, as Hanff was Jewish, as were the owners of the bookshop, Ben Marks and Mark Cohen, who founded the bookshop in 1904. However, there is little Jewish content in the correspondence, apart from Hanff’s sassy New York sense of humour.

The epistolary form of the book and stage play gives an opportunity to explore the cultural differences between the bold, plain-speaking American, with a wicked sense of humour, and the initially diffident bookseller, who for many years refrains from using first names in the correspondence, as it will appear in the business files! Gradually, Helene and Frank discover a shared love of books, not only their contents, but their bindings, paper, print and provenance. More surprisingly, Helene’s wide ranging letters bring out other interests in common such as sport – baseball for her and football for him. It reminds us of how much greater the differences were between the UK, still severely rationed (powdered eggs and no nylon stockings) and the plenitude of the US – the relationship between Hanff and the bookshop staff became more personal when she started sending them Christmas parcels of luxuries. An early letter does refer to Hanff’s realisation that the proprietors are Jewish, when she anticipates that her gift of a “6-pound ham” for Christmas might not be appropriate. Unfazed, she asks “ARE THEY KOSHER? I could rush a tongue over. ADVISE PLEASE!”. Doel’s reply shortly afterward states that “Mr. Marks and Mr. Cohen insisted that we divide it up among ourselves and not include ‘the

bosses.’” Marks and Cohen play no further active part in the exchanges.

A sense of the day-to-day life of the bookshop staff and their attitude towards Frank Doel emerges when other members of staff start writing to Hanff, wanting to express their own gratitude for the gifts. Cecily Farr writes first, concerned that Doel comes across as “stuff” when “he’s quite nice really, very nice in fact” and “in his late thirties, quite nice-looking, married to a very sweet Irish girl”. She also expresses curiosity about Hanff – “I’ve decided you’re young and very sophisticated and smart-looking”. Soon, Frank’s wife joins in with descriptions of their children and her elderly neighbour (who also writes a short letter herself). Over the next 20 years of correspondence, Frank, his family and his colleagues attempt to convince Helene to visit them in London. Sadly, although many of her friends drop into the shop and are always made a great fuss of, Hanff herself never managed to visit during Doel’s lifetime. Her correspondence makes it clear that she does not have a large income and she keeps having to postpone her visit, firstly missing the Queen’s coronation in 1953 due to the “astronomical” cost of getting her teeth capped, again in 1956 when she was forced to move apartments, then in 1959 when she lost work when TV scriptwriting moved from New York to Hollywood. After that, there is little further mention of her ever seeing the shop, although a sequel to 84 Charing Cross Road, which features as an epilogue to the stage play, reveals that in 1971 she did finally get to see the shop, funded by the advance from the English edition of the book, and to meet Frank’s family. However, the shop itself had closed by that time, despite the window being filled with books by her publishers for publicity purposes.

Like all relationships, there are occasional disagreements. It is difficult to tell from Hanff’s style whether she is seriously cross when a book fails to appear or is not of the expected quality. However, she does seem to be seriously discomforted when “a bookshop, a BOOKSHOP – starts tearing up beautiful old books to use as wrapping paper” which forces Doel to make a swift apology – “they were just two odd volumes with the covers detached and nobody in their right senses would have given us a shilling for them”. More serious is her fury at receiving a copy of Pepys’ Diary which she describes as “some busybody editor’s miserable collection of EXCERPTS from pepys’ [sic] diary.” It strikes me that she may have been the inventor of the e-mail convention of capitalising words to indicate shouting!

However, she seems to be genuinely moved when, for once, a book is sent as a gift by the bookshop, and her response is unusually light on quick-fire wit, stating “I’ve never owned a book before with pages edged all round in gold. Would you believe it



arrived on my birthday... And why didn't you sign your names? I expect Frank wouldn't let you, he probably doesn't want me writing love letters to anybody but him." And this book does come across as a set of love letters, but between lovers of books who become pen friends and share other aspects of their very different lives.

The stage play is a faithful representation of the book. There are few letters missed out or tampered with. The Edinburgh People's Theatre production cleverly divided the stage into two sides, with Hanff's New York apartment on the left and the bookshop on the right. Books are wrapped in the "shop" then appear in the "apartment" (our own Betsy Dorfman had a very busy time in charge of the props for the production!) and gifts of nylons and food packages are opened with great joy by the staff in 'dumbshow' as Hanff's character reads out the letter accompanying them. The acting was fine, and the English and

American accents believable (considering that the cast were Scottish amateurs). Pauline Waugh, playing Hanff, and Richard Godden, playing Doel, captured the contrasting natures of the principals so that the audience were immersed in the developing relationship. The members of the Jewish book club thoroughly enjoyed a night out at the play, the New Yorkers and Londoners among us relishing the references to our home cities.

In an age of electronic communication, it is likely that a book based on written correspondence will never be compiled again, especially between lovers of literature such as Helene Hanff, Frank Doel and his family and colleagues. Whether e-mails, blogs and social networking will produce a work of this charm and quality remains to be seen. In the meantime, we have the letters to remind us of the transatlantic differences in the 40s, 50s and 60s and of the pleasure that is still to be gained from handling and reading antiquarian books.

# Letters

## Kibbutz Beit Alfa

David Gonshaw

Home is a kibbutz in the northeast of Israel near to the boarder of Syria. Kibbutz Biet Alfa is about 35 kilometres from the lovely city of Haifa and next to Beit alfa is the famous beauty spot of Mount Gilboa which is mentioned in the bible. Mount Gilboa is a pretty ridge of hills with two contrasting slopes and with trees growing in profusion on grasslands.

In 1970 I was a volunteer for five months. It has always left a memorable impression on me. Things seemed hard at first, but I soon got used to it. I lived in a small room; all our needs were supplied within the kibbutz. There was a large dining room where people took their meals and the food was excellent, some being grown at the kibbutz. There were about 250 members plus about 20 of us volunteers.

At first the members were a little offhand; they probably thought we were there for just a good time. When they saw that we could work as hard as they, their attitude changed towards us.

At first I picked olives, and then worked in the cowshed feeding the cows. One day I asked the kibbutz secretary if I could drive the heavy Mack truck. The secretary smiled at me, "It's too much for you" he said; I said "let me try". I went out with a driver for a two day trial; on the third day I was on my own. The Mack was a 20 ton vehicle with 18 gears fitted with a crash gear box, and that means that you have to time the gear change when shifting up or down. I t did not take me long to get used to it, as I had previous experience.

My first trip was to the Golan Heights; I followed anther driver and after that I went on my own. I loaded large stones from a JCB onto my truck and delivered them to Mount Gilboa area. The Golan Heights is of absolute vital strategic importance

to Israel, because it gives the IDF a tremendous view of Syria. Thus it saves Israel from surprise attacks by the Syrians. The Heights will always be important to Israel because of the continued unrest in that region.

The transport team were not too happy with me driving the route, because I was a volunteer. I simply told them that I was not worried about the situation, so why should they be. I just got on with the job; I just felt that I was part of the scheme of things.

Before I left Beit Alfa, my boss Gavrosh, a former Palmach Commander of the '48 war of independence and very well known in the northeast of Israel, made a small celebration for me. Gavrosh told me that he was pleased with my work. It was a very sad moment when I left. I regret to this day that I did not stay for good. Even today I still have the vision in my mind of the Golan Heights and how eerie and quiet it was up there.

## Thank you

On behalf of the Scottish Friends of Alyn Hospital, Jerusalem, I should like to thank all those who responded so generously to our 2011 appeal to help the children in this hospital in Jerusalem.

I should also like to thank everyone who marked the celebration of birthdays, anniversaries and other happy events by donating to Alyn and is very much appreciated by them.

Clarice Osborne (Chairman of Scottish Friends of Alyn)



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# Mazel Tov to...

**Betty (Peshky) Abrahams** who celebrated her 90th Birthday on 18th July.



**Judy and Tony Gilbert** on their 40th Anniversary.



**Isaac Ansell Forsyth** who received the Chief Rabbi's Award, for young people who carry out community work.

**Janet Carsten** for receiving a 'Fellowship of the British Academy' – elected in July 2011.



## Patrons

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**Lady Hazel & Mr John Cosgrove**

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**Mr Leslie Wolfson**

## Forthcoming Events

### September

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Pre-Yom Tov Coffee Morning

**29 Thursday** First day of Rosh Hashanah

### October

**7 Friday** Kol Nidrei  
**8 Saturday** Yom Kippur  
**13 Thursday** Succot  
**16 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
Dr Ben Outhwaite, *The Cairo Genizah: a not-so-horrible history of the Jewish Middle Ages*  
**17 Monday** Lodge Solomon  
**20 Thursday** Erev Simchat Torah

### November

**6 Sunday** CCC  
Film Night  
**13 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
Dr Maria Diemling, *Nursing babies: Christian wet-nurses and Jewish families. A case study in Jewish-Christian relations in the Early Modern Period*  
**21 Monday** Lodge Solomon  
**27 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
George Wilkes, *Wars of Liberation, Wars of Religion: a Jewish Guide that some have called Great*

### December

**10 Saturday** CCC  
'Not Quite' the Chanukah Dinner  
**11 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
Film Evening *To be decided*  
**19 Monday** Lodge Solomon  
**21 Wed** First day of Chanukah

### January 2012

**8 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
Malcolm Rifkind: *Israel & the New Middle East*  
**29 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
Mark Smith: *The story of Hershl Sperling*

### February

**26 Sunday** Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society  
Patricia Allerston: *'Child of the Ghetto': Sickert's Portrait of Israel Zangwill*

### March

**11 Sunday** Stephen Bowd: *Jews in Early Modern Travel Literature*

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday (meat) and Thursday (fish) at 12.30pm. New volunteers and/or helpers always welcome.

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in member's homes. For further information, contact Isaac Ansell-Forsyth and Benjamin Griffin.

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

**TEASER....** First person to look back to their last edition of the Star and contact us with the name of the policeman in 'Guess Who & When', will receive a £20 prize!