

THE EDINBURGH

STAR

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY

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Synagogue Chambers, 4 Salisbury
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Cover Design
Redemption
by Judy Gilbert & Micheline Brannan

Editor
Micheline Brannan

Editorial Board
Sidney Caplan (Treasurer)
Michael Adler
Sylvia Donne
Sue Fyvel
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Eve Oppenheim
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Proof readers for '68
Anthony Gilbert
Judy Gilbert
Edward Green
Phillip Harris
Janet Mundy
Eve Oppenheim
Hilary Rifkind

Design
Debbie Bennett

Artwork
Helen McFeely

Printing
Meigle Printers Ltd
Tweedbank Galashiels TD1 3RS

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Thank you

The Edinburgh Star would like to express its appreciation to all those who support the magazine with their continued subscriptions, and all those who make donations over and above this.

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The Board would also like to thank Mr & Mrs Harold Mendelssohn for kindly defraying the cost of sending The Edinburgh Star overseas.

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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.

Editorial

It's been a challenge to take over from the longest-running Editor the Star has ever had – Judy Gilbert. She has taught me so much since I joined the Editorial Board 3 years ago.



The Board has been widened to be more representative of the Edinburgh Jewish Community as a whole. Our aim for the Star is to shine a wider light on the Community and appeal to an enlarged readership, trying to draw more people into the diverse Jewish culture that exists in Edinburgh. At the same time we hope to maintain the interest of our readers elsewhere, on whom we continue to depend for support. This is a dynamic process. We will be relying on all our readers to draw our attention to people and events that deserve a place in the Star. We are considering a web-based 'Star Extra' to cover developments in between printed copy and provide a forum for ongoing discussions. If anyone would like to help us to develop this and has the skills to offer please contact me.

Rabbi Gideon Sylvester said at a recent Shabbaton at EHC that he was impressed by the huge efforts and sacrifices that people are making in Edinburgh to maintain a Jewish life here. In this issue we highlight some of the folk who have supported Jewish life in Edinburgh over several decades and who have played a key part in running the religious and social life of EHC. Sadly we are mourning the loss of Vicky Gruneberg, Gerald Glass and David Goldberg in this issue.

Passover Message

When the Jews left Egypt they did not leave empty handed. They took many things with them, including gold and silver, fine garments and cattle and sheep.



Indeed many of these things were later used for the construction of the Tabernacle, that we have recently concluded reading about in the Torah. Yet when the Torah commands us to commemorate the Exodus we remember none of these things. We are commanded to eat a Paschal lamb in memory of how G-d spared us when he punished the Egyptians. And we are commanded to eat Matzah, the one thing that we took

out of Egypt that made it to the Seder table. What does Matzah symbolise? Matzah is the bread that has no time to rise, reminding us that the Jewish people left Egypt in a hurry taking only the barest of provisions into the wilderness. The prophet Jeremiah elaborates on this theme stating how G-d remembers the faithfulness of the Israelites who went into the wilderness with only a few provisions, trusting in the providence of G-d. Matzah thus commemorates the qualities of the Jewish people as they left Egypt. We can now see why only Matzah is used at the Seder. Everything else we brought out of Egypt commemorated objects, Matzah commemorates people; the gold and silver etc are possessions, Matzah reminds us of an attitude. That is an important lesson for us today. On Pesach we don't commemorate the physical possessions we brought out of

It is delightful however to be able to give space to some young people whose achievements demonstrate that they are ready to play their own part in Jewish continuity.

In October 2011, bearing in mind the 'Being Jewish in Scotland' project being carried out by the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (see Fiona Frank's article on page 16), the Editorial Board decided to start a debate in the Star on the Future of the Edinburgh Jewish Community. Michael Adler has more to say about this in his introduction to the feature (page 11) Some excellent articles have already been submitted, and not all could be published here – more will feature in Star 69 or in 'Star Extra'. The views in the articles are entirely those of the contributors and have not been edited. Let's hear even more! In Star 69 we will also be asking community leaders to share their visions of the future.

In this edition also there is the first of a standing feature 'Where are they now' in which we catch up on families who have left Edinburgh. This will be of interest to current and former members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community who might have lost touch with old friends. And in Star 69 we will start a new standing item of articles from newcomers to the Edinburgh Jewish Community. We have already received two lovely articles from Claudette Hudes and from Joe Goldblatt and Nancy Lynner but space would not allow us to include them in this edition.

Enjoy what is to follow and *chag sameach* for Pesach 5772.

Micheline Brannan

Egypt and that were later used to build the Tabernacle. We commemorate the people that took part in the Exodus and their faithfulness. Physical structures can be very important but they are not the main thing. In any organisation the people, their enthusiasm and commitment are what counts. Without that, the most elaborate or beautiful structure is merely an empty shell. As G-d is reported to have retorted to the Romans when they boasted of the destruction of the Temple: 'you have destroyed a destroyed building'. The structure remained but there was no life inside. This is the lesson of the Matzah we eat on Pesach and as we sit down to the Seder we should take it to heart.

A Happy and Kosher Pesach
Rabbi David Rose

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Pearl and Alec Rubenstein 65th Wedding Anniversary

Edward Green

There is no question that Alec Rubenstein is one of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's unsung heroes. Born in Glasgow, the son of Samuel Rubenstein who served the community for over 45 years (1919 – 1964) as our esteemed beadle, much respected and revered teacher and reader, Alec grew up well schooled in all the rudiments of Yiddishkeit and, differing from so many, he has continued to be so to this day.

Called upon frequently when we had no Rabbi or the Rabbi was absent, Alec would daven the service, conduct funerals, bench, and, until relatively recently, teach barmitzvah boys, always with the utmost patience and care. But then, one would expect that from a man who can recite the haftarah with no notice and with a distinct and admired clarity. He, together with John Cosgrove and Ian Leifer, would lein whenever required, a rare and much envied talent. And when the late Rabbi Dr Weinberg found that the visiting of the sick was not his strength, Alec stood in for him and covered that responsibility for the Rabbi.

Alec was one of six children (four sons and two daughters); sadly his brother, Nat (Nathan), who lives in Manchester, is the only one surviving of his siblings. He was aged two when his father accepted a calling to come to Edinburgh. He remembers his parents with great love, their house open to all on Friday nights with wonderful family dinners and the same after shul on Shabbat. He attended Boroughmuir High School in Edinburgh, his schooldays coinciding with those of Arthur Kleinberg, Joe Lurie and Ellen Armstrong.

Leaving school, Alec went into one of the many Jewish owned furniture businesses in Edinburgh, but the war was to change things. Joining up in 1941, he was placed in bomb disposal within the Royal Engineers and served all over the United Kingdom. He joined a fellow soldier, Percy Appell, on leave with his family in Leeds and there was introduced to Percy's sister, a charming young lady called Pearl. But it wasn't until 1945 when he wrote to the family to trace Percy, as he was travelling to Ripon, close to Leeds, on a training course, that he renewed his acquaintance. Love soon blossomed and Pearl and Alec were married in September 1946 in Leeds.

Alec had left the army in May of that year and started a furniture manufacturing business with his brother Nat. He remained in that business until his retirement and Pearl was to be a most able assistant with him after Nat left the business to marry and move down south in 1962.

Alec was President of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation from 1981 to 1985 having been senior warden for twelve years, junior for one prior, two years as Treasurer (the difficult years during the shul's alteration) and four years as Secretary. He looks back on those years with much affection – how good the years were and how cooperative and supportive the council and executive were. To this day, his wise counsel and advice are called upon frequently, and he is the archetypal 'Elder' within our congregation.



But he has not confined himself to synagogue activities. Alec still plays a mean game of bridge twice weekly and used to be an active golfer. Alec has also been a most enthusiastic and hardworking member of Lodge Solomon since he joined in 1947. Holding office since a year after he joined, he was Master for five years, a rare honour! He has been the Honorary Grand Architect of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and is still the Treasurer of the Lodge Solomon. The arrival of an envelope written in his wonderful hand would often herald a request for payment but for us in the shul, that same much to be admired handwritten note would remind us of a yahrzeit, always with the utmost consideration and concern. Before the war, Alec was convenor of the Maccabi Sports and in 1972 -1974, he was President of Bnei Brith Edinburgh, whilst Pearl was active in WIZO. She is the neighbour to have, always ready to help others even if she is not feeling 100% herself.

A sense of contribution has always been very much to the fore in all that Alec and Pearl have done - his much respected and loved father would be proud of all that Alec has achieved and contributed to those around him. Like his father before him, Pearl and Alec are justly proud of their son Alan and his contribution to others. Born in 1956, Alan attended the Royal High before reading Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics at Heriot-Watt University. Marrying Beverley, the daughter of June and Arnold Glass (Edinburgh) in 1980, Alan has held senior positions in a variety of financial houses including Scottish Widows, BZW Asset Management and the Takeover Panel, before becoming a Managing Director with Lehman brothers and, in April 2009, the Chief Executive of the Pension Protection Fund. Alan is often found quoted in the national press. Pearl and Alec have two much loved granddaughters. Emma, born in 1985, is studying law, whilst Lucy, born in 1989, is a graduate in European history. They are justly proud of these two beautiful young ladies and they look to their future with great promise.

Pearl and Alec celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in September of last year with a small family dinner; their shared lives built on a devotion born out of love, trust and a good sense of humour, the latter, something one always enjoys in their company. We send our sincerest good wishes to them on this milestone with the fervent hope of many more years to come.



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Sheelagh and Phillip Harris Diamond Wedding

Edward Green

A caring and loving mutual devotion has been the hallmark of the over sixty plus years of marriage that Sheelagh and Phillip Harris have enjoyed.

A warm atmosphere greets you as you enter the Harris household in the Fettes area of Edinburgh where Sheelagh and Phillip have lived since giving up their house in Ravelston and where they are constantly visited by their children, daughter, Frances, her husband David Hill and their charming and vivacious twin children, Shiona and Alasdair, and their son Harvey, and his pretty daughters Samantha and Abigail.

Although his parents were born in Leeds, Phillip was born and bred in Edinburgh, and now in his ninetieth year, has seen many changes around him. There are many wonderful anecdotes of his childhood and younger life with his brother David relayed in his memoirs, "To be a Neurosurgeon", published in 2009. A brilliant mind and a thirst for learning propelled Phillip to become a distinguished neurosurgeon, with a start to his academic career at the Royal High School, Edinburgh. Telling his teacher one day of his ambition to become a doctor, he was warned that he would have to work "very much harder"!

Through relatives, Phillip was introduced to a young lady, Sheelagh, a member of the well-known and respected Coutts family from Glasgow. Sheelagh's family had been very active in Scottish Jewish charities, her father Harry and mother, Bona, being founders of the Glasgow Board of Guardians, and Sheelagh's late brother, Aaron, carrying on the tradition. Love soon blossomed and

after a romantic proposal at Gleneagles, Sheelagh and Phillip were married in Glasgow in November 1949.

There is a funny story of when they were first engaged. Sheelagh accompanied Phillip in the car when he went to make a planned short visit to a hospital. Leaving her, he told her he would be 'in and out'! Dutiful and patient, Sheelagh then sat in the car for many hours waiting for Phillip as Phillip became totally consumed with his work and patients forgetting that he



had left Sheelagh. It was a sign of things to come, as Phillip was to be the most diligent and hardworking of professional men.

Sheelagh took to life in Edinburgh like a 'duck to water'. She recalls that she felt welcomed from the start and apart from her duties as a wife and mother immersed herself in charity work for such organisations as Children's Aid, the Adoption Society, WIZO, Israel Aid, the Epilepsy Foundation, and the Inner Wheel (part of Rotary). She founded the

University of Edinburgh Riding Group and had, like Phillip, a love of golf.

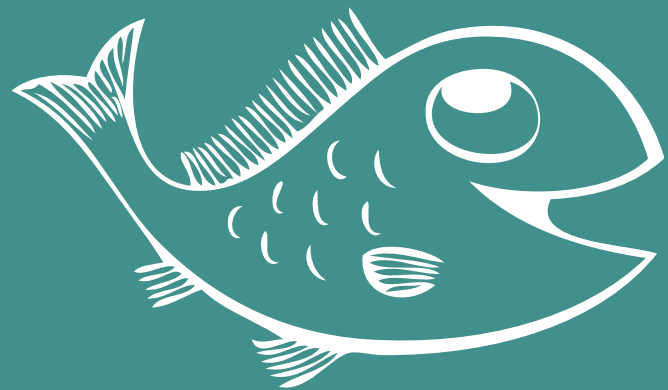
Phillip was involved with a number of organisations; including non-governmental organisations. He was President of the Bnei Brith, President of the Rotary Club of Edinburgh, Chairman of S.E Epilepsy Scotland, Founder, President and the Honorary President of Scottish Disability Sport, President of the British Cervical Spine Society, Editor of the International Journal: Spinal Cord, Chairman of the UK

Government body to examine and assess overseas doctors wishing to practise medicine in the UK, and a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Phillip's work took him and Sheelagh all over and they met a myriad of 'movers and shakers' of the time both in and out of the Jewish Community here in the United Kingdom and abroad. Phillip's reputation as an internationally involved neurosurgeon made him most sought after, and many of his patients have become long-standing friends as have his peers in the medical world. Sheelagh and Phillip have attended symposiums and conferences in the most far flung areas of the world, and this reinforced their love of travelling, linked to their other great loves of music and the arts. Phillip has met all the senior members

of the Royal Family over the years, as well as three Prime Ministers and has had the great honour of being a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a honorary member of several medical associations as well as being the recipient of many medals and prizes for his medical work from around the world.

Phillip Harris's book "To be a Neurosurgeon" is available in hardback or as an e-book. ISBN: 978 1 84104 137 7



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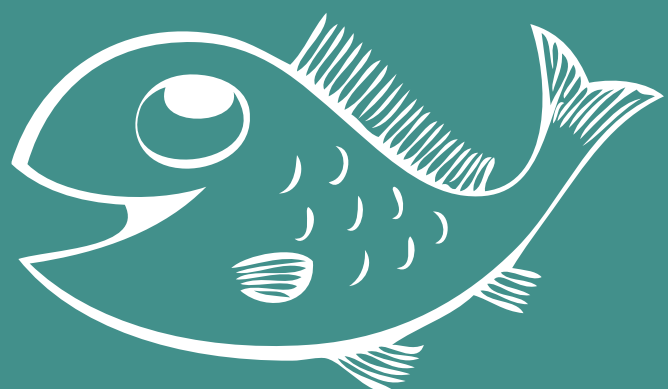
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Anita and David Mendelssohn Diamond Wedding

Micheline Brannan

Anita and David Mendelssohn's Diamond Wedding was marked by a Kiddush at 4 Salisbury Road on 14th January 2012. Following this delightful occasion the Star caught up with them over a cup of tea in their beautiful home.

David tells me "We were both brought up in Edinburgh and I met Anita at the tennis courts after my demob from national service in 1947. Anita was only 17 at the time and I was 5 years older." Afterwards they went for a walk together and 3 years later they became engaged. They were married on 15th January 1952 and their first home was in Balgreen Road where Harold and Elaine were born. Anita describes how she felt that West Edinburgh was not really her part of town and she was keen to move back to South Edinburgh as soon as possible. She somehow found a piece of land for sale in the Braid Hills, and advised David who readily agreed to buy it. The bungalow was built for them and they have lived there for the last 52 years.

Anita and David now have 4 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren who are all equally dear to them.

Their daughter Elaine and son-in-law David live in Nottingham. They have two sons, Daniel and Michael, who both work in London.

Esther and Harold, who live in Edinburgh, have two children, both living in Melbourne, Australia. Cassie is married to Jonty, a surgical consultant, and their children are Lily and Jack. Roy and Megan have a little boy, Archie Ellis. David and Anita are in touch all the time by telephone, e-mail, Skype and any other available means. Cassie comes to visit Edinburgh with the children every year.

David started out in the family tailoring business and later ran a business of his

own, but his first love, apart from Anita and his family, was music. He expressed this through the EHC Shul Choir. His leadership of the choir began well over half a century ago, when Reverend Brysh was the Chazan. There had been a choir under Jack Levinson and before that Jack's father had been the choir master for many years. When Jack Levinson gave up the choir in the late 1950s, David was asked to take over and was happy to do so.

Star 69 will feature an article by Stephen Gruneberg on the choir, to reflect the important role of the choir in the Yamim Noraim Services. What newer members of EHC will not realise is that many of the beautiful pieces sung by the choir on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are David's own composition, and that he has had to train and rehearse members, some non-music readers, in their different harmonising parts. David has trained at least 30 different choir members. He said, "I can't emphasise enough the importance of the choir in my life. My deepest friendships are those I have made with choir members over the years."

Anita was the first female member of the Shul Council, joining in 1974. She says, "They made me very welcome and I never felt out of place. All the same it was a bit strange at first." The late Gerald Glass (o'h) was the president at the time.

Anita served on the council for 37 years and very much enjoyed it. One development that particularly stands out in her mind was the change from a two storey shul with a ladies gallery to a one storey shul with the Community Centre underneath. Anita was involved in designing and equipping the kitchen along with other members of her committee.

For 20 years Anita chaired the Communal Hall Ladies Committee. When the present Management Committee was set up she chaired this on 4 separate occasions – 1987-89, 1995-97, 2002-4 and 2004-6, making a further 8 years in total. This



service is recorded on the board of honour in the Community Centre. Anita has supervised the kitchen in the absence of a Rabbi to make sure that kashrut was strictly observed by all users. For example students were asked to bring all their proposed catering into the Succah so that it could be checked before taking it into the kitchen.

Anita and David are an example of quiet and devoted service to our community, going that extra mile to make sure that things are done properly for the benefit of other people. David speaks of the friendships made through the choir, but their friendship group is much wider than that, extending to two whole generations that have known, admired and respected their contribution to the community. We wish them heartiest Mazal Tov on their Diamond Wedding and many more happy years together.

Anita and David Mendelssohn would like to thank their dear family and friends for gifts, donations to the Alyn Hospital for handicapped children in Jerusalem, beautiful flowers, and cards of good wishes received on the occasion of their Diamond Wedding.

Where are they now?

This is the start of a new column that we hope to feature regularly in the Star. It will track down former members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community and tell readers: “Where are they now?” First it’s the turn of Hazel and John Cosgrove.

Hazel and John Cosgrove

Edward Green

Hazel and John Cosgrove’s new home in London has captured so much of what their lives are about. Set on a leafy thoroughfare in Hampstead, a predominantly Jewish suburb, their first floor mansion flat is flooded with light, spacious, traditional yet with wonderfully modern touches.



They chose their new home for the main reasons of being close to their son Nick and his wife Caroline, and yet close to the centre of town and all that London has to offer. Nick, until recently a well-known and respected journalist with the BBC in London, often heard on the radio where his sensible reporting was much sought after, is now a Director of a large international PR company. Caroline and Nick who have their home in Hendon have two children, Juliette who is ten, and James eight.

The old adage “I am not sure how I ever had time to work” rings in my ear as I sit with Hazel and John as we discuss all that they are doing now that they have moved full time to London. They attend the theatre, museums and galleries, have become Friends of both the Royal Opera House and the Royal Academy, and have taken to exploring London with its wealth of activities.

They have met many new people making many of them friends. They have been delighted to find that many of their neighbours are Jewish and took great pleasure in attending the lighting of a giant Menorah next to the Christmas tree in the communal gardens of their and the neighbouring buildings.

Leading a Jewish life is very close to both

their hearts. On arrival in London, they proceeded to visit the synagogues within walking distance to see which would suit their needs. Surprisingly there is a good choice from large synagogues with traditional services to a myriad of smaller ones offering differing services and diverse communities. They settled on becoming members of St John’s Wood Synagogue, one of the United Synagogues, and have immersed themselves in the life of the shul. Hazel sits on the Board of Management and both Hazel and John are very active in so many of the activities and functions that the shul holds. After over forty years of devotion and service to the Edinburgh Jewish Community it is clear that our loss is St John’s Wood’s gain. But most of all, they have made good friends from within the community, people that they feel an affinity with, and people who share their passion for and love of Israel. They have met many who not only like themselves have homes in Israel but also have children and grandchildren in Israel too. They are delighted to have shared Zionist values and a close link; Hazel and John’s daughter Abby lives in

Ra’anana with her husband Joel Korn, and their three children; Deborah who is fifteen, Saul just barmitzvahed, and Josh who is eleven. Joel is known to us all in Edinburgh as he kindly comes to Edinburgh each Yom Kippur to conduct our services under the auspices of our own Rabbi.

Hazel has also met many more of her peers in her profession and is delighted not to be the only Jewish judge but one amongst others. To be able to marry her professional life and her religious background has been a source of understandably great pleasure to her. She is also called upon to address Jewish and non Jewish groups, and as I write this article, she is proposing the toast to the Immortal Memory at a Burns Night for the Jewish Community in Radlett.

Hazel and John find there is much they miss about their life in Edinburgh and talk nostalgically of the open spaces, the beauty and the convenience of living in Edinburgh. Most of all they miss their Edinburgh friends but are always pleased

to see them when they visit Edinburgh or when they are in turn visited in London. But with their pace of life now and with their travelling to Israel to stay in their home in Herzliya Pituach thrice yearly, often for a month at a time, they find their time available to travel to Scotland becoming less and less. Hazel is still regularly called upon to sit in the Appeal Court in Edinburgh but finds now that she is short of time and ‘squeezes’ in the work amongst other commitments. In fact, Hazel and John could be said to find their new life in London a new career.

Both the Cosgroves attend the London Jewish Cultural Centre at Ivy House, and are enrolled on courses there. John is studying modern Ivrit to keep up with his grandchildren, whilst Hazel has a

small Yiddish learning group that meets at each other’s houses regularly. This is like a continuation of the Yiddish group that she enjoyed in Edinburgh and still attends when she can. John also attends the London School of Jewish Studies in Hendon, the successor to Jews’ College, where there is a multitude of courses on many aspects of Judaism. They anxiously await the opening of the new Jewish Community Centre less than a five minute walk away from their home and anticipate being very much part of its life. It somehow seems appropriate that their new home is so close by, or perhaps the powers that be decided to site the centre close to the Cosgroves!! It would make perfect sense!

Since retiring, Hazel and John have also been able to have the time to travel more, a passion of theirs for many years. Since living in London, they have visited China and parts of Eastern Europe and are soon to travel to India in addition to their visits to Israel.

But what is most interesting is that they are finding their way back to being ‘Shomer Shabbat’. Having come to Edinburgh as Shomer Shabbat they found themselves slipping through the years they lived there. Now with all the opportunities for a Jewish life very much on their doorstep, it seems a natural progression to return to it, and one they are grasping. We wish them continued happiness and enjoyment in their new life in London for a very long time to come.

A Puzzle to Pass Over

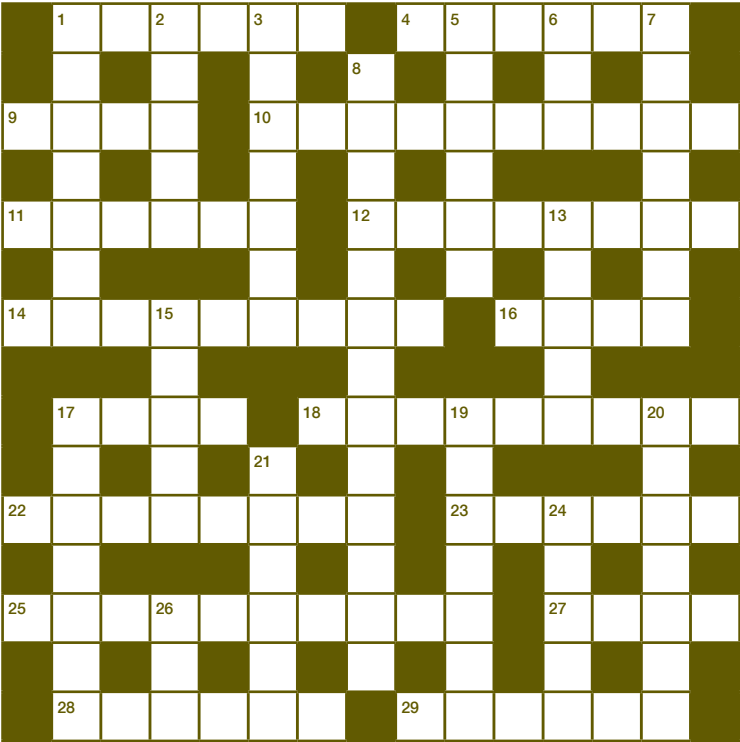
Set by Remez

Across

- 1 Crushed up nachos, served Quixote. (6)
- 4 Reliable individuals build walls. (6)
- 9 Former pronoun is a means of exodus. (4)
- 10 Oppressed when pulverised by tiny feathers. (6,4)
- 11 The Egyptians were dying in coloured water? (3, 3)
- 12 Disordered urge overdue for control. (8)
- 14 A tenth of Pharaoh’s Tsores? (3, 6)
- 16 Zealous infidels outnumber nation at first on the Mount. (4)
- 17 Family hides in traffic lane. (4)
- 18 Ancient invader devastated to go short. (9)
- 22 Aronson, if Scottish, would have one bit of Chometz. (8)
- 23 Chopped up peaches lose energy at this time of year. (6)
- 25 Courtesy refreshments provided by liberal cosmopolitans? (4, 6)
- 27 Student flees from dark entity. (4)
- 28 Inside Ashdod, Germans hid escapee. (6)
- 29 Cooked peaches less hot in flight. (6)

Down

- 1 Add decade to Vi to make her a sweet age. (7)
- 2 You can sing them or you can send them. (5)
- 3 Witch, tribe and article: these make a story! (7)
- 5 Apostate gives up promotion – Pharaoh didn’t in the end. (6)
- 6 Endless computer instructions – a piece of which passeth all understanding? (3)
- 7 Kind of South African, therefore we turn brown. (7)
- 8 “Why? Warum? Pourquoi? Perche?” asks the youngest. (4, 9)
- 13 Pharaoh was prone to reclining? (5)
- 15 Starts to play lute and zither at the square. (5)
- 17 Pesach egg can be treated in this way to sound like a vegetable. (7)
- 19 These meals are about our histories. (7)
- 20 Touchy-feely, topsy-turvy cat on a hat. (7)
- 21 Member of folk group in soap opera? (6)
- 24 Origins of stress and upset not allowed in steam room. (5)
- 26 You’ve got to it. (3)



If you want to attempt the crossword and send it in, please ask Editor for a downloadable copy:

michelinehbrannan@msn.com

All correct solvers will be congratulated in the next edition of The Star and put in a random draw for one free membership of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society for 2012 – 13.

Solutions in Star 69.

Chief Rabbi's Award 2011 Isaac Ansell Forsyth

Jane Ansell/ Micheline Brannan

On Sunday 20 November the Chief Rabbi invited 4 young people into his home to present them with his award. Isaac Ansell Forsyth was the Scottish winner of the Chief Rabbi's award. This award was for young people who made a significant impact in their communities, both Jewish and secular.

Jane writes When Isaac had his skype interview, the interviewers had been particularly interested in the special needs work that Isaac had been involved in with both children and young adults. Isaac's CV ranged from Cheder teacher, Tribe madrich right through to his future work with the South African township children and young people where he is now spending part of his gap year.

Many members of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation know of Isaac's particular commitment to the youth, and his love of davening for the congregation. The Chief Rabbi stressed that these four award winners were young people who made things happen, and leaders of the future. He spoke to each one of them, He praised the young people for their contributions, and guided them, telling them:

"One should see the world, and see himself as a scale with an equal balance of good and evil. When he does one good deed the scale is tipped to the good – he and the world are saved." Maimonides



Micheline adds The Chief Rabbi's Award was conceived in 2007 as a challenge to young people to extend themselves in their daily lives in ways that make a significant contribution to their communities. Each year the awarding panel considers nominations of young people from Jewish communal organisations. The criteria include participation in leadership

training, completion of a minimum of 100 hours voluntary work, 2 years as a youth leader, of at least 2 youth organisations, and participation and completion of an accredited activity which demonstrates outstanding contribution and benefit to the community.

In 2011 four young people won the award and were invited to the Chief Rabbi's own home for the presentation. These included Rebecca Stonefield, nominated by the Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade, Darren Cohen, nominated by Habonim Dror, Hannah Baruch, nominated by Langdon College, and our own Isaac Ansell Forsyth, nominated by the Edinburgh Jewish Community.



Isaac's achievements include:

- Graduate of the Maccabi GB leadership training programme
- Tribe leader
- Teacher at Edinburgh Synagogue cheder
- Leader of children's services at Edinburgh Synagogue
- Youth leader of Maccabi Youth Club
- Leader of youth groups for 12 – 18 year olds
- Leader of main shul services on Shabbat
- Volunteer at "Teens" centre for disabled teenagers.

Graham Nussbaum, the Chairman of the awarding committee, said, "Isaac is an energetic and dynamic young man who is clearly an essential part of his community....Above all he is a caring and compassionate young man who truly embodies the spirit of the award."

Proud mother, Jane Ansell, a member of EHC's Board of Management, attended the award ceremony with older son, Robbie. Isaac has now gone to South Africa for the rest of his gap year, as one of a group of volunteers from James Gillespie's High School, working with street children. We look forward to seeing him back in the autumn when he will begin a degree in Psychology at Glasgow University, and we hope he will continue to be a regular participant at EHC when in Edinburgh.

The Future of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

Michael Adler



Our aim in this issue of the Edinburgh Star is to foster a discussion among members of the Jewish Community in Edinburgh about our future, and about the future we would like for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

In order to do this, it may be helpful to start by clarifying the meaning of the term 'community'. The term community refers to a group of people who interact regularly with each other, share a common identity and, in some respects at least, a sense of cohesiveness.

When Jewish communities were geographically concentrated, one could be a member of the community simply by living in the area. Everyone, regardless of which shul they belonged to or whether or not they belonged to a shul, regardless of whether they were religious or secular, was a member of the Jewish community simply because they interacted regularly with others who lived in the area. This used to be the case in Edinburgh. The Jewish community used to be located in the south side of the city. But as it has shrunk and become more affluent, and Jews have moved out of the 'ghetto' into the more affluent suburbs, this is no longer the case. Some are members of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation; others are members of Sukkat Shalom, a third group are supporters of Chabad, but the largest group of all have no religious affiliation. Since the Jewish population is now quite small – about 750 people defined themselves as 'Jewish' in answer to the religious question in the 2001 census – this creates problems for the religious communities since they have to work very hard to maintain their viability. They would all dearly like to draw in others from outside their communities and one big question that faces all of us is whether, and if so how, this could be achieved.

'Social capital' is a concept which has been used to measure the strength of

communities. It refers to the ties that bind people together, to the networks of social relationships and the existence of structures of participation that foster cooperation and confidence. Thriving communities are characterised by high levels of social capital while communities with low levels of social capital are really in trouble. The established organisations in the Edinburgh Jewish Community, including the Edinburgh Star, undoubtedly contain high levels of social capital, but how long they can maintain this without involving those with no religious affiliation is a question that should concern us all.

In order to shape our own futures, we need to have a clear idea of what future we are aiming for, of what sort of community would we like to see. Of course, we need to be realistic. There is little point in aiming for a future that is clearly not achievable. On the other hand, we need to have a vision that can act as a rallying call for others. There is strength in numbers and a vision that has the support of large sections of the community is a more effective agent of change than one supported by smaller groupings.

I believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that, without sacrificing their own integrity, the constituent parts of the Jewish Community in Edinburgh need to cooperate more and to devise ways of strengthening the community of Jewish people in Edinburgh. By starting a discussion in this issue about the future of the Jewish Community in Edinburgh, a vision of the future may emerge. With this end in mind, a cross-section of possible contributors was approached and asked to address the same set of questions. They were asked to give a brief introduction of themselves and their family, state whether they were a long-standing resident of Edinburgh or a newcomer, and, if they did not always live here, what brought them here. They were also asked to explain whether they were members of any religious, community or cultural organisation, and/or whether they had Jewish friends with whom they shared special occasions. They were then invited to explain what being Jewish

means to them, whether they thought of being Jewish in religious or cultural terms, and how happy they were with the existing opportunities in Edinburgh that enabled them to live the sort of Jewish life they would like to live.

After this introduction, they were asked a series of questions:

- What would they like the Jewish community to look like in the future and what changes would like to see?
- What needs to be done to bring about these changes?
- What were their greatest hopes and worst fears for Jews and the Jewish community in Edinburgh?
- If they were in a position to influence the leaders of the Jewish community, what would they tell them to do?
- If they were currently unaffiliated, was there anything that would make them want to become more involved in the Jewish community in Edinburgh?
- If they had a crystal ball, what would they expect the future of the Jewish community in Edinburgh to be 10, 20, 30 years down the line?

This issue includes the contributions of four individuals who have been prepared to put their heads above the parapet, and we are very grateful to them for getting the ball rolling. Three other articles have also been received from Sidney Caplan, Edgar Prais and Norman Crane, but because of pressure on space they will be published in a later edition or online if we can get Star Extra going. The contributors include members of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and Sukkat Shalom, 'incomers' as well as those whose families have lived here for many decades; those who are at school and university as well as those who have families of their own. We very much hope that their contributions will provoke discussion and encourage others to join the debate in future issues. The feature is complementary to the work of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities on Being Jewish in Scotland described by Fiona Frank in the article following the four contributions.

Jonny Sperber



I took up this offer to write before thinking too seriously about the space needing filled. It is not easy and that I suspect is because we do not have a crystal ball – Judaism does not go in for that kind of prophecy as far as I am aware. But I felt more the need to try to collect for myself my thoughts and see them written down.

We are small but we are 'Am Yisrael' – the people of Jacob – and I think it helps to think of ourselves as belonging to a family as much as we do to a land; because that land has over the millennia grown and shrunk, existed and not existed for us as a place to call home never mind being able or being allowed to live there. So in that sense size does not necessarily matter.

Edinburgh often reminds me of Jerusalem. We all have a romantic fantasy of living in the old city – a few of us are lucky enough to do so. But modern day living costs and demographics mean for most of us that we end up being more scattered amongst the neighbourhoods of the City. We need to make a bigger conscious effort to participate.

The first Jew, recorded at least, to arrive here came in the 1690s, for the historians amongst you, or those who acted in or saw 'Over the Grenitz to Granton' (ask your parents/grandparents!), in which I had the privilege of appearing. The last Jew may go in the 2090s, I don't know, but in my view it is incumbent upon each one of us – even the last man, woman or child standing – to know who we are and act accordingly. This means, in my view, that we have to have in place, even if not fully functioning, the infrastructure and civic and religious institutions to maintain and continue our lives as Jews in a multicultural, multi-ethnic and exciting point in our times as Scots.

In short I will be very straightforward in saying that the religious identification of our community should be one based on Halacha. (This is not an idea I have plagiarised from our Rabbi, Rabbi David Rose, as he will tell you, but one I have long believed in.) Halacha is not only the buffer between sense and extremism (which is the Rabbi's idea) but in essence allows every Jew to participate in our services in some way. We are too small to exclude others from walking through the door which would be

the case if Orthodox Jews felt they could not come in. This is not an apology or excuse for orthodoxy as it is not synonymous with 'halachic'. Basing our religious practice (within the existing shul) on Halachah means that any Jew from anywhere in the world can come and pray there. This does not preclude other groups having their own religious practice in their own premises as happens now anyway. But I believe that there is much scope for the possibility of exploring a different structure for the social and wider cultural aspects of a Jewish community in Edinburgh which can encompass all religious sectors and none.

In my mind this does not of necessity need to be affiliated to a particular religious following. Other communities in the world have a separation between the Jewish social/cultural aspects of the community and the differing religious/shul affiliations. In such a small and ageing community as ours we cannot afford to be too split.

We are an ageing community. However, we are in a relatively strong position with our physical infrastructure at present. I welcome the proposed development of the Bet haMidrash. If and when the lights begin to dim and the remaining elderly amongst us move into the redeveloped commune of the main building, the Bet haMidrash will be the perfect shul.

As an ageing community we need to extend our relationships with local statutory and voluntary bodies with an interest in supporting elderly services. At the same time I do not think we should be overly pessimistic. It does not necessarily take much for a new spark of revitalisation to take place. These are interesting times for Scotland as a whole. Without prejudging the outcome of the referendum process over the next two and a half years we should welcome this time as an opportunity for Scotland to become even more familiar to Jewish people within the United Kingdom and beyond.

Over the next two and a half years perhaps we can piggyback (not real pigs of course) on the political vitality of that other referendum that is taking place by in a sense conducting our own process. We need a leadership willing to consult with both the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and to reach out and involve other legitimate Jewish interests and groups within the City and surrounds; to consider in what areas we can work together; what we can work towards as a unified structure; and, within what the Chief Rabbi would call diversity, we can tolerate each other's religious practice.

There are actually still people of all ages at differing stages in their personal and family lives in our community. We need to learn the lessons of the past and not allow those with an interest and urge to serve the community to slip through the net. We need a leadership that can keep both the halachic tradition alive as well as fostering that path towards living within a tolerant wider Jewish community. We need to recognise where the boundaries lie between differing minyanim within the City but within a spirit of diversity that recognises that the EHC does not have a monopoly on how Judaism is practised. However, in my view we can still find much common ground on which to build trust and a way forward for the betterment of us all as Jews and as good citizens of Scotland.

Judy Sischy

Is it brave or foolish of The Edinburgh Star to tackle the topic of the Edinburgh Jewish Community? Is it looking for answers to a topic that has been the subject of ongoing discussion for the many years that I have been in Edinburgh and which will no doubt continue to be for many years to come?



As I mull over the issues, the debate about Scottish independence is raging – how many others are wondering whether Scotland would become a more or less tolerant society if it became independent? Would it change from the present? Would the Jewish community feel more or less secure in an independent Scotland?

We came to Edinburgh in the 1970s in an unusual mix of circumstances. My parents were the children of East European refugees who came to Scotland, my father's family to Edinburgh and my mother's to Dundee. The story of my mother's family was the subject of a play, 'The Lost Tribe', written by the playwright, her late cousin Jack Ronder, and later televised. My mother trained as a nurse in Dundee and my father graduated as a doctor from the University of Edinburgh. They then emigrated south of the border to Newcastle, my home town. My husband, Mark, was South African and had moved with his family in the 1960s to Edinburgh, where he finished his schooling and studied politics and law at Edinburgh University. He and I met in Edinburgh and, after spending some time abroad, we settled in Edinburgh, where Mark practised law. Despite the fact that Mark retained some of his South African accent and I had an English accent, our two children were unmistakably Scottish.

We belonged to the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and were involved with the community in several different ways. Mark was chairman of the Community Centre and I was President of the 'Lit'. I became

a regular shul goer as our daughters went through cheder and prepared for their batmitzvahs. I was quite proud of my new found religiosity, only to be told by a friend that it was just as easy to lose the habit as to find it – and how right he was. And now? No longer having family here, I go to shul only for occasional, specific occasions when I quite enjoy the experience – the familiarity, a spiritual connection and the sense of belonging to a thread that stretches back for centuries. Yet at the same time, I feel frustrated by the service and know that if I moved to live somewhere else, I would almost definitely prefer a reform service, which is why I like from time to time to attend Sukkat Shalom services, where I also feel comfortable.

Although neither my social nor professional life has been dominated by 'being Jewish', it is a crucial part of my make-up. I cannot remove it, disguise it, or cover it up – not that I would wish to. Yet I do not make a point of actively displaying my religion when perhaps I should. Why is this? Perhaps subconsciously, I am afraid of encountering anti-semitism, I am unsure of the reactions I might receive and I need to feel secure before I enter that territory. Would I feel more confident, I wonder, and less unsure of my Jewishness, in a place with a larger Jewish community? Does belonging to such a small Jewish community make one feel more vulnerable?

This sense of uncertainty is accentuated and becomes even more complex at the present time when being Jewish immediately connects with issues around the situation in the Middle-East. Edinburgh's relationship with the Palestinian cause is well known. To be Jewish is to be pro-Israel and even a commitment to rapprochement creates suspicion, as I discovered somewhat painfully when I was recently invited to talk about 'Windows for Peace' at an Edinburgh gathering. Why did I feel comfortable accepting that invitation when I knew the score? I think that I felt secure in my belief in the importance of bringing people together, especially young people – in the case of 'Windows' young Israelis and Palestinians – a message I tried to convey to my listeners. My non-Jewish Scottish friends do not link being anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian with anti-Semitism, whereas many Jews believe that deep down there is no distinction. Not surprising, given that we are a persecuted race.

Living in Edinburgh as a Jewish family we have had mini-upsets but in the context of our history, we cannot complain. Yes, we came across discrimination but we also experienced success. However, there is surely room for improvement. There must be scope for greater rapprochement, not only between the Jewish communities in Edinburgh, but also with Christian, Muslim and other communities and I commend the inter-faith work that is being done here. I fear that in the past many Jewish communities, Edinburgh included, have ostracised Jews who might have welcomed a link, however tenuous, whether religious, cultural or social, and even more sadly, whose children have become a lost generation in terms of their Jewish roots.

I feel that there is scope for the Jewish community in Edinburgh to be stronger, larger and more unified. Surely we cannot afford internal differences that would allow hostile forces to exploit divisions and therefore weaken our already small community? To the outsider we are all Jews – the distinctions between orthodox, ultra orthodox and non-orthodox are irrelevant and probably incomprehensible. We live in a small country where sectarianism is rife, where a young man is fatally stabbed for wearing the wrong colour jersey, where crimes are still committed in the name of religion. There is a strong argument for the Jewish community to find strength in unity and to focus on our common ground rather than on our differences, whether our ties be of a religious, cultural, emotional, intellectual or psychological nature. Within our own communities we may see ourselves as observant or non-observant Jews, we may be orthodox, traditional, liberal or secular Jews, we may be committed to a particular branch of Judaism or we may be floating Jews open to different experiences, but we are all Jews. I sometimes have a fantasy of the 600 or 700 Jews registered on the census as living in Edinburgh gathered together, united simply by the fact that they ticked that box. Surely there is a magnet that would draw us all in, a common thread, a note that strikes a chord, a story that moves us, or an issue in which we all have a stake? A long-sighted vision would look ahead to preserve Judaism in its widest sense, would reach out to the affiliated and to the unaffiliated and, given the eclectic nature of the Edinburgh Jewish community, would seize the opportunities that are within our grasp.

Sarah Levy and Jessica Spencer



We are both seventeen-year-olds in our final year of school here in Edinburgh (Sarah at St. George's School for Girls and Jessica at James Gillespie's High School). Sarah's mum is originally from Solihull, outside Birmingham, whilst her dad comes from Liverpool. Sarah's family moved to Edinburgh from Oxford ten years ago. Jessica's mum is from North London and her dad from Surrey, and Jessica has lived in Edinburgh her whole life.

We both attended Cheder and continue to participate through teaching the younger children. Although there are very few Jewish teenagers in Edinburgh, we do enjoy socialising at Edinburgh Maccabi meetings and other community events. We feel connected to both the religious and cultural aspects of being Jewish. Being Jewish is more than just religious obligations but being connected to others throughout the globe through shared customs, and being part of a history going back to Abraham and Sarah. There is a certain pride in being linked to such illustrious people as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, and Yehudi Menuhin. Our Judaism is something we both wish to maintain in the future, by joining our universities' Jewish Societies in the short term and in the long term by bringing our own children up in a Jewish environment.

The size of the Jewish community in Edinburgh means that there are limited opportunities to meet other Jewish people, especially of our own age. For example, low numbers make it increasingly difficult to hold weekly Senior Maccabi meetings and being one of the only Jews in one's school can sometimes feel isolating. Although Edinburgh has all the facilities necessary to live a fully observant Jewish life, it would certainly not be as easy as many other places (like Israel, London or Manchester), and this is possibly something which would put people off joining the Edinburgh community.

In the future, we would like the Edinburgh Jewish Community to be vibrant, with activities and events held on a regular basis,

geared to both the old and young members. We could extend what we already have, including the annual Quiz Night and the popular Purim Spiel. Therefore we would suggest more collaboration between the Sukkat Shalom community and the Salisbury Road community. We strongly feel that if, in the face of dwindling numbers, Edinburgh is to continue to provide a supportive community for Jews, it is imperative that we break down the barriers that separate us and come together. This could perhaps be achieved by the sharing of facilities at Salisbury Road and joint activities between the children.

One issue which can be a problem with small congregations is internal divisions - in which small disagreements can be magnified and lead to a total lack of unity. In order to prevent this from occurring, we feel that proper discussion where everyone feels comfortable putting forward their views is vital. This could be incorporated into council meetings, which have the potential, if more people were encouraged to attend, to be the real voice of the entire Edinburgh Jewish community.

Another thing that we would like to see more of in the future is women's participation in the community. Currently, although the community provides more opportunities than many other shuls, there is still some room for improvement. We would hope that, in the future, there may be further ways for women to be involved more in the religious aspects of Jewish community life. This could be in the form of a women's Rosh Chodesh study group or even women's Torah readings in addition to the regular Shabbat service.

We are both somewhat concerned, however, for the future of the Shul. It is clear that we have an ageing community, with many of the younger members moving away and not coming back. This is compounded by the fact that fewer people are joining, although in recent years the addition of several families to the Cheder has really given a new breath of enthusiasm. Maybe if the Edinburgh University "J-Soc" were to be more involved in Shul life, it would encourage the students to continue playing a part in Jewish life in Edinburgh after they graduate, as well as giving a feeling of rejuvenation to the synagogue.

It is very difficult to predict the future of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. It really does seem that we are at a turning point at which the decisions made will determine the fate of our community. If no changes are made to the way we currently operate, we believe that it is possible the community will decline greatly over the coming years. However, if the right actions are taken to keep the community moving forwards, we are perfectly placed to see a revival of the Edinburgh Jewish community.

In conclusion, the key step that needs to be taken in order to have a brighter future for our community is the inclusion of everyone. Whether this means improving our links with Sukkat Shalom, reaching out to University students or further including those who are already members of the congregation, it is vital for the community to maintain a friendly, welcoming and tolerant attitude. When we return to Edinburgh in a few years after university, we look forward to rejoining a bustling, growing and constantly evolving community.

Saul Aryeh Kohn



I was born in New Jersey. My father is a journalist. When I was 8 years-old, he was transferred to report from London, so my mum, my 3 siblings and I moved with him to England. It was a 2-year assignment, but it was 10 years later, the year I came to Edinburgh to study at the University, that my dad was transferred to Hong Kong. I grew up in London, and think of myself as a Londoner rather than a New Jersey-ite.

In London we attended Kingston Liberal Synagogue (KLS), which we still follow very closely from our various vantage points around the globe. My siblings and I had our B'nei-Mitzvot at KLS, played an active role in worship and community activities, and maintain very strong friendships with congregation members and the various rabbis that we met there. I have a lot of love for the Hebrew School, where I was a teacher for almost five years. Whenever I'm in London, KLS is a first priority for a visit.

From primary school to sixth form, and also now in the School of Physics, I've always been the only Jew in my class. What a change it was to have to miss school to attend Yom Kippur services, instead of the whole school just shutting down over the Days of Awe! My parents were very conscious of the demographic change from a New Jersey elementary to a Teddington primary school. They made the change easier for us by making every

Jewish holiday a public celebration: my mother would bake honey cake for my class on Erev Rosh Hashanah, and always remind me to wish the teacher good Yom Tov or Happy Sukkot or Chag Purim. This way I didn't feel singled out or alone; my siblings and I were new and exotic! Growing up like this enforced the pride I have in my Jewish heritage.

Our family have always been Liberal Jews. So I was very happy to learn of the liberal community of Sukkat Shalom upon arriving in Edinburgh. I love the community here. However, it was definitely a change to get used to. KLS has a huge attendance of every age, toddlers through centenarians. Being a lone 18 year-old in the room was certainly a very different feeling from being surrounded by my class of 13 and 14 year-olds, next to my best friend's class of 8 and 9 year-olds! (Yes, I met my best friend at synagogue. We taught together at the Hebrew school for 3 years.)

I've grown into my place in my new community. I enjoy bringing a different kind of energy to services, whether I'm attending them or leading them. My friends there are mostly more than twenty or thirty years older than me, but for the first time in my life it doesn't matter. It's a new kind of interaction, and I like it. I have a lot of fun there.

That said, the lack of youth in the community is a distinct one. Other Jewish students are hard to find due to their low numbers, and even then there is a constant balancing act between study, socialising and worship. Frequently, worship takes the backseat of these priorities. I can try to understand why this is: you're not getting graded on or paying for synagogue, and everyone is waiting for Friday evening to finally come round. For me, a Friday evening isn't complete without candles and blessings and my friends at Sukkat Shalom. But showing this to other students; running outreach programmes, it's hard! Again, this has a lot to do with the low numbers of practising Jews full stop.

Why so few practising Jews my age? Glasgow has a much older, more established Jewish community for one thing, so there's a drift in the westerly direction there. Let me give a University

of Edinburgh (UoE) student's perspective. Last February the Israeli Foreign Secretary, a Bedouin, came to speak at the Jewish Society. But he couldn't. He was blocked from getting in the door by several protest groups. When he came in Appleton Tower in George Square by an alternate door, they followed him into the event's lecture hall and heckled until he left. Last March, the UoE Student Association (EUSA) voted on and passed a boycott-Israel motion. I was at the EUSA meeting, and watched the cheering, fist pumping, and (almost) the entire lecture theatre applauding. These people weren't shouting because they didn't like the Knesset or Netanyahu, but because they didn't like Israel. Which is exactly why the foreign secretary had to leave. Even though he was the first Bedouin to hold such an office and actually represented the liberalisation of the Israeli government, he represented Israel, and for this reason he had to leave.

As a practising, proud Jew, this all scared me. And it still scares me. Unfortunately, there's very little one person can do about it, and I think this is one of the major reasons that student Jews at the UoE don't come to services and don't practise: they're scared of being singled out. They need to feel proud enough to bring in honey cake for their classmates on Rosh Hashanah; to feel exotic.

Being proud of your Jewish identity is a deeply personal and sometimes difficult journey. If the Edinburgh Jewish communities were more present on campuses in the city, or made their service schedules and locations more public, I think a lot more young people would feel urged to get more involved. When there are enough students willing to cram into my kitchen to study the weekly Torah portion, my door will be open for tea and discussion.

It's hard to say what's in store for the Edinburgh Jewish community in one, two, three decades time. I think it will, on balance, stay as it is: welcoming, friendly and genuinely cheerful. On the student side of things, it probably depends more on the situation in Israel. That seems to be the major deciding point for me.

SAUL ARYEH KOHN is a 3rd Year Astrophysics Student.

Being Jewish In Scotland The Story So Far

Fiona Frank *Being Jewish in Scotland* project worker

“As I travel to other places around the world for work, I often reminisce about the Edinburgh Jewish community and wish that other Jewish communities could be so open and welcoming as what I experienced in Scotland.”

Former Edinburgh exchange student, m, 26

Being Jewish in Scotland is a small-scale study, funded by the Scottish Government and managed by SCoJeC, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, to find out more about the variety of experience of Jewish people in Scotland.



Fiona Frank (centre) with Gillian Raab (L) and Claudette Hudes (R)

As I write, the ‘Being Jewish in Scotland’ survey is moving into its second phase. The first 100 responses and ten focus groups have provided us with some key themes on what it’s like to be Jewish in Scotland, and the next phase is to have some more conversations about these topics around the country, particularly with groups that have been under-represented so far, in order to check that these themes are the right ones, and that there isn’t anything missing. We’ll then start thinking about bringing people together to mount responses to these issues.

Edinburgh has been well-represented in the responses. The special nature of the Edinburgh community has come out clearly, with several people echoing the young American visitor quoted above, talking about the Edinburgh Jewish community as a warm and close family. The community’s Burns Supper was mentioned by many people as a ‘wonderful evening of celebration of being Scottish’. One little girl was so used to seeing Robert Burns’ portrait on posters for the shul Burns Supper, that when she saw the same portrait in a shop window she asked: ‘Mummy, do

Christians believe in Robert Burns too?’

There were, however, some stories that identify some concerns. A couple of Edinburgh respondents were surprised that the synagogue asked them to provide their parents’ ketubah to prove they were Jewish, something which did not happen in the smaller communities, where, we were told, ‘people don’t ask questions’. Some people who have married out but who still identify strongly as Jewish found it harder to be part of the community. And the regular anti-Israel rallies in the centre of Edinburgh caused many of our respondents to feel distinctly uncomfortable, with Israelis with young children being particularly affected.

People across Scotland have expressed concern about the shrinking community, and the fact that if young people want to have Jewish friends they have to travel to London or Leeds or Manchester, and that young adults tend to move away – often followed by their parents. There were calls for more social, non-religious, activities for younger people. Several Edinburgh respondents wondered about how young families could be encouraged to move to the city. And some people suggested exchange visits and social activities to involve other Jewish communities.

Although some people mentioned that Scots have a deep respect for Jews as the ‘people of the book’, outside Glasgow there seems to be very little knowledge about Judaism. For example in schools, some teachers, even in the cities, know very little about the high holy days and why Jewish pupils might be taking the days off; several respondents feel that there needs to be more awareness raising about Judaism.

I’ve learned lots about Scotland, about Jews – and about listening – while I’ve been engaged on this inquiry, and look forward to taking the project out to remote parts of Scotland, and to reporting further as it progresses.

Please see <http://www.scojec.org> for further updates and ways for you to stay involved in the conversation!

Fiona Frank can be contacted on fiona@scojec.org or mobile 07779 206522

What is Chabad of Edinburgh?

Rabbi Pinny Weinman

Like many of its centres around the world, Chabad seeks to provide a home away from home for Jewish students at the University of Edinburgh. As a result of the variety of students’ backgrounds and the recent assimilation rate on campus, the future of many of these students’ Judaism looks bleak.

Chabad of Edinburgh always offers a fun, warm and exciting environment for students to discover and experience the joys and beauty of Judaism, whether it’s around a Shabbat table or at a Public Menorah Lighting. Chabad strives to create a Jewish resource for these students through its many holiday related activities and thought-provoking Torah classes, ensuring that these young men and women develop strong, vibrant Jewish identities.

With the help of G-d, in the three short years since Chabad of Edinburgh’s establishment, it has seen tremendous success. Friday night Shabbat dinners have become the place to be for Jewish students in Edinburgh.

Seated around a table replete with all the traditional foods, from the freshly baked Challah to the steaming chicken soup with matzo balls, Jewish students have the opportunity to meet, socialize and celebrate Shabbat together. Songs of “Am Yisrael Chai,” “Oseh Shalom Bimromav,” games and lively discussion all contribute to the festive atmosphere, making the evening a most memorable and enjoyable experience for all!

Throughout the holiday of Sukkot, Chabad’s Sukkah on Wheels visits the campus, bringing the joy and Mitzvot of the holiday to the streets of Edinburgh. Jewish students and passers-by are encouraged to make the blessing on the Lulav and Etrog and grab a bite to eat in the mobile Sukkah. This year the holiday of Sukkot was celebrated

in a most original way. Instead of the traditional chicken soup and gefilta fish, the students were invited to a “Soup and Sushi in the Sukkah.” That evening, students from eight different countries, including Israel, Germany and the Americas, united in celebrating their Jewish heritage and together fulfilled the mitzvah of dwelling in the Sukkah under the schach of the Sukkah at Chabad of Edinburgh.

Our annual public Chanukah lighting is described elsewhere. Soon, it’s Purim and it’s time to celebrate! Finding scotch or whisky isn’t going to be too difficult for the university student in a city like Edinburgh, but getting hold of a ‘hamentash’ or ‘gragger’(rattle) just might be a bit more complicated. That’s when it’s time to join



the party at Chabad of Edinburgh. Dressed in costume, students enjoy homemade ‘hamentashen’ and individual ‘shalach manos’ while listening to the reading of the Megillah, always making good use of their ‘graggers’ when Haman’s name is mentioned. The festive Holiday bash provides the perfect atmosphere for students to celebrate their Judaism together and create memories that will last a lifetime. Purim is always the highlight of the year at Chabad!

When Passover time rolls around, Chabad hosts a Seder that is open to all regardless of their background, knowledge or level of observance. Tourist, local, visitor, student and any other Jewish person looking to celebrate the traditional Pesach Seder in a comfortable environment is welcome.

Seated around a traditional Seder Table, which includes handmade Shmura Matzah and freshly grated horseradish, over seventy people wine, dine and recline while recounting the story of the Exodus from Egypt over 3,000 years ago. With representatives from so many countries present, various different customs and traditions from communities around the world are incorporated into the Seder to make everyone feel at home. The four questions are asked in numerous languages as the age-old words of the Haggada become alive through song and discussion. Of course, everyone participates in the search for the afikoman and the Seder culminates with songs of “Chad Gad Ya” and “Leshana Haba’ah Biyerushalayim” that last way into the night. Chabad’s Pesach Seder is the one night of the year that is not to be missed!

Every Monday, Jewish students at the University of Edinburgh take an hour break from their studies and meet on Campus for a “Lunch ‘N’ Learn” session. This meeting consists of a lively discussion on a topic in Judaism associated with the weekly Torah portion, around a lunch table, simultaneously providing food for mind and body. Chabad also offers one-on-one study sessions in any topic of choice including Hebrew reading, Pirkei Avot, and Talmud. Other Chabad educational activities include guest lecturers, among them Dr. Doron Kornbluth, author of ‘Tips on Jewish Dating.’ Some of Chabad’s purely social activities include “Girls Night Out,” Thursday night Challah baking and an annual Thanksgiving dinner, among other programs listed in the term card distributed at the beginning of each semester.

It is clear that Chabad has seen tremendous accomplishments in the past three years and, with the help of G-d, looks forward to much continued success in creating Jewish life in the city of Edinburgh. With its rapidly developing student family and open door policy that welcomes every Jew, Chabad of Edinburgh sees a bright future ahead.

Lighting the Chanukiah in St Andrews Square

Janet Mundy



A great miracle happened here... in Edinburgh on the first night of Chanukah 2011. "Edinburgh's Largest Chanukiah" was sadly vandalised, but this merely delayed the festivities for a short time. Rabbi Weinman managed to deliver a replacement shortly after the original scheduled time.

The usual aluminium Chanukiah had been broken beyond use and on finding this was the case at just after midday Rabbi Weinman was faced with a dilemma, cancel or forge forward. Cancelling was not in the Chabad Rabbi's vocabulary, and he turned to Edward Green to help find a solution. Edward was able to lend his workshop facilities and labour, and together with Moishe Hecht, Rabbi Weinman's brother-in-law, in Edinburgh for a few days, they were able to design and build a twelve-foot wooden Chanukiah from scratch and have it ready for five o'clock. But how were they to transport this to St Andrew's Square? All options seemed unavailable at this late hour, until Edward Green finally tracked down his roofer! Coming to the rescue, (Rab has also recently done work on the shul roof and the tahara house), we all heard of Rab's progress through the heavy traffic in Queen Street until he arrived at St Andrew's Square only twenty five minutes after the scheduled time.

Joe Goldblatt was master of ceremonies for the event. Mark Loughridge, a student from Newcastle and current president of JSoc, was raised in a hydraulic lift up to the lamps representing

the shamash and the first night candle to light them with, of all things, a blowtorch! Eli Atad then led the singing of 'Maoz Tsur' and 'Chanukah oh Chanukah.'

At this point, the huge Jewish (and Jew-ish!) audience of more than 150 moved to the fourth floor of Harvey Nichols at the kind invitation of Gordon Drummond, general manager. Here, the congregation was addressed by, first our host, Rabbi Pinny Weinman, Director of Edinburgh Chabad, who told a story about train signals and an unlit lantern to illustrate the message of Chanukah being the switched on lantern to make the world a better place.

Rabbi David Rose of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation spoke too reminding us that Chanukah is about Jews fighting for the right to be themselves and publicising the miracle of the festival.

Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, revealed that this was the first Jewish religious event that she had ever attended, but hopes to accept an invitation to attend a synagogue service in the future. She spoke of Chanukah as one of many winter festivals of light, which are particularly vital during the dark days, not only literally, but also economically and financially. She was proud to discover from David Daiches, confirmed by many of those present, that Scotland is the only country in Europe that has never officially victimised Jews, and she revealed that Jews were mentioned in the declaration of Arbroath (the formal declaration of Scottish independence in 1320).



Roseanna Cunningham speaking

Dana Linnet, Principal Officer at the US Consulate General Edinburgh, had already lit candles with her 5-year-old daughter before joining the festivities and spoke of Jews overcoming adversity and spreading positivity and light. That good friend of the Edinburgh Jewish community, Councillor and former Lord Provost, Eric Milligan, reminisced that he first came to the synagogue civic service in his twenties, and pointed out that the only public celebration that took place during the big freeze in 2010 was the lighting of the Chanukiah.

Amit Nevo then entertained the crowd with a couple of Chanukah songs before delicious doughnuts and hot drinks were served and Chanukiahs handed out. Old friends were greeted and new friendships were made before everyone made their happy way home to continue the celebrations for another seven nights.

Our thanks must go to Rabbi Pinny Weinman and his lovely wife, Gitty, for arranging and hosting this inspiring occasion. All in all, it was a wonderful example of the Jewish and wider Edinburgh community coming together to create a fantastic celebration of our very own festival of lights.



Dana Linnet speaking



Rabbi Rose with Joe Goldblatt



Samuel Danzig, Rabbi Rose, Jonathan Danzig, Duncan Brannan



Jonny Sperber, Lesley Danzig & Shari Cohn



The Chanukiah lit up

Beit Hamidrash Refurbishment Project

Update Report; March 2012

Edward Green Chairman, The Beit Hamidrash Refurbishment Committee

At the time of writing this, my colleagues and I are delighted to report that the fund-raising for the Beit Hamidrash refurbishment has gone very well and we have received numerous and most generous donations with our initial target being well exceeded.

The members of the refurbishment committee will be presenting the up-to-date financial position of the project at a meeting to be held on Sunday the 25th March. Following that presentation the Board of Management will be inviting members of the EHC to vote on

proceeding with the refurbishment of the Beit Hamidrash at a Special General Meeting.

As you know, the refurbishment is for the benefit of our members, the overwhelming majority of those present at the Annual General Meeting last year voting in favour of the outline for the project. We anticipate that, once the final go ahead is given the work will take six weeks and the newly refurbished and enlarged Beit Hamidrash will offer the community a warm, inviting and spiritual space to hold our Shabbat and other services detailed in the next paragraph during the colder winter months.

It is interesting to note that the Beit Hamidrash, although somewhat chilly, is currently used more frequently throughout the year than the main synagogue, as we hold our Friday night and Sunday morning services, our children's Shabbat and Cheder services, in addition to any services that may be held during the week.

The enlarged Beit Hamidrash will have a dedicated ladies' section and overall seating for seventy. Most importantly, the heating and lighting will be upgraded. Currently, our winter Shabbat services attract around forty in total and the current Beit Hamidrash is too small to accommodate this number.

Interview With Dana Linnet

Principal Officer, US Consulate General, Edinburgh, 2009 To Present

Micheline Brannan

The Star was privileged to have an hour long interview with Dana Linnet in her office in Regent Road. Here is what she told us in her own words.

Please tell us a little about your personal background. Where were you born, brought up and educated? Did you have a Jewish education? What was your home life like? Was it a large or small Jewish Community?

I was born and brought up in California. My mother is Jewish but my father is Catholic. We practised both traditions in our home, which might seem a bit strange to some, but it did engender in my brother and me a great deal of religious and cultural tolerance. My mother's entire family is from New York City. They still speak with their accents as if they never left! We lived in Los Angeles, which has a thriving Jewish and multicultural community, but moved when I was in primary school to another county which was very Anglo-Saxon Protestant. There were clear prejudices against Jewish people at that time there, but I didn't really care. I was happy with my home life and I was proud of my Jewishness. As a child I was fairly comfortable with who I was. As a young person that's probably not that common. I don't tolerate bigotry in any form.

My maternal grandfather was Orthodox Jewish. He did not approve of my mother marrying outside the Jewish faith and was prepared to sit Shiva for my mother. My grandmother pleaded with him, but then the kicker came: It turned out that my father's priest, Father Doyle, shared the same bookmaker as my grandfather – they liked the horse races-- and Father Doyle talked my grandpa Sid into allowing the marriage and coming to peace with it. Grandpa loved my mother and actually liked my dad. It was a huge step, but I think my Grandfather chose to keep the family intact.

How did you come to be a diplomat? Was it difficult to get into?

I started out my professional career in the private sector from a young age. I worked primarily in banks and IT companies and really enjoyed working life and liked making my own income. I also served on the boards of several security policy NGOs in Denmark (where my husband and I were living at the time) and

worked really hard organizing events, writing articles, speaking and networking. And through this work I had a lot of interaction with Ministers, diplomats and high-level government officials from all over Europe and North America. I went back to university to finish my Masters degree during all that and did an internship back in the U.S. The Co-Chair was a retired Ambassador. She gave me the "pep talk" to take the Foreign Service exam, so I did. I received a lot of encouragement from other U.S. officials who were really supportive. So I was kinda talked into it, encouraged into it. This shows the power of mentoring

and encouragement. We all need to encourage young people to take bold steps for themselves. I wouldn't have done it without those very accomplished people encouraging me. It was a difficult process, but no sweat, no reward.

What has been your career experience? Has being Jewish been relevant? Has it led to any particular interesting experiences that you want to share?

My experience of the U.S. Foreign Service has been largely wonderful. There are the little frustrations with bureaucracy and the bureaucrat mind-set. My colleagues in the Foreign Service are incredible, they are truly special. This is a group of people who give up their lives to live in places that most people couldn't bear, to work extremely long hours, dealing with violent and difficult circumstances at risk to themselves. They are working long hours on difficult things like Middle East peace, famine in Africa, earthquake aid to Japan or


Haiti. They're working long hours ensuring our policy makers in Washington really understand all the consequences of our foreign engagement. Edinburgh isn't exactly a hardship, but I do work very long hard hours for my country at the expense of my family back in the U.S. -- you miss everything back home: birthdays, weddings, bar mitzvahs, special family events.

I've been lucky to be able to do interesting things. I've orchestrated and ridden in Presidential motorcades. I got to meet Her Majesty the Queen. I've also assisted Americans whose family members have died violent deaths here and I had to convey that heartbreaking news to them. While it's not easy doing that, I'm really proud to do that part of my duty and I'm so proud that the United States has a consular service that so



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deeply cares about our citizens. We go to great lengths to help them and their families when they need us. Consular work is often the most rewarding.

How have you balanced home life and the diplomatic service?

I think it's important in any demanding job to set boundaries. To schedule yourself out of things. So much we don't really have to do. So much we do. It's important to set priorities and know what's important. If you have that, you can have a balance most of the time.

How long have you been in Edinburgh? What have been the lows and highs of this experience?

This summer will bring me the close of a wonderful 3 year assignment. There are many highs: The first is the many friends I've made. Then there's the experiences: being there at the British Open in St. Andrews, golfing Scotland's courses, going to my friend's daughter's wedding—a big Pakistani affair in Glasgow—incredible! There are many special events we get to do as part of the Consular Corps: Tattoo, Festivals, Fireworks. The lows are very few.

Jock Tamson's Bairns Exhibition

Micheline Brannan

It was a lovely surprise when EHC forwarded an invitation to the Jock Tamson's Bairns exhibition, curated by one of our own, Clara Massie, daughter of Rosa Massie.



Clara's career is as a pictorial journalist. For this exhibition she has teamed up with the Curators of the National Museum to form an exhibition on Scots who made this country their home. The exhibition consists of beautiful photographs of the people featured, by Albie Clark and Jenny Wicks of the Photographers Collective, along with montages in each person's own words and pictures, telling their life story. The relevance to the Jewish

What or whom will you most remember about being in Edinburgh?

I will mostly remember my friends and the people I've met all over Scotland through my job and travels here. Thank goodness for things like social media—for better or worse, it makes keeping in touch so much easier. Oddly enough, I think I will miss the smell of the brewery at 6 am—the wafting of hops. It's a special smell—you either love it or hate it. And then there's the view of the Old Town from Regent Terrace at sunset. Hard to beat that. I will also remember the special times I spent with my daughter—whether it was hiking Arthur's Seat, enjoying her school experiences, trips to Glasgow, touring Skye and the Highlands. We will have many shared memories here.

Where are you going next and what will the new challenges be?

I can't say publicly what my next assignment is, but I can assure you it will be full of excitement and challenge!! There's a saying in the U.S. Foreign Service: "It's the most interesting work in the world!"



Clara and Rosa Massie with a picture of the late David Goldberg alongside that of Lillian Tervet who crawled out of the rubble of the London Blitz

sent abroad to cheer her up and married a medical student in Aberdeen. They tell a common tale of settling in Scotland and working hard to contribute something to their new homeland, all Jock Tamson's Bairns. The exhibition ran at the Axolotl Gallery from 17 to 30 November 2011, but it is entirely flexible both regarding location and content and we must all hope it will be advertised again soon so that we can all get to see it.

The Star in the Kitchen – Pesach

Ellen Galford

The Seder table is a time-machine. Elijah the Prophet may be the one who gets a wine glass to himself, but he's not the only invisible guest from the past. Inevitably the spirits of long-gone and much-missed elders come crowding in. During a festival so intensely focused on remembering and revisiting our communal history, it's hard to avoid making a few personal side-trips along the way.



I can't open a Haggadah, for instance, without finding myself transported across the Atlantic, to a dining room on New York's Upper West Side, way back in the middle of the last century. The great-uncle at the head of the table picks up his book, draws breath and launches in. Leaving absolutely nothing out, he gets us through it at a mind-boggling, neutrino-beating speed. Then he mops his brow and shouts down to his wife at the far end of the room "Okay, that's it! I'm starving. For heaven's sake, Lily, let's eat!!" It may be no coincidence that Great-Uncle Lou (z"l) was something of a macher—a big noise—in the Seventh Avenue rag trade: For him, the Seder was like an assembly line in the factory. He wanted it running flawlessly but fast.

But as any cook will tell you, the real time-travel starts in the kitchen. Whenever I drop a matzoh-ball into a simmering pot of chicken soup I hear my grandmother (z"l) clear as day, asking: "All right, so who wants light knaidlech and who wants them heavy?" Her ability to fine-tune the density of her dumplings was the stuff of legend. "You mean," gasped one awestruck guest, "she can actually control the way they turn out!?" And the mere sight of a bag of spring carrots brings back the annual debate in the parliament of aunts over just how sweet to make the tzimmes.

In those days, Seder menu-planning was easy. In our family the only lawful main course for Pesach dinner was a pot-roast, a magnificent brisket, for preference, slowly braised to mouth-melting succulence in a deep, dark gravy.

Lately things have become more complicated. I don't think I've hosted a Seder meal (or any dinner party, come to think of it) in the past twenty years without at least one vegetarian on the guest-list. And even enthusiastic omnivores are often happy —once we've satisfied that hard-wired Pesach craving for chicken soup — with a menu that isn't based on meat.

My own Ashkenazic culinary heritage isn't very helpful when it comes to planning a vegetarian Seder. When looking for inspiration, I tend to head further south or east.

A couple of years ago, searching for a vegetarian contribution to bring to a friend's Seder, I came across an Italian-Jewish dish called Scacchi. Broadly speaking, it's the Pesadich equivalent of lasagne. Squares of moistened matzoh stand in for the sheets of pasta, enclosing layers of spring vegetables suffused with garlic, lemon juice and herbs. Jewish communities from the Veneto, Emilia-Romagna and other regions have their own variations, with recipes ranging from First Night of Pesach elaborate to midweek-easy. This one, with a few tweaks, comes from the American-Jewish food writer Joan Nathan. Don't be daunted by the long list of ingredients—everything can be assembled well in advance, making it very user-friendly for a Seder meal, and if you don't fancy the greens suggested here, feel free to substitute an equivalent quantity of other seasonal vegetables.

SCACCHI (8-10 servings)

Ingredients:

- Matzohs, 12
- Olive oil, 250 ml
- Onions, 750 g thinly sliced
- Artichoke hearts, 14 oz. tin, rinsed, drained and cut in halves
- Lemon juice, freshly squeezed, 125 ml
- Garlic, 6 fat cloves, minced or finely sliced
- Rosemary, 2 tsp finely minced if fresh; 1 tsp. crumbled if dried
- 5 leaves of fresh sage, finely sliced or ¾ tsp dried
- Spinach or chard leaves—stemmed, cleaned, blanched or steamed until just soft (4-5 minutes max), drained well and squeezed dry..
- Dried red chili flakes (1/4 tsp. or more, to taste)
- A few gratings of nutmeg
- 500 g chestnut or open-cap mushrooms, sliced
- 6 large eggs
- 250 ml vegetable stock
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place the matzohs in a large pan or baking dish, cover with water and steep for a few minutes until they soften.

Fry onions gently until soft in 60ml olive oil. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon, drain on a plate lined with kitchen roll and set aside.

Sauté artichoke hearts, 1/3 of the minced or sliced garlic, the sage and the rosemary gently in 60 ml olive oil for 5 minutes or until the aroma of the herbs and garlic rises from the pan. Drain, as with the onions, and set aside.

Sauté the spinach or chard leaves gently in 60 ml olive oil, along with another 1/3 of the garlic, the chili flakes, nutmeg and a dash of salt, for 3 to 5 minutes, until the leaves are well-coated with the garlic and seasonings.

Sauté the mushrooms gently in the remaining 60 ml olive oil for 3 minutes, until they begin to soften, then add the rest of the garlic and another dash of salt, if liked and cook for another minute or so, just until the garlic begins to soften.

Rub the inside of a large rectangular lasagne pan or deep gratin dish with oil and cover the base with 3 of the softened matzohs (if they fall apart, it's fine). Top this first matzoh layer with the onions.

Add the second layer of 3 more matzohs—whole or in pieces—and cover these with the artichoke and herb mixture.

Add the third layer of 3 matzohs, cover with the spinach or chard mixture.

Add the final layer of 3 matzohs, cover with the mushrooms.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs with 125 ml. lemon juice and pour this mixture evenly over the whole dish. Pour over just enough of the vegetable stock to make sure that the whole assemblage is well-moistened.

Preheat the oven to 200C and bake for around 30-35 minutes, or until the Scacchi is completely set and cooked through. Let the dish cool down slightly before serving.

Reports on Community Activities

Jewish Edinburgh Trekkers JETS

Culross – a Village Frozen in Time

Keith Gilroy

On a damp, September morning the western car park in the Royal Burgh of Culross (a small village almost directly across the Firth of Forth from Grangemouth) burst into life as 11 members of JETs (Karol, Louis, Jonathan, Molly, Micheline, Susie, Malcolm, Julia, Judy, Tony and Keith) arrived to participate in the first walk of this year’s calendar organised by Karol Swanson.

Whilst the rest of us were chatting and/or getting ready, Jonathan headed for the homemade crisp stall in the corner which had just opened and returned with a huge bag of freshly made crisps. Ever the gentleman, and perhaps keen not to gain too many calories (Joules for our younger members), he passed the bag of glistening, golden goodies around the group. Few could resist and a second round quickly ensued before Jonathan actually managed to eat some himself claiming that it was a late breakfast.

Now energised, the group headed up the track towards the woods whilst engaging a variety of animated conversations. En-route, Susie, enthralled us with a commentary on the many varieties of mushrooms (or were they toadstools? – I should have been listening more carefully) whilst Karol pointed out an old graveyard, many of whose stones were engraved with symbols depicting the trade of the deceased. In addition, several were marked with the skull and cross bones and, tempting though it was to think that we had come across a motley crew of pirates, a more likely explanation is that they were Memento Mori, a reminder of our own mortality. A short while later, we diverted off the main path and found the grave of a family which had perished in the plague in the 1660s – their bodies having been placed in this remote spot so as to be well away from the village.



Malcolm, Molly, Jonathan, Julia, Louis and Karol in Culross

Following on through the woods, the conversation continued unabated and, in what seemed no time at all, we arrived back in Culross village with its narrow streets and mustard coloured cottages. Some of the group decided to enhance their cultural knowledge by visiting Culross Palace owned by the National Trust whilst others were content to sit on the wall opposite the Townhouse and enjoy the September sunshine which just about managed to break through the ominous dark grey clouds.

By 13:30 we were all in definite need of refreshment and so headed to the Red Lion pub where we continued to share stories, congratulate ourselves that it did not rain (at least not whilst we were outside) and look forward to the next walk on Corstophine Hill.



Tony and Keith admire the townhouse

JETS Kiddunch

Shabbat 26th Nov 2011

Tony Gilbert

Following a novel suggestion from Jane Ansell to the Board of Management, it had been agreed that in this small community of ours with its multifarious groups of wide-ranging interests it would be a great idea for the Shul to host a Kiddunch specially involving some of the groups. A Kiddunch (ugh, what a word) is a combined Kiddush and sit-down lunch in the Community Centre during which representatives of the featured group would say something about their particular interest with the aim of informing other Community members and maybe attracting new members to their particular group.

On Shabbat 26th November 2011, the JETs (Jewish Edinburgh Trekkers) started this particular ball rolling. Jane had worked hard coordinating the event, which

included cooking on the preceding Friday with Marcia Berger and Hilary Rifkind, organising speakers, and then to round off matters in a particularly appropriate way, to have a post-prandial amble to Dr Neal’s Garden, a hidden Edinburgh delight, in not too distant Duddingston.

In the event the meal and talks were a great success. The numbers in the shul that Shabbat had been very satisfyingly swollen by Antipodean visitors (extremely welcome...but the Rabbi was just a little disappointed that they weren’t Kiwis) and also a group of Interfaith visitors, who were in the process of visiting each others’ religious institutions. All came to the Kiddunch and added greatly to a very lively and enjoyable social event. During the proceedings, Carol Levstein told how one very wintry morning almost 2 years ago now, she and Tom led a walk around a very snowy Penicuik estate with Tom, armed with sledges supposedly for the easy recovery of potential casualties... but he had a secret agenda. At one

point on the walk there was a glorious hill, and many of us rediscovered our youth bombing up and down (some in a somewhat undignified backwards motion see Star 64, p.16) ...and from this JETs was born. Next, Elaine Samuel gave us the sociological aspect of the walks...who you walk with, what you talk about, pick up some shul politics here, a recipe there, financial advice – you name it; we’ve got it.

And after the brilliant success of the meal and the spiel...the walk? Well this is Scotland and outside the trees were almost being blown sideways, so enthusiasm wavered a bit, well quite a lot...but not totally, as a resolute trio braved the hurricane and savoured the splendours of the landscaping in the Pollock Halls and Abden House, a bit of a come-down, but enjoyable nevertheless.

Many thanks to Jane, Marcia, Hilary, Carol, Elaine and all who helped in making the first Kiddunch a happy and memorable occasion.

Mitzvah Day

Micheline Brannan

Mitzvah Day 2011 was on 20th November and for some of us involved an outdoor expedition to cut down the gorse on Whinney Hill (part of Holyrood Park) to make a firebreak. The Jewish Edinburgh Trekkers actually replaced their planned walk by this activity. Our ranger, Peter, met us at the Education Centre, 1 Queens Drive (near Holyrood Palace) and told us how necessary the work was as a whole swathe of gorse had recently burnt down as a result of outdoor bonfires.

After a short training session, our group was equipped with gaiters, leather gloves, long loppers, secateurs and saws, and led to a steep hillside where inroads had already been made to the gorse. It is a prickly shrub and penetrates even stout gloves as well as creeping round the edges of spectacles and poking through the non-gaiter-protected parts of trousers. However we set to work with a will and as the morning progressed more people joined in, leading your Editor thankfully to relinquish her gaiters, gloves and loppers and slink off. I was not sure what Mitzvah we had actually performed and have asked our rabbis to enlighten readers of the Star about this. Rabbi Solomon’s reply is on page 36.



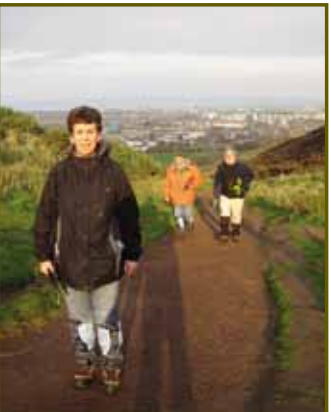
Peter our ranger looks anxiously at the team



This is fun!



Choosing our kit



We trek up the hill



Setting to work

Jewish Community Centre Events

COFFEE, CHAT, CAKE AUCTION

On 25 September 2011 the Community Centre Committee held their annual pre-High Holydays coffee morning. Around 50 members and visitors had the chance to bid for home baking, browse the bookstall, buy some plants, and chat to friends over a relaxing cup of coffee.



Gidona Henderson and Lesley Danzig run the cake stall



Molly Seckl, Gillian Field and Susie Kelpie



Norman Dorfman, Rosa Massie, Betty Caplan, Ruzena Woods



Peshke Abrahams and Norma Brodie, Keith Gilroy and Howard Kahn in background



Steven Hyams runs the book stall



Clarice Osborne, Eve Oppenheim and Andrea Cowan



Melissa Gilroy takes money on the door, with Micheline (Editor)



Children's Corner



Lesley announces results of cake auction, Joyce Sperber on the right, Gidona on left

FILM NIGHT 'THE DEBT'

On Sunday 6 December 2011, about 30 guests gathered at the Community Centre for a light supper and film night. The team who organised and helped on the night were Carol Levstein, Joyce Sperber, Betsy Dorfman, Lesley Danzig, Janet Mundy, Melissa Gilroy, Steven Hyams and Gidona Henderson. A delicious spread of baked potatoes and salads was provided. Cornettos were handed out to the audience while Gidona gave an introduction to the film. This was the original Israeli version of 'The Debt'. In the film 3 elderly Mossad agents are unwillingly reunited for a piece of unfinished business, with Holocaust resonances. Everyone found the film enthralling, if not exactly cheery, and the evening finished with a lively discussion over tea and cake.



Carol Levstein, Tom Griffin, Keith Gilroy, Joyce Sperber

Jonny Sperber, Lynn Cooper, Tony Gilbert, Judy Gilbert

David Gonshaw, Jonny Sperber, Rabbi Rose, Lynn Cooper



Melissa Gilroy, Ian Shein, Pearl Shein

Joyce Sperber, Lesley Danzig, John Danzig, Betsy Dorfman

Barbara Kwiecinska, Marianne Laszlo, Sharon Ogilvie, Gidona Henderson



Susan Hyams, Jane Ansell, Janet Mundy

THE 'NOT QUITE' CHANUKAH DINNER

Tables were set and decorated with dreidles and Magen David sprinkles, each table aptly named after a different Chanukah symbol. Subdued lighting set the tone with candlelit centrepieces and a drinks reception laid out in the front hall. Over 70 people attended and when everyone had warmed up over Pimms and crisps, they were invited to sit down to start the meal. Excellent fare (including latkes) was served and with the diners replete, the entertainment got under way.

Ian McIntosh gave an entertaining variety performance of songs, cabaret, magic, ventriloquism, and comedy. His ability to deal with very shy, unwilling young 'volunteers' was second to none and with great aplomb he managed to separate them so that only one would

come onto the stage to help him with a magic trick. The announcement of the winner of the Bonus Ball number came at the very end of the night. The winner generously donated her winnings then and there towards a Lunch Club outing.

Despite it not yet being Chanukah the atmosphere was festive and a very enjoyable time was had by all. Thanks to all the Committee for a magnificent team effort in making the evening such a success.



L to R from top: Jonny Sperber, Anne Hyman, Ian McIntosh (entertainer), Janet Mundy, Arnold Rifkind, Carol Levstein, Sara Lurie, Matthew Shapps, Edward Green, Tom Griffin, Grace and Tom Seater



L to R: Peter Phillips, Jack Itcovitz, Margaret Phillips



Lesley Danzig, Sara Lurie



David and Millie Harris, Norman Dorfman



David and Irene Hyams, Eve Oppenheim



Orli and Naomi Meiksin, Miriam Brickman



Shirley and Peter Bennett, Katie Goodwin



Norma Brodie, Jonathan Kish, Peshke Abrahams, Betty Caplan



Marcia and Lennie Berger



Avril and Norman Berger, Jackie Taylor, Arnold Rifkind, Andrea Cowan, Raymond Taylor



Ian McIntosh, magician and entertainer, picks his victims, Ohad and Marcia



And makes everyone wave their hands in their air to some old favourites.



WIZO EVENTS

WIZO arranged for a party to attend a Festival Theatre matinee performance of her one women show 'Retiring from Retirement' by comedienne Dorothy Paul in November. This was followed by a supper at the home of Katie and Ronnie Goodwin. Twenty people attended and over £300 was raised.

On 25th January a ladies lunch was held at the home of Edward and Maryla Green. Around 40 people attended and over £450 was raised.

On 28th February Edinburgh had 2 teams participate in the WIZO Quiz at Home, one at the home of Sylvia and John Donne and the other at the home of Carol and Tom Griffin in Penicuik. The Penicuik Pandas (a name dreamt up on the night) were joint 3rd with 3 other teams across the UK. A total of 126 teams had participated. It was a hilarious evening, as team members frantically racked their brains to unscramble anagrams, think laterally about the dingbats and identify famous buildings from aerial photographs. Two songs played simultaneously in one track had older team members baffled while the young or young at heart romped this round.

L to R Back Row: Carol Levstein, Arnold Rifkind, Stan Raffel, Susie Shenkin, Jonathan Adler

L to R front row: Tom Griffin, Betsy Dorfman, Lesley Danzig, Micheline Brannan, Elaine Samuel, Hilary Rifkind, Jonny Sperber, Joyce Sperber



A buffet of delicious dishes contributed by team members completed the evening, and the wine was finally opened as we waited for the results which were posted online at 11.30pm. Each player contributed £15 and, with no expenses, it was a great way of raising money for a beloved cause.

CHANUKAH LUNCH

Sidney Caplan

The annual Lunch Club Chanukah lunch was graced by the presence of the Lord and Lady Provost, George and Elisabeth Grubb.

The senior citizens of our community together, with the cooks and their spouses, sat down to minted pea and spinach soup, roast beef, potato latkes and the trimmings followed by sweet lokshen kugel and coffee.

As this would be the last visit of the Lord Provost, as he steps down from office at the next local election in May 2012, he said that he would miss the contacts with the Jewish community that he had come to know so well. He reminisced about his meetings with the Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, and other leaders of the Jewish community in the UK, but as a man of the cloth himself, being a Church of Scotland Minister, he enjoyed his discussions with our own Rabbi David Rose.

Rabbi Rose closed the proceedings by saying how much he will miss meeting the Lord Provost not only in our

L to R: Back Row: Eve Oppenheim, Anita Mendelssohn, Sylvia Donne, Norman Berger, The Rt Hon the Lord Provost Councillor George Grubb, Rabbi David Rose
Front Row: The Lady Provost, Avril Berger



synagogue but in the City Chambers and the civic ceremonies throughout the year.

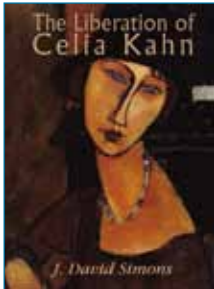
The Lunch Club convenor Avril Berger then presented the Lady Provost with an orchid for both Chanukah and Christmas.

Book Club Review

‘The Liberation of Celia Kahn’ by J. David Simons

Claudette Hudes

‘The Liberation of Celia Kahn’ is set in Glasgow during and after the First World War. This well researched novel gives us a world of rent strikes, the emergence of socialism and feminism and an account of early contraception. The landscapes are stark and brutal but, against a backdrop of war, poverty and religious intolerance, there is hope to be found. It is written in a style that manages to feel both of its time and modern.



There is a compelling friction that is central to the novel, that of a young Jewish woman who is repressed by a patriarchal society but is becoming more aware of a world beyond. She also has a growing sense of empowerment, "the power of a united force ... of women together."

The central character is Celia Kahn. Celia is a young woman with little experience of the world at the beginning of the novel. Her gambling and alcoholic uncle has told her a few things about the wider world but then Celia meets feminist and socialist Agnes Calder in a Glasgow sweetshop. Agnes decides to befriend Celia and educate her in the ways of socialism and feminism.

The novel is a coming of age story against a historical background. Faced with the unsettling events around her, the Celia of the end of the novel is very different from the naive young woman that we meet at the beginning of the book. The mature Celia takes it upon herself to learn about family planning. Celia witnesses first-hand the terrible situations in which women find

themselves when contraception is not available, and, following Agnes's lead, Celia makes the availability of contraceptives to women (in this case 'the French Cap') a priority in her life.

Although the blurb mentions a love affair which leads Celia to a new life in British-Mandate Palestine at the end of the novel, this book should not be classed as a romantic novel. This is a book about politics, about feminism, about socialism and the collective might of the people. It is about rent strikes, female love and concern, and it is about the effects of war on the ones who are left behind to serve in different ways far from the front lines of battle. It shows the bravery of the women who protested in their hundreds against the injustice of rent increases and evictions and the women who went against convention, religion and propriety to show each other how to correctly insert a French Cap.

The choice of the title is important. Liberation is twofold. One point is more general, that women can only be liberated when they can control conception. The other point is that of Celia's liberation from repression and her growing into a mature and open-minded adult ready for a new world.

Some historical fiction is a little on the dry side. There can be a bit of stretching the plot to include a notable event. The Liberation of Celia Kahn, however, is a thoughtful, neat and plucky book, much like its heroine. J. David Simons is brilliant at capturing the little oddities and foibles of his characters as well as describing the different worlds of Glasgow in the beginning of the 20th century. The novel's success is in its balance. Escape is possible and change meaningful. It is an unflinching but uplifting portrait of a society beginning to shift on its axis told through the story of the social awakening of a young woman.

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

16 October 2011

Ben Outhwaite : The Cairo Genizah – a not-so-horrible history of the Jewish Middle Ages

Micheline Brannan

The Lit started its 2011-12 season with a well-attended meeting chaired by Rabbi David Rose and featuring the Head of the Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University, Dr Ben Outhwaite. Dr Outhwaite was appointed in May 2006, having worked for the previous seven years as a researcher in the Unit. His passion for Hebrew resulted from a Kibbutz romance – he switched from Chinese. The lady who made him change one difficult language for another became his wife and joined him in Cambridge. After his studies, he asked Professor Stefan Reif for a job, and eventually received his mantle.



Genizah Fragment

The collection is called after two distinguished 19th century Cambridge personalities: Solomon Shchechter, a Rabbi who was the first Jew to be appointed to teach Rabbis in Cambridge at a time when Jews were not even allowed to read for degrees; and his patron, Charles Taylor, the Master of St Johns. This report can do no better than refer readers to the website <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/index.html> which is an excellent introduction for the lay person as well as scholars.

Dr Outhwaite concluded that the Genizah shows that mediaeval life was neither horrible nor a Golden Age, as it is sometimes portrayed, but that it shows how everyday life finds a way.

Following the address there was a lively discussion and a vote of thanks was given by Hannah Holtschneider.



Our speaker takes the opportunity to climb Arthur's Seat

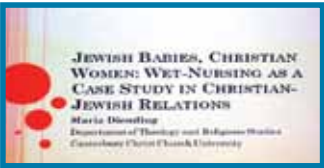
13 November 2011 – Maria Diemling

Micheline Brannan



The second meeting of the 'Lit' 2011-2012 season attracted an audience of around 25 which was gratifying given the unlikely subject of the relationship between Jewish families and the Christian wet-nurses whom they had to employ before the invention of baby formula. The speaker was Dr Maria Diemling, Senior Lecturer, Canterbury Christchurch University.

Dr Diemling has made a scholarly study of the documents available from the early-Modern period in Austria in order to shed light on this topic.



The Talmud supports mothers in breast-feeding but also recognises that some women may not find this possible, and a wet-nurse may have to be employed rather than threaten the baby's life. Also as in the upper classes anywhere, there were women who would not breastfeed their own children for aesthetic reasons and had the means to employ someone else. Dr Diemling explained that, generally speaking, more Jewish women needed wet-nurses than there were Jewish women who could provide this service and therefore Jews had to look outside their communities for women who could fill this need. This raised interesting questions such as the nature of relations between employers and servants across religious and cultural boundaries, concerns about food, discussions about the moral qualities of mothers and wet-nurses and fear of pollution. It also allowed us some insight into the roles women played in establishing links with other women outside their specific culture and adds to our understanding of the complexity of Jewish-Christian relations.

Dr Diemling made the subject absolutely fascinating to an audience with no prior knowledge. This was shown by the length of the question and answer session in which at least half the audience had something they wanted to ask. The meeting was chaired by Hannah Holtschneider and a vote of thanks was given by Micheline Brannan.

27 November 2011 – George Wilkes: Wars Of Liberation, Wars Of Religion: A Jewish Guide That Some Have Called Great

Micheline Brannan

George Wilkes's talk was about 'The Star of Redemption', a philosophical work by Franz Rosenzweig published in 1921. This landmark text has had a lasting influence

on modern political philosophy because it analyses the concept of a 'just war' in terms that still resonate today. Scholars still debate what exactly Rosenzweig believed which is part of his fascination, but the main relevance for a Lit audience was the way he drew on biblical and rabbinic sources in support of his arguments. Rosenzweig's humanitarianism led him to reject the ideal of 'dying for the state' which was so important in the First World War, but he was not a pacifist, and accepted that war would sometimes be necessary for a greater good. The meeting was chaired by Maurice Naftalin and vote of thanks was given by Micheline Brannan.



11 December 2011 – Film Night ‘A Serious Man’

Micheline Brannan

Although many of us had seen ‘A Serious Man’ at the cinema, it is the kind of film that bears a second viewing with the chance to discuss its deeper significance in intelligent company (which of course is the Lit’s forte). Elaine Samuel introduced the film while the audience enjoyed a glass of Pimms left over from the ‘not-quite Chanukah’ dinner the previous night. There was an excellent turnout considering it was people’s second late night running at the community centre. Everyone enjoyed the film and Elaine led a discussion afterwards which revealed many contradictory points of view about whether people get their just deserts and other issues raised in this enigmatic offering by the Coen brothers.



8 January 2012

Sir Malcolm Rifkind at ‘The Lit’: The Arab Spring

Charles Raab

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the former Foreign Secretary (and much else besides) gave a masterly analysis of recent events in the Middle East and North Africa when he addressed the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society at the start of 2012. Was the overthrow of regimes a revolution, he asked: a historic change or just a blip? It took people by surprise and was a long time in coming, but people in the region will never forget the lesson that such change is possible. We have seen similar dramatic changes – in the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and the Far East – in which dictatorships and patterns of authoritarian rule were rapidly overturned by semblances of democracy, bringing the freedom to protest, to travel, and to use the internet.

Although, he continued, some have said that Muslims are not good at democracy, this view is not tenable if one considers Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey and Malaysia, for example. The problem, he thought, was not with the Muslim world but the Arab world, which had seen economic stagnation for long periods of time in Egypt, Libya, and the dynastically-ruled Syria. Apart from oil and gas exploitation, which depends on initiative and entrepreneurship, political domination by families and cliques had led to economic backwardness and mass unemployment as a result of ‘crony capitalism’, with its licensing and monopolies.

On the other hand, Rifkind argued, the region is not uniform. It is highly complex, and we must consider national differences: there are monarchies as well as republics. Big political changes have happened in the latter, but not in the former, where rulers – despite all their faults – are regarded as legitimate (but not necessarily popular) and tap into the religious dimension to help support their regimes. But how long could they maintain their position, he wondered? Major reforms have been seen in Morocco and Jordan, and the writing is on the wall for rulers to

transform their societies or else possibly face overthrow in five or ten years’ time. What about Saudi Arabia? There are many pressures for change, but the regime is unlikely to go the way of the Shah in Iran. The Saudi dynasty are great survivors, with a new generation of clever and bright princes coming up to take the place of the older rulers. Sir Malcolm did not think the army would be likely to take over in Saudi, because there are actually two armies, both commanded by princes, so if one tries a coup, the other would oppose it. If the royal family does get swept away, there could be a generation of rule by ayatollahs; the large middle class are very cautious and will not bid for power. But perhaps there will be gradual change in Saudi.

Rifkind then considered the question: democracy or Islamisation? The prospects are unclear: in Tunisia and Egypt, the Islamists are doing better than the rest in elections, so they cannot be overlooked, although their prospects of ruling are unlikely. At least, the Iranian model is no longer in fashion: if you overthrow a ruler, you do not turn to Iranian-style repressive religious despots. On the other hand, it is possible, he thought, to be Islamist and yet not follow the Iranian model. Would that be a threat to democracy, the West, and Israel? Perhaps, but not inevitably, unless Islamic rulers use their power to promote terrorism and regional instability. But Tunisia, for example, has a moderate Islamist party, rather like Turkey’s, and should not cause alarm in the region.



Egypt, on the other hand, is less predictable: the Muslim Brotherhood is much more doctrinaire and anti-Western, albeit not supporters of terrorism. Yet it would be premature to become too concerned on behalf of Israel, because there were moderating factors, including an unresolved relationship between the Egyptian army and the new democratic forces, with the army being supported by those who worry about Islamist successes at the polls. Egypt would stand to lose massive American funds if the peace treaty with Israel were revoked, which Islamists say they will not do. Egypt is not one of the ‘oily lands’ of the Middle East, and needs foreign investment that would be threatened if they were to go down an Iranian route, and the Islamist parties know that they will be judged by the criterion of economic growth. Israel, Rifkind explained, was deeply concerned by the Arab Spring: Mubarak was a moderate, and – by Arab standards – was positive towards Israel, and as for Syria’s Assad, Israelis prefer ‘the devil you know’. But in the longer run, the potential of democracy in the Arab world was good news, for Israel needs to be surrounded by democracies and a stable environment.

Yet there were many uncertainties, and he thought the current relationship with the Palestinians was stagnant and far from satisfactory. But resolving the Israel/Palestine question would not solve all the problems of the region.

Following this impressive tour d’horizon, Sir Malcolm answered a range of questions, particularly about Iran. Many Arab states are even more alarmed than Israel about the prospects of Iranian nuclear weapons. He believed a Western pre-emptive attack on Iran to be unfeasible. Under certain conditions, Iran could emerge as a pluralist and even a democratic society. Returning to consider Israel, he thought that, while public opinion in the region was opposed to Israel, governments were pragmatic, yet without a Palestinian state no Arab country could have a normalised relationship with Israel: only then would we see some transformation in the region towards co-operation with Israel. This looked possible in the late 1990s, and it was in Israel’s

interest to see a Palestinian state created as soon as possible. Palestinians needed to see themselves as citizens of their country in order to reject extremist blandishments. The West Bank, but not Gaza, is developing politically and economically, and could sustain a proper state. In the final analysis, the Israel/Palestinian question requires statesmanship. Rifkind pointed to South Africa as an example of where statesmanship caused great transformation: not forgetting Mandela, what was decisive was when de Klerk saw the need to dismantle apartheid and convinced the majority of Whites. Rabin could have managed a similar change, along with Jordan’s King Hussein and Egypt’s Anwar Sadat; but that generation of leaders, in Israel and elsewhere, has sadly passed.

Avery Meiksin chaired the meeting and Charles Raab gave the vote of thanks.

CHANUKAH

EHC CHANUKAH PARTY AND TEA ON THURSDAY 22 DEC 2011

On the night of the third candle a good number for a midweek event of children and adults, including parents and grandparents, assembled at the Jewish Community Centre, Salisbury Road, to celebrate Chanukah. Proceedings started with a service and lighting of the Chanukiah in the Beit Hamidrash by children of the Cheder, under the guidance of Rabbi Rose. Following the service there was a mass lighting in the Jewish Community Centre hall. An assortment of chanukiot had been brought by the families and each child had a chance to light their own. This was followed by tea with latkes and doughnuts and a children’s party with an entertainer. A good time was had by all.



ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY SERVICE

The annual Remembrance Sunday service took place on Sunday 13th November at the Edinburgh Synagogue, 4 Salisbury Road, with a congregation of over 60 people. The emphasis this year was on participation by young people and the centrepiece of the commemoration was a series of readings by members of our Hebrew classes. Ben Ross, the grandson of the late Gerald Glass, began these readings with his own Remembrance speech. Ben said:

“Of the 9 million British soldiers who served in the First World War, about 50,000 of them were Jewish. In the Second World War, 60,000 Jewish men and women served and 3,000 of them lost their lives. I am going to speak specifically about the First World War because I have recently had a related trip.

“I went on a Battlefields trip with my school to Belgium and France..... We visited the only remaining trenches from the War. We also visited at least 5 different graveyards dedicated to the British soldiers, the largest of which had over 35,000 names. Even though all these names are known there will still thousands of unknowns in the cemetery. One of the things we had to do there was place our hand on an unknown gravestone and think of that person. We had to give him a face, a name, a personality and an appearance. We had to think if he had a skill, like painting, sculpting, music or sports. We had to imagine the family they left behind to fight and how they felt when they knew their loved one was dead. Personally I felt quite emotionally upset about how many soldiers died in that war.”

ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE PARADE BY AJEX

Freddie Green was one of only four young men and women from around Britain asked to lay a wreath on the Cenotaph at the annual Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and women parade in London on Sunday 20th November.

He felt very honoured to do so and laid it in memory of his great great-uncle, Abraham (Dot) Latter, who died at the age of twenty in the closing months of the First World War and is buried in Baumez-les-Cambrai, Northern France.

Freddie Green is pictured here with his grandmother and step-grandfather, Toby (nee Sagman) and Arthur Lawson.

Left to right: Bugler, Angus Edmund, Jessica Spencer, Clare Levy, Sarah Levy, Ben Ross, Isaac Ansell Forsyth, Freddie Green



Ben spoke for all of us as his personal account of his visit moved us to tears, and it was followed by equally moving items by Clare Levy (recital of poem “A Soldier’s Cemetery” by John William Streets), Freddie Green (reading from “The memoirs and diaries of A M Burrage”), Sarah Levy (recital of poem “Alone and Far Removed” by Audie Murphy), and finally Jessica Spencer on solo violin with a beautiful rendition of the “Lament for the Death of the Reverend Archie Beaton” by John Mason.

After the memorial prayer, bugler Angus Edmund (the principal Cornet of the Newtongrange Silver Band) played “The

Last Post”. This was followed by two minutes and silence and then “Reveille”. Isaac Ansell recited Psalm 121 in English and the remainder of the service was conducted by Lord Julian Goodman. Rabbi Rose presided over the service and the Standard Bearers were David Gonshaw and Ian Shein.

Following the service tea was served in the Marian Oppenheim Hall. Edward Green gave a vote of thanks at the tea, which was prepared and served by Jackie Taylor, Susan Hyams and Lesley Danzig. The annual tea is paid for by a legacy from Violet Oppenheim.



The Jewish Book Group

Elaine Samuel

It was conceived five years ago at the most inauspicious of occasions... a meeting of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Education Committee. “Education is wasted on the young”, quipped one wag. “So what can we do to promote Jewish education amongst adults?” asked another. As for who it was that raised the idea of a book group, perhaps that has been lost in the mists of time. Or perhaps, at this very moment, someone is beating her/his hand on her/his chest; not in repentance but in exultation. Because 47 novels, 2 semi-autobiographies and 6 play-readings later, there is every right to feel self-satisfied.

So let's first go back to first principles. How does this particular book group operate?

We meet on the first Monday of every month at 8pm, at someone's house. The meeting is open to anyone who is attached in one way or another to the Jewish communities of Edinburgh....and attendance has snowballed since those early months. There are some who like to refer to us as The Ladies Book Group, but that is a misnomer that elicits strong protests. Firstly, we are no ladies....and secondly, we have recently been joined by persons of a gentler disposition.

As for selecting the books, they are chosen democratically ahead of the meeting. Suffice to say, democracy sometimes operates via persistence, persuasion and a big mouth. The bottom line is that any book proposed should in some way illuminate or interrogate what may loosely be referred to as “the Jewish condition.”



Elaine, Janet, Norman and Wendy read their scripts



Wendy, Carol and Tom read theirs

At the meeting, anarchy rules. With no-one appointed to lead the discussion, the book of the month gets a good airing until the last person falls silent. How long does that take? Some books elicit special enthusiasm and others real antipathy... and when the same book evokes both, the discussion lasts until someone is reminded that they need to get up early the next day. Yes, you did hear echoes of the Haggadah there. Play-readings take just as long as it takes to get through them. On the last occasion, four acts were simply beyond us and we resumed where we had left off the following week. Oh...and did we mention the refreshments that follow?



Claudette, Nancy, Janet and Judy

So far, so very straightforward and non-contentious....you may say.

And in many ways, it is. We have read widely, but frequently return to those writers that we particularly enjoy, such Michael Chabon, Aaron Apelfeld, Amos Oz, Chaim Grade, David Grossman and Meir Shalev. Plays, such as Mike Leigh's “2000 Years”, Jack Rosenthal's “The Evacuees” and “Barmitzvah Boy”, and Arnold Wesker's “Chicken Soup with

Barley” have not just been great fun to perform extempore, but their delivery is always full of surprise. You may not be aware that Anthony Sher and Janet Suzman are alive and well, and living in Edinburgh! And as the years have rolled by, we have found ourselves becoming more discerning. Some have reported that whereas once they would have felt some kind of moral obligation to finish any book they started, they can now put aside a poorly written book in mid-stream. There is a new urgency. So many good books to read, and so little time left to read them in.

Of course, there are always “issues”. If one really can't stomach the suggested book, do you read it anyway “in the interests of community” or do you just play “busy”, “ill” or “away” that month? How do you deal with differences in taste and views? How much of a relativist can you remain when in your view the writer under discussion has no feel for rhythm, no ear for language, no knowledge of time or place, and no sense of characterisation or development? Are all views to be tolerated or is taste a matter for discussion and argument? And if so, just how far do you go with old friends? Lastly, how do you politely tell your host that no, you are not yet ready for tea and cakes? Indeed, you have only just begun.

In the final analysis, this is what the book group is really about. It's about meeting old (and sometimes new) friends and replacing the tired and conventional exchanges of the past for new understandings. It's about giving us more ways of getting to know those we thought we already knew inside out. Small communities can suddenly feel diverse and weary relationships can be invigorated. That's the power of books.



And the all important cake

Golf Report

Syd Zoltie – Chairman of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Golf Society

Friendly isobars with blue skies and a mixture of nimbus and strata cumulus clouds set the stage for the annual Shul Golf Tournament on the nine hole Princess Golf Course at Braid Hills. A record twenty players turned up for the challenge.

The Reuben Zack Trophy was won by Aaron Levey with a formidable score of a net 26. Aaron is a third year student of International Politics at St Andrews University and, of course, manages to get in a few rounds at the Old Course in between his studies!

The team event for the Maccabi Cup was won by Steven Levey, Brian Caine and Syd Zoltie. The longest drive competitions were won by Tom Griffin and Steven Levey, and the nearest to the hole by Lionel Freedman and Tom Griffin. The Orange Bowl Trophy was gracefully accepted by Gladys Montgomery.

Our thanks go to Lennie Berger for organising the event, to Ian Young of the Braid Hills Golf Centre for donating again the prize of a professional golf lesson and to Jim at the Coffee Shop for allowing us to use his premises for the prize-giving reception.

I am sure everyone thoroughly enjoyed the outing and will return for more punishing golf next year!



What Mitzvah is it Anyway?

Rabbi Mark L Solomon

A mitzvah is a divine commandment: a ritual such as saying the Shema or blowing the Shofar, or an ethical act like giving Tzedakah. A mitzvah might also be a general good deed, like helping an old lady across the street. But what sort of commandment or good deed is cutting gorse on Arthur’s Seat, the so-called mitzvah which several members of our community got together and did last Mitzvah Day?

I will argue that it is not only two very definite mitzvot from the 613 commandments, but also a meta-mitzvah, an act of spiritual significance that looks back to creation and forward to the Messianic Age.

First, the definite mitzvot. Both are found in the same verse, Deuteronomy 22:8: “When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you bring not blood upon your house, if anyone fall from there.” The Sifre, the ancient midrash to Deuteronomy, explains that “you shall make a parapet” counts as a positive commandment, while “bring not blood upon your house” counts as a negative commandment. Now you’re saying, no-one’s built a house lately on Arthur’s Seat. True, but as Maimonides explains, in codifying both in his Book of Commandments, the scope of these mitzvot goes far beyond one’s own house. In his words, Positive Commandment no. 184 requires that we “remove obstacles and dangers from all our settlements” while Negative Commandment no. 298 forbids us “to leave obstacles or hindrances on public or private property, so as not to cause fatal accidents.” As the Park Keeper explained to those taking part in Mitzvah Day, the primary purpose of cutting the gorse was to create a fire break, which certainly counts as removing danger that might cause injury or even fatality. In his great code the Mishneh Torah, Rambam famously

expands on this commandment – some think he was especially keen on it as a physician who had to deal with the consequences of people’s recklessness – and says: “In like manner it is obligatory to remove and to guard against every obstacle which constitutes a threat to life or limb, taking exceeding great care in this matter, as it is said, ‘Only take heed to yourself, and guard your life diligently’ (Deut. 4:9). He who exposes himself to any such dangers thereby fails to fulfil a positive commandment, and also transgresses ‘Bring not blood upon your house.’” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Rotzeach U-Shemirat Nefesh 11:4*).

As to the meta-mitzvah, looking back to the story of creation we read that God placed Adam in the garden *le-ovdah ule-shomrah*, “to work it and guard it”, or better, “to serve it and protect it” (Gen. 2:15). Our duty as human beings is to be faithful stewards of God’s beautiful world and tend it with care. Even though Adam was told, as he was driven out of the garden, “Cursed be the ground because of you ... thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you” (Gen. 3:17f), it is our task to keep the thorns in check. Scots need no advice on the importance of thistles.

Looking forward too, in the prophet’s vision of redemption we are reminded *lo tohu bera’ah*: that God “created [the earth] not as a waste, but formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). This came to be understood as a meta-halakhic principle, that when we cultivate and civilise the world we are doing God’s work. In modern times we are learning to appreciate the importance of wilderness, both for the sake of its own beauty and the wildlife it harbours, and for the wellbeing of the entire earth, but even such a majestic wilderness as Arthur’s Seat, in the midst of our city, needs protecting, tending and cultivating. So hack away, Mitzvah-Dayers, in the knowledge that you really are doing a mitzvah!

Purim PART 1 – EHC CHEDER FANCY DRESS PARADE

So much was happening at 4 Salisbury Road on 14 Adar 5722 (Wednesday 7 March), and elsewhere in the Edinburgh Jewish Community, that the Star will have to report the events in 2 instalments. This instalment focuses on the fancy dress parade which took place prior to the EHC Megillah Reading. Later that night there was a joint Purim Spiel with Sukkat Shalom which will be covered in Star 69.

Shortly after 6.00pm, Janet Mundy invited candidates of all ages up onto the stage to be interviewed, the tiniest among them taking some coaxing and parental encouragement. The Star’s favourite costume was a group representing

Shabbat, consisting of Sarah and Clare Levy dressed as ‘Candle One’ and ‘Candle Two’, with Jessica Spencer as a Kiddush cup, and for props, two enormous cardboard challot. For shy charm, the Knight (Shlomit Gardi) looking for her dragon (mother Merav) sitting in the audience, would be hard to beat. Ruth Adler (cat), and Sam Adler (Dennis the Menace), were also accompanied by parents in costume (Jonathan as Wee Willie Winkie complete with candle, and

Susie as a sailor). Mother Segal Finlay and baby Leo, as Kangaroo with Joey in pouch, took the palm for animal-themed effort. The compère’s decision was final, so, after not much anxious deliberation, Janet awarded the boys’ prize to Aiddie Finlay (Transformer) and the girls’ prize to Lotem Gardi (Mario Monti). Apologies to the many wonderful entrants not mentioned by name through limitations of space or ignorance. Congratulations to all who participated and who made such an effort to promote the Purim spirit at EHC.



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Obituaries

Gerald Glass 20th May 1929 – 17th November 2011

Karen Glass

With the passing of Gerald Glass in November, the Edinburgh Jewish Community lost one of its most committed and longest serving stalwarts, and his close family lost a loving and devoted husband of 60 years to Sylvia, a supportive father to Jackie, Karen and David, and adoring grandfather of 5 and great grandfather of 4.

He is mourned too by his younger brother Alick, with whom he built an international trading business on the commercial foundations laid by their late father.

At the time of Gerald's birth on 20th May 1929, the Glass and Shemenski families were prominent amongst a thriving Edinburgh community of mainly Lithuanian immigrants. His father Henry was one of 9 children, his mother Bessie one of 7. Gerald attended the Royal High School before joining the family wholesale fruit business immediately after the war, and re-joined it following service in the Royal Air Force in Southern Rhodesia. Shortly thereafter, he married Sylvia Levey, a Glasgow girl he had known since his teens. They set up home in Edinburgh, raised their family there, and Gerald demonstrated his interest in communal affairs in the Shul Choir, on the Council, and eventually as Treasurer (1970), President (1974), and from 1979 as Honourary Vice President. He chaired the Burial Society from 1996 to 2008 and in 1967 was Master of Lodge Solomon.

Gerald and Sylvia were renowned for their hospitality, and Gerald's friendly disposition, sense of humour and warmth endeared him to all. His commercial acumen gained him the respect of his industry and his extensive business gave him the taste for international travel.

In the early years of their long and happy marriage, he and Sylvia regularly visited

the United States where Sylvia's family had emigrated to, and eventually, they established a second home in Florida in order to spend more time with Jackie's growing family. After Gerald's retirement from business, they travelled intensively. A recent highlight for them was a trip to Australia to attend the wedding of their eldest grandson, Justin. Their reciprocated devotion to their children and grandchildren knew no bounds, and the birth of three great-grandchildren in 2011 gave them immense joy.

In the latter stages of the illness that Gerald bore with great courage and dignity, he reflected on a life of family love and commercial success, but expressed particular regrets that he had been unable to holiday as planned this year with the family to celebrate his diamond wedding anniversary, and that he would sadly not be present at the forthcoming barmitzvah of his grandson Ben in January.

Gerald will be sorely missed and fondly remembered.



Mrs Vicky Gruneberg

19th August 1914 –
24th August 2011

Stephen Gruneberg

Vicky Gruneberg died on the 24th August 2011. She had come to Britain in 1939 and worked as a maid in a large house in Hampstead. Eventually, she was able to bring her husband, Rudi, out of Germany just before the outbreak of war. In 1940 they spent some time together in Plymouth, where Rudi worked in a hospital.

Because of the intense bombing of Plymouth, they decided it was safer for her and her young son to come to Scotland. They stayed in Dunbar and West Linton before moving to Cramond, at that time a village on the outskirts of Edinburgh. She became a widow in 1977 and since 1984 lived in Edinburgh on her own but remained active in the community until recently.

Vicky was very aware of her Jewishness and was proud of the achievements of her fellow Jews and the contribution they made to society in the arts, sciences, commerce and the professions. She was a great supporter of Israel and an active member of WIZO for many years and she was saddened by the inability of Israel and its neighbours to find a peaceful solution.

Vicky was also a member of the Association of Jewish Refugees in Edinburgh, where she served on the committee. She attended the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society and invariably sat at the front, from where she could be relied upon to ask stimulating, perceptive, and incisive questions that everyone enjoyed.

Classical music was a passion and Vicky went to concerts on a weekly basis. She

played an active role in the Edinburgh Gramophone Society, where for many years she organised their Listening Circle, which held fortnightly evenings in the homes of members, who presented recorded music according to a theme or composer of their choosing. She also often hosted evenings in her flat and gave talks on her music collection.

She could recite numerous poems in German and sang songs and arias from memory. She was always able to surprise with quotations and sayings in German,



which were part of her very being. She was deeply moral. She could not lie. She was utterly scrupulous. She had an ability to make judgements and give advice. She read her daily and weekly newspapers avidly and enjoyed discussing world events, not least stories about the Royal Family, which she considered to be her soap opera, but whom she nevertheless respected.

As an expert on needlework, Vicky ran a sewing school together with Vicky Clunie, whom she met during the war, while living in Cramond. She made patchwork quilts, which could take her up to three years to complete. She made baskets of all

shapes and sizes. She studied woodwork in evening classes and made tables. Her cooking was British and authentic German, always cooked to perfection. Indeed everything she did was done to perfection. She designed and sewed tartan hats, which even featured in Vogue magazine.

An amazing, highly intelligent, cultured and practical person, she had a marvellous sense of humour. Nevertheless it was important that she did not feel neglected, alone and forgotten. On one occasion to reassure her, I told her she was Beethoven, Einstein and Shakespeare, all rolled into one. Quick as a flash she said, "I'm glad you recognise my limitations." She was a modest lady, who was deeply proud of her home and her collection of antiques and family heirlooms, which she had managed to bring with her from Germany.

In his eulogy at the funeral, Rabbi Shalom Shapira, who came specially from Jerusalem to officiate, said, "Vicky had a kind and friendly character, which was rooted deep into her heart, in spite of her personal awful experience going through the Holocaust and the Kristallnacht.... She was an extraordinary personality, a great lady, proud of her Jewish heritage and her great love for Israel. She was a great symbol of Jewish pride, not only for us, but also for everyone, particularly those who had the privilege to

have a conversation with her and get to know her more closely."

Vicky died 5 days after her 97th birthday. We have been privileged to have known her for so long. Her life is something to celebrate and all who knew her were touched by her charm, intellect and vivacious personality. She was indeed loved and respected and will be remembered for a long time to come.

She is survived by her sons, Michael and Stephen, her grandsons, Phillip and Leon and her great grand daughters, Cerys and Angharad.

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Congratulations

and hearty mazal tov to Norman Dorfman on his 90th Birthday celebrated at the Lunch Club at 4 Salisbury Road. Some photos of the happy occasion are below.



The lunch club gets ready to enjoy the celebration



Norman with older daughter Joyce Sperber, and cake



Presentation by lunch club chair, Avril Berger



Presentation of a garden in a bottle by Hilary Rifkind, with Rabbi Rose

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Star Teaser

In this edition you will find a photograph of the Founder and First Editor of the Edinburgh Star.

Can you find the picture and name the person? No prize is offered but first 3 correct respondents will get an honourable mention in the next edition of the Star.

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THE EDINBURGH
STAR

Mazel Tov to...



Congratulations and hearty Mazal Tov to **Ben Ross** who read Maftir and Haftarah on Shabbat, Saturday 28 January 2012 (Parshat Bo) at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Synagogue. Ben also performed Anim Zemirot. The service was followed by a delightful family Kiddush. Mazal Tov to

mother Karen Glass, grandmother, Sylvia Glass and all the family. It was sad that Ben's grandfather, the late Gerald Glass (z"l) did not live to see the occasion. Many tributes were paid to Gerald Glass whose obituary is included in this issue.

The star wishes a hearty Mazal Tov to **Freda Riffkin** on the occasion of her 90th Birthday.



Freda was very active in her day in the Ladies Guild, The Communal Hall Ladies Committee, and the Lunch Club as cook and Treasurer. Until recently she was a regular Shabbat attendee at EHC.

A hearty Mazal Tov to **Hannah Holtschneider & George and Noa Wilkes** on the birth of **Yael Melanie Wilkes** on 30 January 2012.



Patrons

Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation

Mr & Mrs Edward Green

Mr John & Lady Cosgrove

Mr & Mrs Phillip Harris

Mr Leslie Wolfson

Forthcoming Events

Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation

Shabbat morning services take place every week at 10.00am in the Synagogue at 4 Salisbury Road. Friday night services take place weekly at times advertised on: www.ehcong.com in winter and at 8.00pm 14 April to 25 August.

April

Thursday 19 Yom Hashoah
6.45pm Peace Garden, Princes Street Gdns

Wednesday 25 Yom Hazikaron service

Thursday 26 Yom Ha'atzmaut - Israel Independence Day

May

Sunday 6 Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society AGM,
8pm, 4 Salisbury Road

Sunday 13 Community Centre Coffee Morning
10.30am, 4 Salisbury Road

August

Saturday 18 Civic Service at 10.00am

Sunday 19 Festival Open Day

October

Sunday 28 Quiz evening

December

Saturday 8 Chanukah dinner

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 members' homes. For further information, contact Jessica Spencer and Sarah Levy.

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

Sukkat Shalom

Our **Erev Shabbat service** will be on the **SECOND** Friday of each calendar month and our **Shabbat morning service** on the Saturday after the **FOURTH** Friday.

These services take place in the **Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace**.

Our **Kabbalat Shabbat** services take place on the **FIRST** and **THIRD** Fridays at **Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road**.

We also have regular **Tea & Talmud** classes, **Choosing Judaism** classes and a **Spinoza** discussion group.

We are having a communal Seder on the 6th of April which will take place at **Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road**.

Please check the website for exact dates and times:
Web www.eljc.org For info: Email info@eljc.org