

THE EDINBURGH

STAR

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MAZAL TOV TO OUR CENTENARIANS  
ALEC RUBENSTEIN AND SYLVIA BAKER  
TO 120 YEARS

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## HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATIONS – SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, FIRRHILL HIGH SCHOOL AND BISHOPBRIGGS ACADEMY



Edward Green is seen here at the Scottish Parliament Holocaust Education Trust reception on 14 December with Ingrid Wuga, Glasgow based Kindertransport survivor. In the background are some of the HET Scottish Regional Ambassadors from schools around Scotland. These pupils visit Auschwitz and disseminate the lessons of the Holocaust back home.



Survivor Henry Wuga speaks to one of the teachers involved in the Ambassadors project. Henry's message is not just about remembering the Holocaust but about making sure that it does not happen again by guarding against hatred and prejudice. As well as Henry, the First Minister and the Presiding Officer Ken Macintosh spoke at the event.



Firrhill High School's HMD event on 24 January was preceded by a reception in the library. To the left, Kindertransport survivor Stephan Brent, from Haddington (centre, pink shirt). Readers will also recognise AJR member Maria Chamberlain, to Stephan's left, and Archivist, Deborah Haase, to his right, as well as Rev John Stevenson (far right), formerly treasurer of Edinburgh CCJ.

Kindertransport Survivor Harry Bibring was the guest speaker at the Firrhill event, organised by the school with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. The stage was decorated with lanterns from the project which S2 pupils had carried out during the lead up – each lantern commemorating an individual or family who perished during the Holocaust and whom the children had researched. There were photographs, letters, poems and other memorabilia, and each was illuminated from within, as if by the souls of the departed. Against this backdrop, Harry retold the story of how Austria had been annexed by Germany, how Jews immediately began losing civil rights, and Kristallnacht had been planned and triggered, following which arrests and imprisonment began. It was at this point that the Bibring parents stopped pretending to their children that Nazism would soon pass and the world return to normal. Failed attempts to emigrate as a family ended with daughter Gertie, and son Harry, being put on the Kindertransport, following which they never saw their parents again.



### HMD NATIONAL EVENT

Bishopbriggs Academy was the setting for the national HMD event in 2017, which was addressed by Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, as well as Saskia Tepe, daughter of Brigitte Langer, a Holocaust survivor who kept her past secret from her daughter, and by Rwandan genocide survivor, Umutese Stewart.

Pictured left, Margalit Borowski views a painting by inmates of nearby Low Moss prison, movingly depicting their take on the Holocaust.

## FROM THE LIT – ANTISEMITISM AND THE LEFT TODAY: THE RETURN OF THE JEWISH QUESTION

If we want to understand why, despite the Holocaust, antisemitism, often thinly disguised as opposition to Israel, has taken root again today, we need the help of academics and historians. For this reason, the Star is publishing a fuller report of the Lit meeting with Phil Spencer.

**Philip Spencer** is Emeritus Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Kingston University. He is currently a Visiting Professor in Politics at Birkbeck College, London University, and an Associate of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. He spoke to us on Sunday 11 December 2016 about the highly topical subject of antisemitism and the left today, on which he has a book coming out shortly.

Beginning with a historical perspective, Professor Spencer outlined the position of certain Enlightenment thinkers on the so-called Jewish Question. The general position was that it would be better if the Jews and their prejudices did not exist, and that the choices for civilisation were either to wipe them off the face of the earth, to leave them as they are, or to civilise them. Various thinkers had it against the Jews that they were both different and united amongst themselves, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century they were thought to be a bigger problem than before. For example, Bruno Bauer in his 1843 work *Die Judenfrage* argued that Jews can achieve political emancipation only if they relinquish their particular religious consciousness; and that the concept of Jewish nationalism was 'chimeral' and 'baseless'. Bauer also called the Jews 'white negroes' and wanted them to be shipped off somewhere away from Europe. Karl Marx also wrote a book on the Jewish Question, in which he argued that there was nothing wrong with the Jews as such, but that 'The Jewish Question' arose from the way society is organised. Professor Spencer made a case that Marx's work, with its use of heavily antisemitic language, was in fact designed to show up Bauer by way of parody. However, audience reaction indicated that Marx's book is generally taken literally.

The components of Enlightenment antisemitism were as follows:

- Jews are not a particular group or nation;
- Because they are not a particular group or nation, they have no right to assert a national identity;
- Jews use their past sufferings as special pleading;
- Their customs and practices are backward and inhibit progress;
- Anyone who is on the side of progress and civilisation is entitled to resist the Jews.

The Nineteenth Century thinkers saw Jews as a problem because of the way they behaved, and this was particularly an issue for the Left, which finds more difficulty in approving of Jews than in antisemitism. The Marxist theorist Rosa Luxemburg (writing in 1905) saw antisemitism as a crucial part of the armory of the reactionary Right. She argued that it is an historic problem which keeps re-emerging, and which is deep, complex, profound and multi-dimensional, and which involves the psychological projection of negative characteristics upon the victims. She postulated that humanity is inherently and essentially diverse, so if you attack one group it is as if you attacked the whole of humanity. This ought to have given the Left a reason to reject antisemitism. However, despite the full participation of Jews in the Russian Revolution, the Communists were not philosemitic. The Jews who had been most active in the Revolution were also first to fall victim to Stalin, who had himself written in 1912 that Jews could not be a nation. Although the Nazis acted out the Enlightenment ideal of annihilating the Jewish people, it is a fact that more people were imprisoned and executed under the Soviets for being Jewish than by the Nazis. Under Stalin Jews were attacked as being 'cosmopolitan'. The accusation of 'cosmopolitanism', often coupled with 'Zionism', gave rise to a new wave of antisemitism in the Soviet Union immediately after the Holocaust, which manifested itself in purges and show trials. This showed that the Left did not understand the antisemitism which had given rise to the Holocaust. They adopted an understanding of the Holocaust as universalistic – other victims could be 'celebrated' but not Jews. The Left believed that, by definition, they could not be antisemitic.

Professor Spencer said that, in trying to make sense of the Left's history of antisemitism, he has not been able to find any coherent Marxist response to Nazism. In Germany, reformist Social Democrats and Communists did not take up the Jewish question except for a brief period when Communists raised it after Kristallnacht. Stalin both handed over Jews and minimised what the Nazis and their Soviet collaborators had done, for example claiming that only 1000 Jews died at Babi Yar in the Ukraine. All the countries invaded were more interested in their own nationalistic issues than in protecting the Jews.

The Left to this day does not acknowledge its own part in the persistence of antisemitism. They see it as a product of the Far Right and Islamic Fundamentalism and something of which they cannot be guilty. This reflects a reluctance and failure to recognise the history and complexity of antisemitism. Jumping forward, their reaction to the State of Israel is a reformulation of The Jewish Question along the following lines:

- As with the Enlightenment, they do not accept that Jews can be a particular group or nation;

- Because they are not a nation they are not entitled to a nation state of their own, even after the Holocaust;
- The Holocaust is instrumentalised by Jews once again as a form of special pleading;
- The only group which has not learnt the lessons of racism is the Jews, in that they have founded a racist state. This reflects the Enlightenment idea that Jews are backward and inimical to progress;
- The Jewish state is against progress, and where forces are fighting the Jewish state, by definition they are progressive. These progressive forces are fighting imperialism and colonialism.

Depressingly, Professor Spencer showed that even though the Soviet Union is gone, and Stalinism is gone, the arguments of the Left are still the same as those used by the Soviet Union to justify persecuting Jews. One of the charges against the Jewish state is of apartheid and genocide. This means that the catastrophe that overcame the Jews is now turned against them, and they are alleged to be instrumentalising the Holocaust to justify themselves for perpetrating genocide. The Jewish state is the only contemporary nation state that faces these charges.

So, the speaker asked, where is the hope? Going back to Rosa Luxemburg, he reminded us of the argument that Jews are an intrinsic part of humanity, so to repudiate the Jews is to turn against humanity as a whole. Therefore one could try arguing to the Left that it is important to hold onto all groups that keep their own identity, including the Jews. And one can also remind the Left that antisemitism is a complex phenomenon that can arise on the Right or the Left. One can also argue, with Marx, that there is not a Jewish question but an antisemitism question.

Unfortunately, this might not work. As soon as the Left argues that they are not antisemitic, and that all complaints by the Jews are special pleading, this is a sign that the Jewish question is being reformulated. Antisemitism may get worse, for example as is happening in France. What will happen in the USA is uncertain.

Following the speech there was a lively question and answer session, with most contributors expressing concern about the situation described by the speaker, while one person objected to the way criticism of Israel can be dismissed as antisemitism, making it difficult to critique Israel or its actions. The speaker found the questions challenging and it was clear he had no easy answers to offer.

The meeting was chaired by Howard Wollman and the vote of thanks was given by Stanley Raffel, who said that it was good to know that antisemitism did not just start with Jeremy Corbyn but was a feature of the Enlightenment. He commented that the Left does not have any theory of why one would choose to be Jewish. The Left theorises about the class war but has difficulty in dealing with other types of prejudice.

Everyone enjoyed the meeting, if that is the right word, and we learned a lot, but altogether it was a depressing message that antisemitism seems inescapable and just morphs from one form to another to suit the Zeitgeist.

**For more on this subject, the editor would recommend *The Left's Jewish Problem*: Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism by **Dave Rich** (ISBN: 9781785901201) Biteback Publishing, 2016**

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## THE NOT QUITE CHANUKAH DINNER – SALISBURY ROAD 17 DECEMBER 2016

With Chanukah not starting until 24 December, the highly successful 'not-quite Chanukah' dinner featured a cocktail reception, a wonderful meal prepared by the Community Centre committee and a performance by the David Vernon Band, who were ready to perform in Jewish, Scottish, Irish and any other style to order. The profits went towards the refurbishment of the kitchen at Salisbury Road. Many thanks are due to the team who organised the dinner and the entertainment. The Star has selected the best society photos to represent the event.



L to R: Kate Goodwin, Sidney Caplan, Rachel Skop, Stella Macleod (Bierman), David Mendelssohn



L to R: Jonathan Seckl and Gordon Plotkin



L to R: Hephzibah Kolban and Judith Sischy



L to R: Carol Levstein, Lesley Danzig, Sara Lurie



L to R: Hilary Rifkind, Jackie Taylor, Raymond Taylor, Malcolm Cowan



L to R: Joyce Sperber, Susie Kelpie, Jonny Sperber



Above L to R: Clarice Osborne, Nigel Goodrich, Dorothe Kaufman  
Left: Jane Rickman and Sheva Lurie on either side of Stella.



The David Vernon band

The Star gives a hearty thank you to our patrons.

### Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Sukkat Shalom

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## CHANUKAH IN ST ANDREWS SQUARE

Chanukah was jolly late this year, but nothing daunts Chabad, and the annual public candle lighting ceremony took place on 28 December. Edward Green DL provided a spectacular Chanukiah which had been burning brightly all week amongst the Christmas decorations. The 6 ceremonial candles were lit by Meir Kojman. After singing Maoz Tsur, the crowd moved to the Royal Bank of Scotland's refurbished branch on the other side of the Square for a lavish reception. Muzo Emek, Branch Manager, welcomed the guests on behalf of RBS. Speakers included Rabbi Pinny Weinman, the Rt Hon the Lord Provost, Donald Wilson, former Lord Provost Eric Milligan, Susan Wilson, Principal Officer for the US Consul in Scotland, and Mike Russell MSP, the Scottish Government's Brexit Minister. After the speeches, which talked about the significance of light, bringing cheer in the depths of winter, as a metaphor for bringing hope in the midst of despair, a delicious buffet of latkes and donuts was served. Grateful thanks are due to the sponsors of the event, Maryla and Edward Green, Nancy Lynner and Joe Goldblatt, and Debbie and Mark Cecil.



L to R: Chanukiah with 6 candles  
Dancing in St Andrews Square  
A lone piper welcomes the guests.



The spectacular ceiling of the refurbished RBS branch.

Rabbi Weinman addresses the guests, followed by the Rt Hon, the Lord Provost, Donald Wilson.



L: Susan Wilson speaks to the guests.  
Below: The seasonal buffet of donuts and latkes.



## The Jewish Community in Curaçao and the origins of Curaçao liqueur

Stella Bierman Macleod

In 1492 when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella completed the reconquest of Spain they gave all the Jews who had been living in Spain since Roman time an ultimatum "Either convert to Christianity or leave the country." Many chose exile and vast numbers settled in Portugal, a few, for business reasons, pretending to convert but keeping to their true religion in secret. Over the next 90 years most of these " conversos" were also driven out of Portugal and took refuge in Holland, keeping their identity as Portuguese Jews. In 1634. the Dutch invaded and captured several Spanish islands including Curaçao. In the following decades, many Dutch settled in the islands including many Jewish families starting with Mordechai Senior in 1651. He sent back word to Amsterdam that island life was favourable to Jews and 70 more immigrants soon joined him. The Senior family continued to thrive on Curaçao for three more centuries. In 1732, the community was wealthy enough to build the Mikve Israel synagogue on Snoa Street, Willemstad (the capital of Curaçao). It is a replica of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam and was the second synagogue to be built on that site. Mikve Israel is therefore the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the New World and in the Western Hemisphere. It is older than the Touro synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island which is the oldest in the USA, consecrated in 1762.

In 1860, the younger members of Mikve Israel broke away to form a liberal congregation called Emanuel, but in 1964 the 2 communities reunited and now worship in the Mikve Israel-Emanuel synagogue. The most striking feature of the synagogue for me was that the entire floor is covered in a 6-inch layer of sand. This is for 3 important reasons. The first is that many Spanish/ Portuguese synagogues are modelled after the encampments our forefathers established in the Sinai desert during the 40 years of wandering to reach the Promised Land. The Tebah in the middle is the tabernacle and the congregants are like the 12 tribes surrounding it. The second reason relates to the origins of the congregants, whose ancestors were for the most part conversos. After settling in Curaçao, the congregants remembered how their ancestors put sand on the floor of the secret rooms in which they worshipped to help muffle their prayers. Thus, the sand on the floor reminds us of the remarkable faith and courage of those Spanish/ Portuguese Jews who faced lifelong imprisonment or burning at the stake if discovered. The third reason is to symbolise that G-d said unto Abraham, "I will multiply your seed as the sands of the seashore." In the first half of the 20th century, the Sephardic Jews of Curaçao were joined by Ashkenazi Jews fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. They founded a modern orthodox Ashkenazi congregation Sha'arei Tsedek. Today 145 households which represents 200 members worship in the Israel-Emanuel synagogue while around 100 worship at Sha'arei Tsedek.

The name Curaçao is thought to come from a mixture of the Spanish words for 'heart' and 'cure' (corazon and cura) as sailors suffering from the vitamin C deficiency illness called scurvy made a remarkable recovery when eating the island's fruit which was rich in vitamin C. The Spanish tried to induce their own Spanish variety of Valencia oranges to grow on the island but the soil and tropical climate were too much for the colourful and sweet fruit and it turned into a bitter reflection of itself, becoming inedible and left to grow wild. This wild uncultivated orange was named by the inhabitants of Curaçao as 'laraha' and legend has it that, in the late 1890s, one Edgar Senior stepped on a laraha fruit and was struck by the fragrant aroma realised by the etheric oils in the broken peel. He thought this could be the basis for a new drink. After experimenting with various exotic spices and the purchase of a copper still in 1896 (which is still in use today), he founded Seniors and Co, to begin production of what is known today as the genuine Curaçao liqueur. In keeping with his religious beliefs Edgar wanted his product to be kosher and founded a method of producing kosher alcohol. The blue Curaçao liqueur is produced by infusing the sun dried laraha peel, spices and sugar alcohol.

Now I know I can enjoy a kosher cocktail of an evening.



L: Mikve Israel - Emanuel synagogue with sand on floor.



Above L and R, scenes relating to manufacture of Curaçao liqueur.



## PURIM IN EDINBURGH



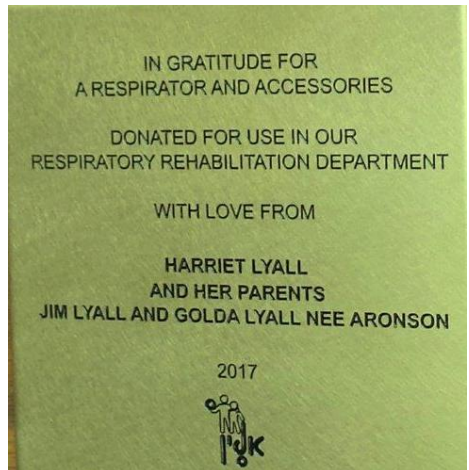
At **EHC**, Rabbi Rose always gives the Megillah his own special twist with hats, crowns and horns to represent the different characters, whether good or evil. This picture, taken at Shacharit, shows the Rabbi in full flow, changing hats without losing a breath. Later that day, our doughty Rabbi went all the way to Aberdeen to read the Megillah again.



Everyone got dressed up very nicely for Purim, adults and children alike. Janet Mundy (centre, dressed as pirate) compered the fancy dress contest, including 5 little Spidermen.



Harriet Lyall, pictured here with Groucho Marks (alias Ian Ashleigh), recently spent a month in Israel improving her Hebrew and finding out what Israel is all about. She stayed at the hotel run by Kibbutz Ramat Rachel in the south of Jerusalem. During her tour she visited the Alyn Hospital, a cause supported by the Edinburgh Jewish Community through the good offices of Clarice Osborne, who runs an annual appeal. Harriet donated a respirator and associated equipment to Alyn – a most generous gift which does not surprise anyone who has come to know and love Harriet. She has a big heart!



**Sukkat Shalom** also had their Purim party and fancy dress parade. Here is their line-up. New Chairman Nick Silk presented the prizes. For Sukkat Shalom Purim Spiel see page 11.





## THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY TURNS 200

On the front cover, we congratulated 2 members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community who have each marked their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2017. Between them, their combined age is the same as that of the organised Jewish Community in Edinburgh. On 1 March the Community was invited to begin our Bicentenary year at a reception hosted by the Rt Hon the Lord Provost, Donald Wilson, at Edinburgh City Chambers. This splendid occasion was open to the whole Jewish Community as well as distinguished guests from Edinburgh, Glasgow and around Scotland. More will be written about the Bicentenary in the Rosh Hashanah printed edition. Meanwhile here are a few pictures taken at this keynote event.



Guests listen to the speeches



The Lord Provost with Raymond Taylor, Chair of EHC Board of Management, after both had spoken



Norman Crane, Chair of Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community



Dr Hannah Holtschneider, University of Edinburgh, talks about the history of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

### GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES



L to R: Elaine Levy, Janet Mundy, Jane Ansell



L to R: Rabbi Pinny Weinman, Rabbi Moshe Rubin, Rabbi David Rose



L to R: Lesley Danzig, Carol Levstein, Sara Lurie

## SAYING GOOD BYE TO OUR DEAR FRIENDS

### Marianne Laszlo



Marianne's sons write: Our mum survived a dark past in Hungary, helping my dad. With optimism through challenges she made a home and made a fulfilled life. She filled her life with friends, interests in art, travel and pursuits to connect with others. She made a life in a country and a culture very alien to her birthplace and so remote from her childhood that shaped who she was. Living in a society that never could know and should know where she came from, perhaps isolated, perhaps at times lonely but never giving up the effort to connect and be part of something. She loved and became proud of her adopted home, she made real friends, always active, always connected to communities, organisations and friends who could share her interests. She overcame and survived repeated ill health but made sure she valued every extra moment of life.

She was never old before her years, never wanted to stop discovering, enjoying every opportunity to learn something new, being with young people, looking forward into life never back into darkness with regrets or bitterness. "Cheer up" was always her response to any number of issues that would dishearten us, in her own way not tolerating or accepting any trivial reason to be down and let sadness block a desire to live. She was never scared to leave us, humorously and defiantly telling us "I'm still here, I'm still around." or at times knowing that her time was near and simply nodding and saying, "Well that's it," without fear. These last years gave her the joy and pride of knowing her grandchildren and seeing the start of a new generation.

Our mother left us on Parshat Pekudei. The similarity of mum's life to this parsha is clear. The parsha is telling a story of counting items so individual to the mishkan and including them to form the tabernacle. My mum always knew and was loved for her very special uniqueness, she was never shy or concerned about being contrarian. Finally, being loved so dearly, by both family and friends, she is counted and will be missed so much.

### Sinora Judah



Judy Gilbert writes: Anthony and I have known Sinora for as long as I remember since moving to Scotland. She was instantly recognisable as an elegant and dignified lady always very careful to present herself as such to the rest of the world.

Sinora was born in Bombay (Mumbai). On her marriage to Sas Judah, she had to adapt to a completely different life. She grew up in an environment which was hugely nurturing and supportive and quickly became the nurturer and supporter herself of Sas's children from his late wife. She was a survivor and gave 100% to her marriage.

I spent many an hour listening to Sinora's descriptions of her colourful and comfortable life in India. It was during these moments that her laughter and humour shone through and revealed a beguiling smile that was not often enough displayed. It has to be said that life was not easy for her. She was an intelligent and well educated woman who gave up any ambitions she may have had in order to keep the observant and kosher home that her husband could be proud of.

Sinora's true strength was motivated by the love she had for the two children she raised and the fact that Sarah and Sion have given all love and attention in return during the remaining years of her life are testament to this. She was generous and honest to a fault, never letting any debt go unpaid. She was philosophical about her health situation and was not afraid of what the end of life might bring. I believe she had faith in the fact that there would be peace and happiness. I sincerely hope that that is so. She was my friend and I will remember her.

*Editor adds: We hope to hear from Sinora's family in the next issue.*





The Editor writes: This lovely picture of Rachel Dorfman, taken with Edward Green, reminds us of a modest and gracious lady who attended EHC every week for many decades, always arriving early to assist with laying out Kiddush and standing patiently pouring coffee for everyone at the end of the service. Rachel was married to Bernard who passed away in August 2015. With Rachel's recent passing we have lost a couple who were fiercely loyal to EHC, attended tirelessly and worked really hard for the community. They were both unassuming, but they leave a huge hole in EHC's pews. After losing Bernard, Rachel never once complained and always continued to ask after everyone else's welfare and family. She is survived by Elizabeth and Selwyn, and their families, to whom the Star gives heartfelt condolences.

### INTERNATIONAL SHALOM FESTIVAL RETURNS

Last August saw the production of the inaugural International Shalom Festival, which took place during and as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. We are ready to run again **from Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017**. Our three-day event will feature Orchard of Abraham (an Arab husband and Jewish wife team from Jaffa devoted to interfaith community projects), Women and their Olive Trees painting exhibition (from Afula), Rockets into Roses stall, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community from Haifa and Maskit, a high-end fashion house from Tel Aviv. Live entertainment will come from model and singer Meskie Shibru from Ethiopia and Jamaya, a young band from Petah Tikva, compered again by Israeli star, Hadar Galron. We also hope to feature the Incubator Theatre from Jerusalem, plus many more. The venue is Drummond Community School in Bellevue Place, in the New Town.

**WE REALLY NEED YOUR  
HELP TO BUILD A TEAM  
TO RUN THIS FESTIVAL  
AND IT IS GETTING  
URGENT**

Here is what you can do:



- **Volunteer to assist with admin in the lead up**
- **Be on the crew for the Festival itself**
- **Provide accommodation for the visiting performers**
- **Donate to the funds**

For more information, tickets, or to find out how you can contribute, please contact organiser Nigel Goodrich on 07787430555 or email [nigel@shalomfestival.org](mailto:nigel@shalomfestival.org).



### SUKKAT SHALOM PURIM

(cont from p8)

A scene from our Trump-themed Purimspiel with a script written this year by Philip Michaelson. Seen here are (left to right) Phil Wadler as Achashveros/Trump, Norman Crane as Haman, Melissa Eisenberg as Esther and Charlie Raab as Mordechai.

## COMMUNITY CONTACTS

**Edinburgh Hebrew  
Congregation**  
[www.ehcong.com](http://www.ehcong.com)

**Rabbi David Rose**  
07932 738425  
[david.rose49@talktalk.net](mailto:david.rose49@talktalk.net)

**Chair**  
**Raymond Taylor**  
07791 360394  
[ray.taylor1@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ray.taylor1@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Treasurer**  
**Hilary Rifkind**  
0131 447 7386  
[Hilary.rifkind@gmail.com](mailto:Hilary.rifkind@gmail.com)

**Secretary**  
**Jackie Taylor**  
07734 291836  
[ray.taylor1@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ray.taylor1@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Education Convenor**  
**Elaine Samuel**  
0131 229 5541  
[elaine.samuel@ed.ac.uk](mailto:elaine.samuel@ed.ac.uk)

**Shul Events and Kiddushim**  
**Hilary Rifkind**  
0131 447 7386  
[Hilary.rifkind@gmail.com](mailto:Hilary.rifkind@gmail.com)

**Luncheon Club**  
**Avril Berger**  
0131 664 2938  
[Avril.berger@btinternet.com](mailto:Avril.berger@btinternet.com)

**Community Centre Diary /  
Hire**  
**Janet Mundy**  
0131 467 1872  
[mundy.janet@gmail.com](mailto:mundy.janet@gmail.com)

**Welfare**  
**Jackie Taylor**  
07734 291836  
[ray.taylor1@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ray.taylor1@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Edinburgh Liberal Jewish  
Community (Sukkat Shalom)**  
[www.eljc.org](http://www.eljc.org)

**Rabbi Mark Solomon**  
07766141315  
[marksolomon@btinternet.com](mailto:marksolomon@btinternet.com)

**Chair**  
**Norman Crane**  
0131 552 5732  
[chair@eljc.org](mailto:chair@eljc.org)

**Treasurer**  
**Phil Wadler**  
[Treasurer@eljc.org](mailto:Treasurer@eljc.org)

**Membership**  
**Sharon Goldwater**  
[membership@eljc.org](mailto:membership@eljc.org)

**Burials**  
**Ricky Hogg**  
[burials@eljc.org](mailto:burials@eljc.org)

**Anything else**  
[contact@eljc.org](mailto:contact@eljc.org)  
or leave a message for the contact team  
0131 777 8024

### Other Organisations

**J-Events**  
for advertising Jewish social and cultural  
events in and around Edinburgh  
[j.events.edinburgh@gmail.com](mailto:j.events.edinburgh@gmail.com)

**Edinburgh WIZO**  
**Kate Goodwin**  
0131 668 2113

**Yiddish Classes**  
**Heather Valencia**  
01786 850647  
[valencia@deepstone.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:valencia@deepstone.eclipse.co.uk)

**Edinburgh Friends of Israel**  
**Acting Chair**  
**Jack Gold**  
[Jack.gold@warmthru.com](mailto:Jack.gold@warmthru.com)

### Other Organisations contd

**Edinburgh Interfaith  
Association**  
**Jewish Community Rep**  
**Stew Green**  
[stewart\\_email@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stewart_email@yahoo.co.uk)

**Scottish Council of Jewish  
Communities (SCoJeC)**  
**Director**  
**Ephraim Borowski**  
222 Fenwick Road, Glasgow  
G46 6UE  
0141 638 6411  
[scojec@scojec.org](mailto:scojec@scojec.org)  
[www.scojec.org](http://www.scojec.org)

**Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society**  
**Secretary, Anthony Gilbert**  
0131 667 4266  
[A.Gilbert@ed.ac.uk](mailto:A.Gilbert@ed.ac.uk)

**Lodge Solomon**  
**Sidney Caplan**  
0131 661 3035  
[sidthefootman@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:sidthefootman@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Book Group**  
**Betsy Dorfman**  
[brdorfman@yahoo.com](mailto:brdorfman@yahoo.com)

**Association of Jewish Refugees**  
**Francoise Robertson**  
0131 337 3406  
mobile 07816 055824  
[frannylouise@aol.com](mailto:frannylouise@aol.com)

**Edinburgh Jewish  
Burial Friendly Society (orthodox)**  
**Sylvia Donne**  
0131 447 2947  
[j.s.donne@outlook.com](mailto:j.s.donne@outlook.com)

**Board of Deputies**  
**Edward Green**  
0131 337 1681  
[edwardmgreen@me.com](mailto:edwardmgreen@me.com)

**Edinburgh Board of Guardians**  
**Morris Kaplan**  
0131 339 8201  
[Morris.kaplan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Morris.kaplan@blueyonder.co.uk)