

THE EDINBURGH


STAR

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לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

And the Lord
prepared a great
fish to swallow
up Jonah

Prophets

- 
- Tributes
 - Edinburgh honours loved ones
 - Real life WW II drama
 - Our vibrant community
 - Always a Jew
 - Teruah
 - Shanah Tova
 - Entertainment
 - Keeping in touch

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY



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The Edinburgh Star

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(Yom Kippur theme)

Editor

Judy Gilbert

Editorial Board

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Phillip Harris
Janet Mundy
Eve Oppenheim
Rabbi David Rose
Philip Mason
Anne Lurie
Micheline Brannan

Design

Debbie Bennett

Artwork

Helen McFeely

Printing

Meigle Printers Ltd
Tweedbank Galashiels TD1 3RS

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From the Editor

I am convinced that it is only proper and that we Jews have it right when we assert that the New Year should occur at this period in the Calendar. It is so much easier to imagine what the world would have looked like at its birth, new and fresh, green and warm and full of expectations; one can live in hope.

I was recently searching the Internet for articles expressing optimism pertaining to the situation in the Middle East. Although I did not find a great deal, I was heartened to discover that there were glimmers of hope written by both Palestinians and Israelis speculating on future accommodation.

And as if to reinforce this hope, quite coincidentally, this morning I tuned in to harmony of a different kind. I have just been listening to Daniel Barenboim in an interview telling us about the wonderful East Western Divan Orchestra of young people from diverse cultures. Referring back to the recent concert in Salzburg playing the rather apt ‘Fidelio’ by Beethoven, he acknowledged that his orchestra ‘could not serve as a political chorus, but that it was a way of promoting cooperation and understanding’.

There is hope when you hear about young members of the orchestra expressing positive ideas. Nassib al-Ahmadiéh, a Lebanese cellist, said that, ‘It’s not a Utopia; conflicts, problems and sensitive issues arise in an orchestra as in society and the first step is to talk about it.... we learn to tolerate and understand more, by listening to the other side’. Israeli violinist Shira Epstein tells us that people at home were critical of her conversing or sitting next to Palestinians or Arabs. She acknowledged that, beautiful music may not necessarily sway them, but despite that, her own experience of a multi-background ensemble has helped her

develop “her own ideas” about her Middle Eastern neighbours.

Although it was not obligatory for the musicians to have political discussions, it helped many of those who did debate, to see that despite very real reasons for resentment on either side, they no longer saw the ‘monster’ in each other.

It would be simplistic to regard the orchestra as a panacea. Realistically the orchestra is not going to be the solution to deep-seated problems, but working together to create the right sound is surely a step forward and gives at least the opportunity to listen to the other point of view. And I would like to believe it exemplifies what ultimately could be achieved by politicians.

And, as if to reassert the above sentiment, that there are also reasonable advocates as well as ‘monsters’ in every culture or community, Stephanie reassures some of our concerned readers abroad, that our Shul has indeed survived its most recent, but happily minor, vandal attack. She also adds to her report that much needed touch of humour that puts everything into perspective.

A most poignant event took place in the wake of Yom Hashoah. The Scotland Holocaust Memorial Book that Irene and Philip Mason, (representatives of the Edinburgh AJR) helped compile, was presented to the Edinburgh Shul. It is with regret that in this issue Edward Green writes our farewell to this very couple who have been so active in the community. We

wish them well in their new London home.

With nail biting moments and a touch of humour, Halina Moss continues the promised extract of her memoirs of surviving WW II as a refugee in the Soviet Union.

I have to admit that I find the Star edition brought out at this time of year, is like a breath of fresh air in contrast to the more serious and often dour nature of the winter publications.

Edinburgh is filled with people enjoying themselves and to reflect this, Julian Goodman, once again ventures out during the Edinburgh Festival to pay homage to the entertaining, if not humorous, Jew in ‘Festival Fun’. This is appropriately complemented by the very welcome good wishes so many people send in our annual Yom Teruah. Ours is an all-embracing Community and maintains its links with family and friends, home and abroad. It has broad arms that stretch out to anyone who has a connection with its members, however far in the past, or wherever they are now. To find out which articles have been sent from Israel and Canada and, closer to home, Glasgow and London, please read further.

The board members of the Edinburgh Star wish all our readers a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year and well over the fast.

L’Shanah Tova.

Judy Gilbert

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The Editor, The Edinburgh Star, 4 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh EH16 5AB



Rosh Hashanah Message

Rabbi David Rose

As we come again to the beginning of a New Year we reflect on a past 12 months that have not been easy. Both economically and politically the past year has seen its challenges.

In our community, as well, we have seen several somewhat unwelcome developments. How should we respond to these challenges and what does the spiritual message of this time of year have to teach us in this regard. The High Holy Day liturgy contains several important motifs, two of which have significance to our situation. They are discernment and unity. Time after time, during this period of the year, we are called upon to be discerning in our choices. We are

warned not to trust exterior appearances but to look deeper. As our Sages noted: ‘look not at the cask but what is within’. A rough looking cask may contain fine whisky while a beautiful vessel may only contain vinegar. The same is true for other areas in life whether choosing financial products or evaluating ideologies. Good ideas may come from someone you wouldn’t necessarily take to dinner, while dangerous movements or ideologies are often fronted by people who outwardly seem pleasant and trustworthy. The message of this period is to be aware, look closely and deeply and make the right choices.

Another major theme of this period is unity. The liturgy is replete with calls for us to stick together. Our confessions on Yom Kippur are in the plural and we hope to obtain forgiveness not only as individuals

but also as a nation. Jewish unity has always been the key to our success. As we face present and future challenges we need to pull together, not all go off in separate directions. We need to provide mutual support and stand as one against those who would harm us. We need to be aware of external forces that seek to divide us, and resist their temptation. Only in unity will we find our true strength.

These, then, are the guiding principles that should lead us in the year ahead. If we all pull together and have the wisdom to discern the correct path to follow, we will successfully navigate the challenges that face us and have hopefully a better year ahead.

A Happy New Year
Rabbi David Rose

Scotland Holocaust Memorial Book

Presentation to the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation
by the Association of Jewish Refugees – Shabbat, July 4th 2009

Philip Mason

On Shabbat, July 4th 2009, the Association of Jewish Refugees sponsored the weekly Shul Kiddush. A special copy of the recently completed Scotland Holocaust Memorial Book was presented to the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Everyone present heard how over the past year Irene and I (both AJR members) together with Agnes Isaacs (Scottish co-ordinator AJR) contacted every AJR member in Scotland whose family members had perished in the Holocaust.

Holocaust survivors, refugees and their families who escaped persecution and death as well as partners and second generation family members were all written to and/or telephoned. The aim was to collect together the names, family details, photographs and documents of all their loved ones who had perished in the Shoah. The outcome was the Scotland Holocaust Memorial Book in which all the information collected plus photographs have been faithfully recorded – but not without a lot of heartache and tears. Several contacted could not bear to open boxes or files where the information lay – it was just too painful. However it was

with great pride that we presented the Memorial Book; which not only provides a historical record of all those loved ones of Scottish AJR members who died in the Holocaust but also an educational tool, ensuring that those who perished will never be forgotten and will always be remembered by future generations. Similar Memorial Books, it was heard, had been produced in Liverpool, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester and Sheffield. Moreover, the Imperial War Museum and Yad Vashem and other museums, had already requested copies of each Book for their archives.

In presenting the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation with a special edition – a leather bound copy containing laminated pages – we hoped that this would enable the Book to be more easily displayed and hence become more widely accessed as an educational tool. In reply, Hilary Rifkind, the Chairman of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, indicated that she was very happy to accept the Memorial Book from AJR, especially as many who had included family pages within it were members of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Hilary conveyed sincerest thanks to AJR for the presentation of the special leather bound edition and then indicated she was very pleased to announce that the Memorial Book would be placed on permanent display in the Shul’s vestibule for all to see, including visitors and the many schoolchildren who regularly look round the Synagogue.

‘Who do you think you are?’

Harvey L Kaplan

Many of us are familiar with the successful TV programme, ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ The South African version of this programme took me to Edinburgh earlier this year on a mission to tell the great-grandson of a former Edinburgh chazan about the life and times of his illustrious ancestor.

Jonathan Shapiro is a top political cartoonist in South Africa whose criticism of the political establishment in that country sometimes gets him into hot water. But from 1911-1937, Jonathan’s great-grandfather, Abraham Levinson from Kutno in Poland, was First Reader in Graham Street Synagogue and then in Salisbury Road.

The programme makers asked to film Jonathan and me in the Edinburgh Shul, and they fitted in a short visit to Edinburgh between similar roots trips to Germany and Lithuania. How could I find out about this once pivotal figure in the Edinburgh community?

I turned first to Hilary Rifkind, who granted permission to film in the Shul and then pointed me to two ‘senior’ members of the congregation for their memories, Freda Riffkin and Alec Rubinstein. They, in turn, pointed me to Rev Levinson’s granddaughter, Sheila Gore in Liverpool. Arnold Rifkind kindly looked up references in the Shul minutes, while I looked for relevant articles in the back issues of the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Edinburgh Star*. I also obtained relevant birth, marriage and death certificates from General Register House in Edinburgh and his 1925 naturalisation file from the National Archives in London. This is the story I presented to Jonathan on the day.

Abraham Levinson was born in Kutno in 1877 into a musical family – his uncle being a famous *chazan*, Moshe Aaron Kibel of Grodzish. Abraham was educated at the Russian High School in Lodz and then at the Berlin Conservatoire

of Music. In 1898, he came to England and was appointed choirmaster to the New Synagogue, Manchester, then occupied ministerial posts in Walthamstow and Bangor, North Wales.^a In 1900, he married Rachel Hulman, and they had four children: Gertrude (grandmother of Jonathan Shapiro), Jack, Benjamin Hertzell and Susman.

In 1911, Abraham applied for the post of *chazan* of the Graham Street congregation in Edinburgh and I was able to show Jonathan how the minutes book of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation records that his great-grandfather was elected to the post by 35 votes to 2, and was to be paid 35 shillings per week.^b

So Abraham came to Edinburgh, but had an inauspicious start to his tenure, when his wife died in 1912, leaving him to bring up four young children. In 1913, Abraham married again, this time to his first wife’s sister, Gertie Hulman. They had two children: Moses Louis (Morris) and Zena Rachel. But in 1918, Gertie herself died. She was described as:

‘...one who, by her charity and hospitality, had endeared herself to all with whom she came into contact. An *Eshet Chayil*, in the truest sense of the word, her loss will be keenly felt, especially by the Jewish soldiers to whom she was a staunch friend and to whom she always extended a warm and homely reception.’^c



In 1919, Abraham took a third wife – Rebecca Kerbel – by whom he had another three children: Rose, Esther and Harry.

Abraham Levinson was *chazan* in Edinburgh when the community was at its peak, with around 400 families or 2,000 individuals, with Rev. Ordman as his deputy. Their community had its butchers and bakers, a range of social and welfare organisations and the inspirational leadership of Rabbi Dr Salis Daiches. The draughty and dilapidated converted chapel in Graham Street was replaced by the current purpose-built synagogue in Salisbury Road in 1932, and various other small congregations rejoined the fold.

Rev Levinson’s granddaughter, Sheila Gore, remembers he had ‘a fabulous baritone voice’. He wrote music and also ran a boys choir. Alec Rubinstein remembers the choirboys in their caps and gowns. Myre Sim remembered that: ‘... he welded together a very good choir which contributed greatly to the beauty of the services and added a measure of decorum ...Furthermore, choir rehearsals were always good fun...’^d



He taught in the Hebrew School, at that time located in Sciennes School. Myre Sim remembered that he took a class on Jewish history on a Sunday morning: ‘ his graphic accounts of biblical heroes and heroines instilled in us a quiet confidence and pride in our antecedents...’^e

Emma Levy (nee Wolfe) remembered: ‘...a handsome man with grey curly hair...he had a ... fearsome fiery temper... what I can still see in my mind’s eye is an enraged Rev Levinson chasing an unfortunate victim up the stairs, prayer book in hand...’^f

But in his obituary in the Jewish Chronicle, we read that he was: ‘...of a kindly and gentle disposition, he was greatly beloved by all with whom he came into contact.’^g

Levinson was popular with the congregation, who held a reception in 1936 to mark his silver jubilee in office: ‘At a reception held at the Masonic Hall, Duncan Street, on Sunday with Mr S S Stungo JP in the chair, a silver salver and a cheque for £100 were presented to the Rev A Levinson to mark the silver jubilee of his appointment as *Chazan* to the Hebrew Congregation. A gold wristlet was also presented to Mrs Levinson. The Chairman, in making the presentation, said that Mr Levinson had gained the esteem and affection of every member of the congregation by his kindly interest and devotion to all matters pertaining to the welfare of the community.’^h

I was able to show Jonathan a photograph of the salver, now in the possession of Rev. Levinson’s granddaughter in the USA.

In 1937, Rev. Levinson retired due to ill health. Mrs Levinson died in April 1949, and Rev Levinson died eight weeks later, aged 72.

Jonathan, who described his roots trip to Europe as an ‘amazing experience’, saw the plaque to Rev. Levinson in the Shul foyer, and he was moved to be standing under the same roof where his great-grandfather had once led the congregation in prayer. From the collection of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, I showed him the commemorative volume printed for opening of the Synagogue in 1932, which has a sketch of the original Synagogue interior, as well as photos of Rabbi Daiches, Rev, Levinson himself, Rev. Ordman and others. Standing in the centre of the Shul, Jonathan the cartoonist spontaneously took out his sketch-pad and drew a caricature of the great-grandfather he never knew.

The programme will be broadcast in South Africa in November.

Harvey L Kaplan is director of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre in Glasgow (www.sjac.org.uk)

(Endnotes)

- a Jewish Chronicle, 24 June 1949 - Obituary: The Rev A Levinson
- b Minutes, 8 January 1911
- c Jewish Chronicle, 24 May 1918
- d Myre Sim, Memories of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Star, No 9, March 1991
- e ibid
- f Emma Levy: Memories of Cheder Days, Edinburgh Star, No 17, January 1994
- g Jewish Chronicle, 24 June 1949
- h Jewish Chronicle, 20 March 1936

Memories

Phillip Harris

Apropos the excellent article by Harvey Kaplan for the Edinburgh Star (September 2009), on the late Abraham Levinson our esteemed editor, Judy Gilbert, discovered that I knew the Levinson family in Edinburgh, and asked me, please, to write a short piece about them for the Star.

The Levinsons lived in a nice house at number 2 Alfred Place, just off the Dalkeith Road and near the Shul.

The Reverend Abraham Levinson was a lovely, friendly, kind, handsome gentleman. He had a beautiful baritone voice. Along with the Shul choir, in which he played a major part with his son Jack (a tall elegant person), formed a superb choir.

It was wonderful during the main festivals, and was also involved in weddings. We were paid a pittance (about 6p, in old money), and for weddings it was doubled.

The Levinsons allowed certain quite young people to carry out ‘experiments’ in their basement, but one day, on using certain chemicals, there was a loud explosion. Harry Levinson, Philip Brown and I were involved. No one was hurt, but several of the bottles of the Levinson’s ‘famous mead’ were smashed – what a wonderful smell! Reverend Levinson took the stromash well, but not surprisingly, ‘no more experiments were allowed’!

I clearly remember some of the Levinson’s family, in particular as mentioned above, Harry and Jack, also Cecil, Mose (Morris) – who became an excellent physician in Blackpool, Rose (Rosie), and Esther – a pretty lady.

Another memory is of Cheder, at that time held in Scienne’s School. The principle teachers were Rabbi Dr Salis Daiches – an erudite, scholarly rather stern person Reverend Levinson, and ‘Ruby’ – the wonderful, wry, popular Mr Rubenstein.

Football was played in the playground before, and also subsequent to the classes. There were many young children then, and some played mischievous pranks such as using sneezing powder in the classrooms, also itching powders and, worst of all, ampoules of a horrid smelling fluid – escaping just as the ampoules were broken open!

However the teaching was good and we were attentive and receptive and learnt a great deal, some of us hoping to receive a prize at the conclusion of the session.

It has always intrigued me how the temporal lobes of our brains receive and store so many memories then, when required, many can be so readily recalled – a remarkable involvement and neurophysiology!

All’s Well That Ends Well...maybe

Stephanie Brickman

When I sat down in Shul on Shabbes on 21st March, I didn’t bother looking behind me, why would I? But had I done so I would have noticed a small stone lodged in the beautiful stained glass window behind the women’s section.

This was one of few tell tale traces of an attack on the Shul that had taken place the previous Thursday evening, the 19th. Two young men had set out from their nearby home, equipped with rocks and a baseball bat with the intention of damaging the building.

One acted as lookout while the other set to with the bat and the stones. Thankfully, Salisbury Road is a quiet and watchful street. Neighbours spotted something was up and called the police. The culprits were apprehended promptly, allegedly making comments to the officers arresting them that left no one in any doubt this had been an anti-Semitic act.

“There hadn’t been a true emergency in Edinburgh since they declared After Eight Mints dairy”

Hilary and Arnold Rifkind, respectively Chair and Head of Religious Affairs of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, had a very early morning start but didn’t let tiredness stop them from getting to grips with the situation. Within hours the glazier had been, the mess was cleared up and you could barely tell anything had happened, except for that stone in the window.

As many of you know, Jewish life in Edinburgh is not usually fraught with drama. When an Editor at the Jewish Chronicle recently gave me a number to call if there was an emergency

while she was on holiday, I was forced to point out there hadn’t been a true emergency in Edinburgh since they declared After Eight Mints dairy.

It seems I spoke too soon.

I expressed my surprise to Hilary and Arnold. “You just don’t expect this sort of thing to happen in Edinburgh,” I lamented. “It hasn’t happened before.” They paused. “Well...except for that other time,” said Hilary. “Oh and then there was the firebomb attempt,” said Arnold. “Oh and....”

Apparently this is the sort of thing that happens in Edinburgh.

A day or two later Rabbi Rose received a letter from Ken Imrie, Chairman of the Scottish Islamic Foundation, expressing shock and outrage at the attack. They also offered the young men of their community to help guard the Shul if need be.

The last sentence was picked up and reported around the world – Muslims offer to help Guard Synagogue – screamed the headlines. Or on one website with a Yiddish name – “Would you put a fox to guard the hen coop?”

Next Shabbat it’s business as usual, apart from the deployment of our very own Jewish community policeman outside the Shul. “Look there’s PC Reuben,” says my five year old. “Why does he have to work on Shabbat?”

I struggle for words. I don’t want to tell her that there are bad people, who hate Jews, even in Edinburgh. That it didn’t all finish when her British and American Great Grandparents joined forces and won the Second World War. But even once the glass is swept up and the stone removed from the stained glass window, it’s a conversation we will have to have.



Sheva on “catwalk”

From back left to right: Kate Goodwin, Irene Hyams, Edna Levitt, Mrs Reif, Dinah Bindman, Nan Caplan, Betty Franklin, Mrs Weinberg

Front Row left to right: Anita Rhodes, Mary Davidson, Dolly Lewis, Mrs Levinson, Caroline Speculand.

Halina Moss Memoirs

Halina Moss

The Star has kindly agreed to publish extracts from my mother Halina Moss's memoirs of surviving WW II as refugees in the Soviet Union. Their objective was to reach Lithuania, then independent, to escape the advance of the Nazis. When the Government offered the refugees a choice between citizenship and repatriation, my grandmother applied for a Soviet passport. The rest of this extract, in Halina's own words, describes what happened in June 1940.

Micheline Brannan

“This is not my dream,
this is real”

Knock...knock...knock. Bang! BANG! BANG! This is not my dream, this is real...I have to open my eyes. I don't want to. I have to. “What is this?” “Sleep on my child, it is nothing!” How can it be nothing? What time is it? The clock on the wall: focus on it. Big hand, little hand... Quarter past twelve! What is going on? I sit up. “What is going on?” “Sh, sh, we are listening.” Commotion. Male voices, a female voice, the landlady's voice. What is she saying? “Pevner, Pevner? No, nobody like that here.” “We have it on the list.” Another male voice: “Here, give it to me!....It says here Leviner. Is there such a family here? The truth, now or you'll be under arrest.” The landlady again, a murmur. Sounds like a protest; not very forceful. Heavy steps, coming nearer. Mother, eyes round, mouth open, cheeks ashen. Father holding her hand. I have a hollow feeling somewhere above my stomach. Mother, father, I am relying on you. Something awful is happening, you have to get me out of this, you always have, but...”Sh, sh, child”.... The door opens, a bright light floods in, blinds me for a minute. Then, I can see again. Two men in uniform. Soldiers. Red Army men. Behind them another. An officer. No I mustn't call him an officer. They don't have those in the Red Army, they have Commanders. In any case, this is the NKVD, the security force He tells them something. They stand at the door, rifles with bayonets, huge coarse boots. He,

neatly dressed, well polished boots. What will happen to us? Commander seeks out table, pushes things aside. Watch, careful, my drawings! He opens his briefcase, spreads papers, gets pen. Mother sits, arms hanging at her side, expressionless. Father helpless, as usual! Myself, waves of coldness from top to toe. I shiver. Commander speaks “Citizens, you'd better start packing. You have an hour to take what you can” My mother stares indifferently at the wall. He continues: “from my documents of your case I see that you and the child can stay here. Only your husband is subject to deportation. “ I hold my breath. My mother often speaks of divorce. When she does, I hate it. She says, “I demand it.” Father usually has a defeated look, but sometimes he is defiant. What will she say now? She speaks. Thank goodness, she speaks. It was terrifying when she sat silent. She says: “Where my husband goes, there I and our child will go,” I let out my breath noisily. We'll be together.

The captain of our secret police posse was a humane man within the framework of his duties and gave us time to pack all our belongings. We were helped onto a waiting lorry and set out to a railway siding. There we were loaded onto cattle trucks of a long goods train. There was a legend printed in large letters on the side of each truck: “ 8 HORSES OR 40 MEN”. The entrance was wide open. A soldier stood either side of it, rifle with bayonet at the ready. For there were already people inside who had been arrested earlier. The entrance was finally shut and sealed. After that there was no getting out of the wagon.

The more realistic occupants of our new home went about organising our life. Someone produced a few long boards, removing them from the luggage shelves. Someone else scrounged two or three blankets and so a kind of wigwam was constructed over the hole in the floor, which was to serve as a toilet. One of us, a man with a teenage son, had a longer history of refugeedom than any of us. He was one of the Polish Jews from

Germany who were thrown out over the border in 1938, and who spent some time in Zbaszyn before the Polish authorities allowed them in to their native country. This man kept us sane with his sense of humour. He referred to the wigwam as Chupa (a wedding canopy) He kept an eye on the queue for the toilet, shouting: “ Who is next under the chupa?).

We expected to set out immediately, or shortly, to our unknown destination but the train remained stationary for a further three days. About lunchtime on the first day our landlord and his wife appeared on the platform. They carried a pot containing soup that Mother had cooked before our arrest. They also brought some other leftovers. The guards allowed them to approach the wagon and hand the food over. Evening fell, then the night, and with it arrangements for sleep, we had to lie on our sides, squeezed together on shelves along the sides of the wagon. I lay between my parents. The following morning we were still in the station. That day the Mowszowiczes reappeared with bread and sausage. There was enough to eat and to store.

The train finally set out on the third day of our hot and stuffy confinement. Our main concern was food. Our captors did not consider feeding us as a priority. Once or twice during our journey, which lasted 12 days, there would be a knock at the door and an announcement that we were to get half a loaf of bread per person. An “ elder” from amongst us was appointed to ensure a just distribution of the delivery. Occasionally, at any time of day or night, usually the latter, we would be standing at some station, there would be a delivery of a cauldron of soup. Sleepily, we would rummage in our possessions to find some sort of container enabling us to receive the thick, steaming, indeterminate mess. All this was annoying and comical. However the most common source of food was barter. Somehow, the peasants got to know about the trains with deportees passing their township, so at many stops there were peasant women with hard boiled eggs, tomatoes, boiled

potatoes, berries, freshly baked pies and tarts and other items. They offered them in exchange for money or small items of clothes, ornaments or gadgets. Sometimes a peasant child would go to make a few purchases on behalf of the deportees. For example if they were given a container they would get hot water from the station tap ‘kipyatok’, and those who had a few tea leaves could make a drink.

“the train stopped in the
middle of a wilderness”

When the train stopped in the middle of a wilderness, sometimes the doors were left wide open. The guards would stand, benevolently, aside. The “passengers” could jump down if they wished, and, boy, did they wish! The sanitary arrangements were so unsatisfactory that many had avoided using them for as long as they could and in their desperation to find some privacy, even risked being left behind by the train.

We had passed Minsk, Mogilev and Smolensk. When we passed Kirov (formerly Vyatka) my father had no doubt whatsoever that we were heading for Vologda, near which he had spent a period of imprisonment under the Tsar. From Kirov we travelled to Kotlas. Nights were getting shorter and daylight extended ever longer, the White Nights. Midges and mosquitoes became more and more troublesome, especially at dusk. Smoking kept them at bay. My mother, who had never smoked in her life, heroically sacrificed herself for the common good. This is how I came, with full approval of my parents, to smoke my first cigarette. The second one came some eight years later.

Approaching Kotlas we began to pass other trainloads of people who had been similarly rounded up. All the trains converged and halted within sight of a wide river. This was the Northern Dvina. The whole length of the sandy bank was covered with heaps of luggage and an encampment formed. After three days a passenger steamer appeared and docked nearby. Some of the campers were loaded onto it and sailed away. Another boat came alongside. It was loaded up in its turn. Eventually, our turn came. Suddenly, we found ourselves in the character of

ordinary passengers. Normality returned. There were lavatories. There was a restaurant serving anybody who had money. One could buy Russian dishes such as macaroni liberally larded with pork fat and “vinegret” i.e. Russian salad with potatoes and beetroot. One could buy tea. The parents settled down among their luggage. I joined other children in running all over the boat.

After a day and a night on board, we disembarked at a wooden pier. Carts harnessed to horses began to arrive, each driven by an elderly, dour driver. Our luggage was loaded and the owners were marshalled behind the carts. The next stage of our journey was to be on foot, along a tributary of the Northern Dvina, the Seftra. The sun was beginning to set. We followed the river but bend after bend revealed no change in the landscape. Eventually, a bend came round that showed signs of habitation. There was a fire at the edge of the river and over it, two large black cauldrons. This, to my childish imagination, fed on fairy stories, appeared highly sinister. So that's what we were brought here for, to be the fodder for the black arts of a coven of witches! This impression was intensified by the sight of an old woman in black who was tending the fire. I advanced filled with forebodings. To my great relief, we were led right past the cauldrons. A few yards further on the convoy stopped and unloading began.

“Carts harnessed to horses
began to arrive”

Father struck up an acquaintance with an accountant from Lodz, a Mr Landau, a tall, grey haired, distinguished looking gentleman. He had a small, pretty, flighty wife and a son, fifteen, still in his “Gimnasium” (high school) uniform, navy blue, with shiny silver buttons in which he was arrested.

We were told to gather around and listen to a short man in the uniform of a captain in the NKVD. He addressed us in Russian. He told us to regard this place—he made a gesture with his hand towards several long, low, log structures, whose dark windows gazed indifferently at us—as our home for the rest of our lives. He asked us to understand that there was no escaping from here: the surrounding forests were

ancient, extensive and impenetrable. The Soviet Secret Service was everywhere.

Our task was to settle down to work. Those who fulfilled the “norm” would get their full ration of food and some money. Every able-bodied person, fifteen years of age or over, was obliged to work. Old people, children and mothers of families were exempt, but would receive only dependants' rations. We were not to stray more than five kilometres from the settlement in any direction. We were to forget our homeland and get used to living here.

“In the humid, stifling
conditions of the
surroundings people chose
the airiest accommodation
they could find”

The men in each family were detailed to go and stuff some mattresses with straw. The women and children were to follow the luggage to their accommodation. There was the possibility of choosing one of the low structures, which we saw earlier, for one's abode. In the humid, stifling conditions of the surroundings people chose the airiest accommodation they could find. We were not smart enough, so were left with a barrack at the edge of the settlement, and in it a corner behind the stove.

Our home became a pair of cots and the space underneath. Being three we were lucky. The allocation was one cot between two people. Several families had to make their “homes” in this communal barracks, using whatever space they were allocated.

All able bodied men from the age of fifteen were expected to work in the forest, felling trees, cutting them up with saws into metre lengths and stack them. They had to fulfil a “norm” measured in cubic metres. The norm was impossible to attain, especially for ‘townies’, gentle tailors, jewellers, accountants, some mama's boys, who were with us. If one did not fulfil the norm he received reduced rations in the canteen and so did his wife and children. This situation was intolerable to our men, who were mostly young, used to the western ways of expressing protests and with left wing views. Several

of them had been communists in Poland. This led to a protest to the commandant. Not many days later, towards the end of July, the young rebels, one by one, were taken away as they stood, some from the forest while they were working, some from wherever they happened to be, and they vanished without trace.

Later, people would discover the secret of making up the norm. The trick was to build the pile of wood as a cube with a hollow inside. The foremen and the checkers were all in on the trick but it was in all their interests to keep the secret, thus maintaining the fiction of adequate productivity. However my father and Mr Landau were exempted from this work on account of their age and my father was kept busy making bonfires.

My mother continued to keep us all clean and to compose little meals out of whatever was to hand to ward off pangs of starvation. She managed to make herself known to some local inhabitants as a seamstress. Her first success was a brassiere for a woman in her twenties who, after three or four pregnancies and breast-feeding, had developed an extremely sagging bust. My mother's brassiere sent her into raptures: she had regained her girlish figure!

Mother began to produce bras, blouses,

skirts and even men's shirts, usually in shocking pink or red. She would borrow the customers' own hand-operated sewing machine. She would be paid in potatoes, milk, tomatoes, lard and any other produce available. Her skill and enterprise saved us from having to sell our possessions one by one, to obtain food, as all the others had to do.

Some weeks passed. Autumn had set in, with rain falling daily and the ground underfoot becoming waterlogged. It was clay and very slippery. One day a message arrived for my father requesting him to appear at the district capital, Verkhniy Toyem, as "a witness" at the trial of the young rebels. Mr Landau received a similar "povestka". On the appointed day, they climbed into a horse-drawn cart and were driven away. My father and Mr Landau sat side by side, their meagre bundles at their feet. Father's contained a change of underwear, his washing and shaving kit, and as much food as mother could spare. I can still see in my mind's eye the two bent backs as the cart receded into the November murk and drizzle, shaking on the clay ruts.

"mother was young and comely and could easily find another man"

A few weeks later my mother was summoned to the commandant's office. She returned with red eyes and a sorrowful face. She told certain friends in my presence that she was given the information that father had a trial and was sentenced, under the infamous paragraph 58 of the Soviet penal code, to five years in a prisoners' work camp. Mother was stunned. Paragraph 58 referred to counterrevolutionary activities, sabotage and spying. She knew that father was wholly innocent of any such activities. She was also dismayed by the length of the sentence. The commandant sought to comfort her by pointing out that five years was a very short sentence by Soviet standards, a child's term, of ten year sentences were doled out like sweeties. He also said that mother was young and comely and could easily find another man if she could not wait. After all there were plenty of men about!

Mother was allowed to send more of father's clothes to the prison in Archangelsk, where he was awaiting allocation to the work camp. We had an acknowledgment, followed by a couple of short, laconic letters. After that — nothing.

The only positive outcome of my father's imprisonment was that my mother and I now had a cot each in our snug corner. This was much more comfortable."



Left, Avril Berger, Right Joyce Cram

Hilary recalled that Mrs. Ruby Levitt, Anita Mendelssohn's late aunt, and her daughter in law Sandra, started this wonderful service to the community 35 years ago. She was sure that we all had our memories of how it was in the old days and remembered some of the characters, not all lovable, who came along. She said that she thought that some of the members in the past were far fussier than the lovely Lunch Club members of today, who are always so appreciative of their meals. At that time there always seemed to be someone coming into the kitchen and lifting the lid off a pot, with a comment about what was being made, not always

complimentary.

Hilary emphasised 'All of us who help, feel it is such an immensely worthwhile act of service to the community. We are all particularly grateful to those ladies over the years who have taken the responsibility of being Lunch Club Convener and thank them for their dedication and commitment.'

Most sincere thanks were expressed to Joyce and Norman Cram for so very generously sponsoring the anniversary lunch. As a token of appreciation, Joyce, whose birthday, was celebrated on Sunday, together with her daughter Hilary, was congratulated and presented with flowers. Hilary was also present at this very special birthday celebration and warmly welcomed.

One more presentation was made to Avril, who coincidentally was celebrating her own birthday. The huge amount of time she gives to the Lunch Club as Convener was greatly appreciated and for this, sincere thanks was given.

YOM HA SHOAH

Raymond Taylor, Vice Chairman of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, welcomed a large crowd to the annual service in the attractive peaceful surroundings of Princes Street Peace Garden on 21 April. He expressed the attendance of Bailie Alistair Paisley of Edinburgh City Council who was deputising for the Lord Provost. Mr. Taylor told the audience that the terrible event, the most fearsome in history, must never happen again and that the sanctity of life, tolerance and dignity must forever be foremost. Bailie Paisley recalled that as a boy during the war he had seen film of the liberation of the concentration camps and the impression it had made. He emphasised that children should be made aware of the Holocaust and of the terrible events in Rwanda and Kosovo. He was grateful to the Jewish community for the invitation to attend the ceremony. A Memorial Candle was lit by Amanda Hyams after which a minute's silence was observed. Rabbi David Rose conducted the service in Hebrew and English ending with Kaddish.

CHEDER PRIZEGIVING AND PICNIC

The cheder year came to an end on Sunday 21st June, with the traditional prizegiving and picnic.

Prizes were awarded to 19 pupils, aged from 4 to 13, by Judy Gilbert, who was presented with a bouquet by Clare Levy, one of the few children remaining who studied with Judy until she retired last year. As both Rabbi Rose and Raymond Taylor pointed out in their speeches, this has been a year of big changes for the Cheder, with a large teenage group having finished their studies (although several are now acting as invaluable helpers) and an enthusiastic new group of young children starting in Kitah Aleph, under the excellent tuition of Merav Gardi. There have also been several Israeli children in the cheder this year, including three in Kitah Bet, taught by Janet Mundy. The two pupils in Kitah Gimel – Clare

Levy and Freddie Green – were awarded the girls' and boys' special prizes respectively. Presentations were given to the teachers and also helpers – Ohad Kammar, Sarah Levy, Sarah-Beth and Katie Neville, Isaac Ansell Forsyth, Benjamin Griffin and Michael Taylor. Special presentations were also made to Elaine Levy, for her excellent special festival events at the Cheder during the year, and to Carol Levstein as children's convener. The children entertained the audience with a special song written by Stephanie Brickman about a grumpy Rabbi!

Once the prize-giving ceremony was completed,



parents, teachers and children departed for Whitmuir Organic

Farm, Lamancha. After a picnic lunch, prepared by Carol and her helpers, the party was taken on a tour of the farm. The children particularly enjoyed seeing the (very!) free range chickens and collecting eggs. They were also delighted to see a new born calf with its mother. Whilst the children played with all the animals, the farmer answered questions from the adults about organic farming. The undoubted highlight of the afternoon was the visit of this most Jewish of children's groups to the piggery and Rabbi Rose was clearly in his element having his photograph taken with the pigs and piglets!

A visit to the well-stocked farm shop completed the visit and ended the cheder year on a sunny, healthy note.

Janet Mundy



Around and About

The Shein Scene

LUNCHEON CLUB

The Luncheon Club celebrated its 35th birthday on 21 April with a larger than usual crowd in attendance. Hilary Rifkind, chair of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation welcomed all and read out excerpts from the Ladies' Guild minutes of 13 February 1974 when plans were formulated to begin a Luncheon Club in the old Communal Hall after Pesach. This was to be run by the Friendship Club helped by the Guild. On 19 March, at a meeting at the home of Mrs. Celia Leigh, it was agreed that the Luncheon Club meet twice weekly and that a charge of 15p (then three shillings) be made. The Communal hall would be paid for electricity, gas and any breakages. Negotiations would be undertaken with the city Social Services for a grant. The Club actually commenced after Yom Tov in October 1974 with an average attendance of 19.

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Back into the Fold

Daniel Gilbert

Since immigrating to Vancouver in Canada nearly a year ago, it seems like I've had to squeeze about 4 years of activities into this short space of time. There's nothing like a bit of blind panic to get things moving swiftly. Having arrived last August, I had no job, no home, no bank account, no health insurance and a pregnant wife. Most of the above, I was able to resolve fairly quickly and nature took its course with Fiona; we had a lovely healthy boy. Getting back in to the teaching profession did not prove to be so straightforward however.

“we Scots can pack in to one year what the rest of the world takes decades to achieve”

I arrived in Canada with a recently acquired Scottish teaching certificate, a year's full-time teaching experience and a healthy dose of blind optimism. Prior to emigrating, I had already applied to convert my teaching certificate to the British Columbian version and shortly after arriving, my application was rejected on the grounds of my course being too short. Quality not quantity I thought, we Scots can pack into one year what the rest of the world takes decades to achieve. Many phone calls later and after an official appeal in front of some important looking people wearing suits, I had my certificate (albeit conditional on me getting some extra schooling in Canadian studies and English – harrumph, I come from the motherland don't you know). All I had to do was find a teaching job. Easy huh?

Two weeks later, my faith in the Vancouver education system was just about shattered. It seemed that the only way to get a teaching job was to work your way up a priorities ladder of recruitment,

and brown nose the right people in the right order and at precisely the right time, at the end of which you may just be considered for a post... either that or you would get extraordinarily lucky and by some incredible bout of good fortune, mixed with the gods smiling at you, you'd get offered a job somewhere – which happened!

“various temples and schools all seem to sit beside each other quite harmoniously”

I had been searching and applying for jobs online when I noticed a supply teaching job at a Jewish Day School. Well I thought, perhaps a Jew in need will strike it lucky. I sent off my bits and bobs and was immensely surprised to get a response from the school's principal inviting me for an interview. This already was infinitely further than I had got before and my waning optimism returned. I truthfully felt that anybody giving me the opportunity to present myself would be impressed, and so in due course, I had my interview. The journey to the school was itself quite interesting. It nestles along a road in Richmond glamorously called No. 5 Road. For reasons that I do not quite yet understand, this road is peppered with mosques, temples, churches and religious independent schools. Richmond Jewish Day School (RJDS) sits relatively unceremoniously amongst these gold domed elaborate structures with their flags proudly blowing and dragons and idols watching the morning as if too say, what's all the fuss about? In fact I drove straight past the school on my first visit as I was keenly looking out for a 50 meter high rotating Star of David. Despite all the troubles in the world and the Middle East, these various temples and schools all seem to sit beside each other quite harmoniously, an excellent role model for some other parts of the world!

The school's principal seemed interested in my teaching background and I only realised after about 30 minutes of chatting

that perhaps she didn't realise I was Jewish. I thought that considering the nature of the school, perhaps this might go in my favour. I had assumed that she knew, as the name on my teaching certificate – Daniel Abraham Gilbert has a certain ring about it, but then she asked me if I was. With renewed religious fervour I proclaimed that indeed I was and the incredibly rare Edinburgh variant at that! I felt slightly guilty when I told her the size of Edinburgh's community (I estimated that there are approximately 200, but now they blame me for there being only 199)

I was invited back to the school again (I'd like to think on account of my enthusiasm for teaching and my faultless credentials) to give a model lesson on anything of my choosing. I decided to teach something I felt reasonably comfortable with and that I thought the children would enjoy (a paper folding exercise to reinforce 2D shape concepts) and was delighted and relieved when the principal offered me a close to full-time position starting in a week. Wow, for a non-practising Jew, I was being well looked after by somebody!

Next week, after tying up a few affairs and rapidly quitting about 4 part-time jobs, I started at the school. First lesson – PE with the grade 7s (mercifully, I don't have to teach anything on the Jewish curriculum or the kids would probably be deeply confused about their religion within a short space of time). I sat there in the gym hall waiting nervously for the class to arrive, wondering how to introduce myself, break the ice, appear friendly but firm, organised but easy-going when they tumbled in, wow... they're big! As soon as I was about to proceed, the morning announcements piped in over the loudspeaker, which included a reminder that at all times, boys should wear their Kippah – note to self – purchase Kippah and practise what you preach. Then, the Canadian national anthem started (how patriotic thought I, if only I knew the words). The anthem ended. “Good morning grade 7...” and then interrupted again but this time by the Israeli national anthem (Well I know the tune; I'll just mime the rest). After this had finished, I paused

for a good 5 seconds just in case another national anthem was about to be played, but it wasn't. I proceeded through the day introducing myself as the exotic Scottish Jewish teacher to classes of interested and slightly bemused be-yamulked children.

“the Israeli national anthem (Well I know the tune; I'll just mime the rest)”

At Richmond Jewish Day School (Google this to have a look at the school's website), 60% of class time is devoted to British Columbia's national curriculum and the rest is devoted to Hebrew and Judaic studies. Lessons are given on Hebrew scripture, Jewish culture and Israel and the Middle East's turbulent history. Because of the small class sizes and dedicated approach of the teachers, the children progress at the province's curriculum as well as any other school. The more diverse lessons require that there is a more diverse teaching staff. There really is a United Nations feel to the school; there are South-Africans, Canadians, Americans, Israelis and a novelty Scotsman. The pupils at the school also come from interesting and diverse backgrounds. There are of course

Jewish Canadians but there are also many children from Israeli and South-African households.

When arriving in the morning, it is quite normal to be greeted with a Boker Tov or a Shalom. Hebrew is frequently spoken in the staff rooms and the classrooms, and it is certainly a prominent feature of the school. My Hebrew reading has already improved by virtue of osmosis and I can now remind my parents when the various festivals are. It's strange how all the learning and wisdom that I ignored at Cheder seemed to find its way into my subconscious and has been reawakened by the school. I recognise the tunes they sing, I can read the Aleph Bet and I even know a good proportion of the prayers. I don't ever remember learning this stuff!

“I don't imagine I'll be donning black robes and hats and growing a long beard and sideburns any time soon”

One thing has become clear from my short time at the school - it doesn't really matter what part of the planet you're from or what faith you follow, school



kids seem to be pretty much the same across the board. For some reason, I had imagined that Jewish kids would be uniformly well-behaved and studious but fortunately, there is the usual mix of young academics, day-dreamers, organisers, bossy-boots and all the other characters that make teaching such an interesting profession. In addition to this, I find myself quite enjoying being back in a Jewish establishment. Being a recent immigrant in a strange land, it's nice to have a feeling of being back in the fold and having a small community I can identify with. I don't imagine that I'll be donning black robes and hats and growing a long beard and sideburns any time soon, but I may soon develop an uncanny sense of when festivals are, what customs I'm meant to be following and an irresistible urge to greet you in Hebrew. Kol Tov everyone!

Yom HaAtzmaut 5769

Tuesday 28th and Wednesday 29th April 2009

Philip Mason

This year, as a result of poor attendances in the past, a completely different format was adopted in order to encourage more families, young people and students to join in with the Community's Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations.

On the Tuesday evening, 4th/5th Iyar, the traditional Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut services were held in the Synagogue – one followed by the other. After the Service, to commemorate Israel's Fallen Soldiers, the congregation assembled in the community centre to watch the film “Catch a Giant Shadow”, part fact part fiction, which dramatized Israel's heroic struggles for independence in 1947/8. As expected, with the celebrations moved to the afternoon of Yom HaAtzmaut ie the next day, the attendance at these services was less than in the past. However, the 25 members who came had a very enjoyable evening.

The Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations started at 5pm on the Wednesday afternoon with activities for children. The Community Centre soon filled with families of young children thoroughly

enjoying a wide range of activities brought from Israel. The children moved from one table to the next enjoying colouring in transparencies and using lots of different stickers in drawings, making wooden spoon puppets and Star of David canes using clay, as well as completing a quiz on Yom HaAtzmaut and then looking for the answers placed around the Hall. The fun they were having was clearly visible on their faces. There was a real buzz, from first moment to last, which continued at 6pm. Other members, with students, children and teenagers, joined in to sing along with a superb Community orchestra, of widely differing ages, spontaneously formed for the occasion, that played the Hatikva with immense feeling and to everyone's delight.

A treat was to follow the superb Israeli buffet. Stephanie Brickman sung a variety of Yiddish songs and a stirring version of Yerushalayim Shel Zahav. Other Israeli songs were accompanied by Pete Garnett, of Moishe's Bagel, on his accordion. This not only got everyone singing, but also many were encouraged to get up and dance. Rabbi Rose thanked everyone who helped with the organization and preparation of the event. The evening ended with the singing of the Hatikva, led by Stephanie Brickman. Sixty five people went away enthralled by the truly celebratory atmosphere they had just enjoyed over the past few hours; in fact, it had been for all, a really special Yom HaAtzmaut, and one not to forget.

Society Reports

Association of Jewish Refugees – Edinburgh Group

Scotland and Newcastle Annual Get-Together – Wednesday 8th July 2009

Philip Mason

At the start of July, around 45 members of the Scottish and Newcastle groups of the Association of Jewish Refugees together with AJR Director Carol Rossen, Head of Social Services Sue Kurlander and Newcastle social worker Eileen Brady met up for their annual summer get-together; at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's Community Centre, just as they had done for several years in the past.

Following morning coffee/tea and biscuits, Agnes Isaacs, our new Scotland and Newcastle Groups Co-ordinator, warmly welcomed everyone who had made it to the meeting and introduced Carol Rossen, a Director of AJR, who indicated she was pleased to report that there were now 43 groups within AJR - with new members joining all the time, especially second generation members. Everyone was also excited to hear of a new venture, Refugees Voices, the AJR's new audio-visual Holocaust testimony collection. We then heard from the new head of Social Services, Sue Kurlander who reminded all present that the AJR team were there at all times to provide support and advice on any health and social care issue.

Members then split up and joined one of three discussion groups on Divided Loyalties, Second Generation (those born to refugees and survivors who came from Nazi Europe) or The Importance of Preserving our Heritage. Eileen Brady led a most interesting discussion on 'Divided Loyalties'. It was clear from the outset that each person had quite a different interpretation of the topic that made for an hour that passed more quickly than any of us would have anticipated. How easy would it be to choose between the country that had rejected you and the country that had taken you in and protected you from the Nazi regime? While some indicated they had soon

settled happily into their new environment and saw it all as a new adventure, others gave an opposite impression. One member's perception, about the difference in attitudes towards strangers settling in England and Scotland, was so strong that there was no question about where those loyalties lay. However, the most difficult expression of commitment to one side or another was the division that often exists between members of the same family. Also how did members feel today? If the worst came to the worst and there were aggressions between Britain and Israel, where then would loyalties lie? The personal stories that were exposed touched the group and opened up many opportunities for an hour's worth of fascinating opinions and revelations.

In the session on Second Generation, it soon became evident that the lives of second-generation members had usually been shaped by the tragedies their parents and wider family had experienced in the Holocaust and as a result they often carried an immense emotional burden. However, many refugee parents admitted they were too upset to tell their children anything as they grew up as they did not want to burden them with what had happened during the Shoah. One second generation member recalled always being told by her mother not to 'ask father any questions'. However this often resulted in second generation children growing up with little experience of Jewish life, especially as refugee parents also felt they didn't fit into and were, as a result, not really accepted by the wider UK Jewish community. Members asked if this increasing loss of 'Jewish glue' among refugees and their families had led to less of their Jewish heritage being passed on? For most, the answer was a firm 'no' – the reason – AJR. This in fact was why all present admitted they embraced AJR – as AJR was inclusive and welcomed everyone. Above all, it had provided the vehicle by which their families' memories could be safeguarded and the bigotry and hatred of the Holocaust fought and replaced by tolerance and equality. After an hour of intense discussion, everyone looked forward to lunch - a superb fresh salmon lunch that had been

kindly prepared by Irene Mason, assisted by Judy Gilbert, both members of AJR. There then followed a session of excellent musical entertainment by Gica Loening, which everyone very much enjoyed.

Batteries having been recharged, everyone settled down in the afternoon to a beautifully illustrated presentation by Edward Green on 'The Queen's Jewellery'. Everyone was enthralled to hear about the immense jewellery collection of the Royal Family. It was started by Queen Victoria. Collections we heard contained both state jewels and personal jewels – although Edward admitted that there was often a very fine line between the two. Both Queen Victoria and Queen Mary saw the importance of wearing jewellery and amassed large collections. In particular Queen Mary modernized the collection extensively and amassed a collection which included jewellery for all the large family she possessed - some of which we now see worn by Princess Michael of Kent and the Duchess of Gloucester. Of course, much of the jewellery collection was passed down to the Queen Mother whose immense collection contained at her death 40 tiaras, 105 brooches and 58 necklaces plus of course many rings, earrings and bracelets. As a result the present Queen also possesses an extensive collection of jewellery, most of which are Crown Jewels, some inherited and some gifts, including the largest pink diamond in the world. A firm favourite within the collection is the large collection of pearls. Interestingly, some pieces, we heard, have been copied and replicas worn by other family members. In addition, a lot of jewellery has been and still is broken up and used in other jewellery. Clearly all the Queens down from Queen Victoria have fully seen the importance of collecting and wearing jewellery. What a fascinating subject – everyone was so thankful to Edward Green for what was such a memorable and interesting presentation.

A vote of thanks to our speaker, Edward Green and all those involved with the day's organization and preparation, especially Irene Mason and Judy Gilbert, was then given by Agnes Isaacs. The day ended with a welcome cup of tea, to ensure members went away happy and contented after what had been a very stimulating day, brimming full of interesting sessions and presentations.

EJLS

Purim program me: Jews behaving badly! Sunday March 8th
As that great Yiddish novelist Aryeh Lev Tolstoy famously wrote, "All well-behaved Jews are alike, but every Jew behaving badly is a world to himself."

And so on Purim, the Edinburgh Jewish Literary made a fleeting visit to some of those worlds: Hendon and New Jersey; Jerusalem and Vilna; the early years of the moshav in Mandate Palestine and over to Edinburgh at a similar point in time.

So who took us there? Naomi Alderman (Disobedience) took us out to eat with the Hartogs on Friday night in Hendon, where her heroine Ronit did everything to outrage the Rebbitzin. Ellen Galford (The Dyke and Dybbuk) took us to a Seder night in North West London, which was less about the flight from Egypt and more about the flight into Chinatown. We spent a day in Philip Roth's New Jersey, where anything less than becoming a brain surgeon for whom 'Hatikvah' would play each time he entered theatre would not have satisfied Alexander Portnoy's mother. And then on to Vilna, where maskilim might have been enlightening, Talmudic students might have been arguing, Bundists might have been forging revolutions and Yiddishists might have been establishing an Institute to match the Academie Francaise. Karpinovich, however, led us down its meaner streets where, by anyone's standards, activities were not quite so "ay, ay ay".



And so we tripped along, hand in hand with Micheline Brannan, Stephanie Brinkman, Lesley Danzig, Ellen Galford, Carol Levstein, Charlie Raab and Heather Valencia: on to the early years of the moshav, as depicted in Shalev's Blue Mountain; back to Edinburgh where David Daiches portrays the 'bleggages' that were our forefathers; on to Jerusalem, to the Edison Theatre on a Saturday morning, from which time henceforth the young Amos Oz was declared a persona non grata in the company of any Herutnik worth his salt.

And so, finally, we came to rest on a park bench, where a couple of an indeterminate age in an indeterminate era is smooching to the accompaniment of fountains and the rustling of leaves (Heather's Yiddish troupe) playing in the background. Hayst dos libe?, asks the woman of indeterminate age. Well, what do you think? It's Purim, after all.

Elaine Samuel

WIZO

For the second year Edinburgh WIZO held a special fund raising lunch. This took place on 19 March at the splendid Balmoral Hotel. Although reduced in numbers, everyone who attended enjoyed being in the magnificent dining room with a fine view of Edinburgh Castle on a bright and sunny day. We made a short introduction to welcome some of our non-Jewish supporters. An excellent meal followed, after which Gill Bowman then entertained us with guitar and songs. This was a most enjoyable event and raised £400 towards our target.

On 5 April a small group of 15 attended the Festival Theatre to see Dorothy Paul on her one night show in town. It was a very funny evening and a full house roared with laughter at her stories and tales of her theatrical adventures and life experiences. We ended most enjoyable evening with supper at the home of Kate and Ronnie Goodwin.

A typical early summer day of sunshine, thunder. Lightning and heavy rain heralded the annual get together at the Goodwin home on 14 June. It certainly failed to dampen the spirits of the crowd of 55, which included a stalwart group of eight Glasgow ladies who travelled along the M8 by bus. An old fashioned tea, now happily coming back into favour, with cake stands consisting of layers of sandwiches, scones and cakes were laid out in the garden and the rooms of the house. The somewhat wet delicacies in the garden were still eagerly devoured by those trapped in the hammocks before escaping to the drier environment of the house. Over £400 was raised for WIZO funds.

Kate Goodwin

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

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

Michael Adler and Sue Fyvel 9 Warriston Crescent Edinburgh	Ena Amitai (nee Dorfman) 8 B/18 Nitza Boulevarde Netanya, Israel	Joe and Margaret Aronson 15 Arden Street Edinburgh	Betsy Dorfman	Rachel and Bernard Dorfman and family	Dr.Dov (Bertie) & Elizabeth Dorfman 19/32 Shlomo Hamelech Street Netanya, Israel
Sally & James Barker, Samuel & Sadie, 23 SouthoverWoodside Park, London	Clarice Been 80 Willifield Way London	Shirley and Peter Bennett	Fay, Max and Rodney Dorfman	Maurice and Sara Dorfman Jerusalem Israel	Norman Dorfman
Barbara and Leslie Bennie	Avril and Norman Berger 3 Kirk Park Edinburgh	Marcia & Lennie Berger, Yvonne, Gillian, Gary, Talia & Hannah 19 Springwood Park, Edinburgh	Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation	David Ellison	David, Gillian, Richard and Jonathan Field
Doreen & Laurence Bowman and family	Micheline, Duncan, David and Shrutee Brannan 31/3 Rattray Grove, Edinburgh	Rachelle Braverman, Cedar Sinai Park, Apt B122, Rose Schnitzer Manor, Portland OR USA	Ruth and Barry Fluss 28 Freud St. Haifa, Israel	Ruth and David Fluss 49 Parkside Drive Edgware	Caroline and Lennie Freedman
Josh and Stephanie Brickman and Miriam	Norma Brodie, Simon, Sarah, Caitlin, Eilidh, Maia, Daniel and Michael	Angela and James Brydon	Golda Friedler(nee Greenstone) 3/7 Nurok Street Netanya, Israel	Marla and Adam Gamoran 317 Cheyenne Trail Madison, WI, USA	Judy and Anthony Gilbert and family
June, Martin and Erika Budd	Christine and Dave Burns	Andrew and Kathy Caplan, Benjamin, James and Zoe 61, Aldenham Avenue, Radlett	Arnold and June Glass	Sylvia and Gerald Glass 1/14 Kinellan Road Edinburgh	David and Philip Goldberg 22 Mid Liberton Edinburgh
Ian and Rachel Caplan 6 The Crosspath Radlett	Sandra and Sidney Caplan 30 Duddingston Road West Edinburgh	Shari, Martin and Hannah Cohn-Simmen	David Gonshaw	Lord Julian Goodman Foot o’ the Walk Edinburgh	Kate and Ronny Goodwin 2 Mayfield Gardens Edinburgh
John and Hazel Cosgrove 4, Avenue Mansions Finchley Road, Hampstead	Nick, Caroline, Juliette and James Cosgrove, 3 Hollyview Close, London	Andrea and Malcolm Cowan 49/5 Mortonhall Road Edinburgh	Edward and Gillian Gordon 55 Rodney Road West Bridgford, Nottingham	Frances Gordon, Deborah, Alan and families, 14 Woodcock Dell Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex	Maryla and Edward Green and Freddie
Elliot, Caroline, Danielle and Olivia Cowan 31 Harrowes Meade, Edgware	Jack and Evelyn Cowan Glasgow	Dale Cowen (nee Pinkerton) 35 South Drive Harrogate	Rebekah Gronowski	Vicky Gruneberg and family 2 Orchard Brae Gardens Edinburgh	Millie and David Harris and family 20 Buckstone Drive Edinburgh
Carole and Mickey Cowen 58 Fountainhall Road Edinburgh	Joyce and Norman Cram	Dr Stanley and Annette Curry Flat 10, Riverine Lodge Old Lodge Way, Stanmore	Sheelagh and Phillip Harris	Gidona Henderson (nee Goodman) and family	Edwin and Doreen Hoffenberg 6a Downes Hill Haifa, Israel
Lesley, John, Samuel, Benjamin and Jonathan Danzig	Joyce Davidson and family London	Sylvia and John Donne	Hana Hornung 3 Ravelston Gardens Edinburgh	Irene and David Hyams	Gary Hyams

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

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו

Susan and Steven Hyams, James and Amanda	Rosalyn and Bernard Jackson	Howard, Valerie & Jacqueline Kahn 27 Blinkbonny Road, Edinburgh	Geoffrey and Lorna Nicholsby and family 3 Cammo Walk, Edinburgh	Eve Oppenheim and family 10 Ravelston Dykes Edinburgh	Mrs Rose Orgel
Sheryl and David Kaplan	Myrna and Morris Kaplan	Cassie, Jonty, Lily and Jack Karro Melbourne, Australia	Clarice and Berl Osborne 56/2 Spylaw Road Edinburgh	Maurice, Dinah and Samantha Penn 47 Fountainhall Road, Edinburgh	Charles and Gillian Raab and family
Lilian Kessly (nee Dorfman) and family, 27 Plantation Street, Menora, Western Australia	Isobel King, Melrose	Abby, Joel, Deborah, Saul and Joshua Korn Ra'anana, Israel	Stanley, Elaine, Aaron and Joel Raffel 31 Leamington Terrace, Edinburgh	Freda Riffkin	Harry, Mary, Rebecca, David Elizabeth and Jennifer Riffkin Teucharts Farm, by Leven
Sam Latter	Ian and Joan Leifer and family	Moshe & Kleile (nee Fluss) Lerner 21 Massada Street, Ramat Gan, Israel	Hilary and Arnold Rifkind	Richard Rifkind 114 Downham Crescent Prestwich, Manchester	Michael & Sharon Rifkind, Eli, Natan, Avigayil & Maytal, 348 Forest Avenue, Teaneck, NJ, USA
Anita Levinson and family 3 Ross Road, Edinburgh	Carol, Tom, Maurice and Benjamin	Emma and Bert Levy 34 Ruthven Avenue Glasgow	Malcolm and Edith Rifkind and family	Francoise Robertson 34 Coltbridge Terrace Edinburgh	Rabbi David Rose
Hilda Levy and family	Esther and Brian Levy 195 Stanmore Hill Stanmore, Middlesex	David, Elaine, Daniel & Michael Litman, 23 Beeston Fields Drive Nottingham	Martin and Phyllis (nee Stoller) Rosenberg, 27 Hillside Gardens Edgware, Middlesex	Karen, Ben and Sam Ross 14 Ewerland, Edinburgh	Alec and Pearl Rubenstein 16 Hillpark Crescent Edinburgh
Lowrie, Monina and Sharman families, Edinburgh, Lancaster and London	Sharon and Mike Lurie Kate and Debra 10 Torr Lane, Plymouth	Sara Lurie 62 Ashley Terrace Edinburgh	Brenda and Julius Rubin 16a/27 Nitza Boulevard Netanya, Israel	Jonathan, Molly, Ben and Jo Seckl	Philip and Juliet Segal
Sheva and Ann Lurie 26 South Lauder Road Edinburgh	Irene and Philip Mason 3 Oxfangs Road Edinburgh	Rabbi David and Elisheva Mason Hodaya,Netanel and Akiva	Yehudith and Rabbi Shalom Shapira 7/12 Givaty Street Ra'anana, Israel	Pearl and Ian Shein 37/4 Orchard Brae Avenue Edinburgh	Vivienne Shrier (nee Goldberg)
Jonathan and Deborah Mason Zack, Natan and Benjamin	Joe, Rosa and Clara Massie 22 Silverknowes Midway Edinburgh	David and Anita Mendelssohn 23 Braid Hills Road Edinburgh	Valerie and Bill Simpson 3 Hallhead Road Edinburgh	Rabbi Professor Danny & Debbie, Noam, Yonatan and Oritt Sinclair, and the Bermans, Jerusalem, Israel	Judy Sischy and family
Harold, Esther and Roy Mendelssohn	Gershon Mendick	Sandra Morris 130 Winston Ave Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Sam and Rachel Skop 2 Greenbank Gardens Edinburgh	Carolyn and Mervyn Smith 43 Shirley Avenue Cheam, Surrey	Gladys and Laurence Smith 20 Cammo Road Edinburgh
Blanche and Janet Mundy, Rowan and Martin Hendry	Michele, David, Sarah-Beth and Katie Neville	Rose and Hannah Newman 1 Bellevue Gardens Edinburgh	Nobby and Shelagh Smith 3/7 Nitza Boulevard Netanya, Israel	Jonny and Joyce Sperber Avigal and Mikael	Harold Sterne 12 Harduf Street Ramat Poleg, Israel

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

Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community	Jackie, Raymond, Lawrence and Michael Taylor	Carole Weinberg 6 Lyntonvale Avenue Gatley, Cheadle, Manchester
Hilary, Graham and Martin West Laura and Shlomo 14 Leighton Avenue, Pinner, Harrow	Madeleine Whiteson 28 Mayfields, Wembley Park, London	Ruzena Wood
Sheila and Alfred Yarrow 9/4 Nof Harim Jerusalem, Israel	Syd and Paula Zoltie	

Scottish Jewish Archives Centre

Frances Morgan

Harvey Kaplan came to address the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation on 24th May 2009 about the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre. He spoke of how, from the 17th century and early 18th century, Jews were recorded as living in Edinburgh with the first community established in 1816, soon followed by Glasgow in 1823, and other Scottish cities during the 19th century. The Garnethill Synagogue in Glasgow – the first to be purpose-built in Scotland, was opened in 1879 and is now home to the SJAC.

Founded in 1987, the purpose of the Centre is to record and illustrate the history of Jews in Scotland with respect to the religious, organisational, social, economic, political, cultural, and the family life of Jews since the 18th century, and to publish articles and books. The Centre is home to a wide range of material from synagogue registers such as circumcision registers, minute books, the Edinburgh Zionist Association, annual reports, youth groups, birth certificates, wedding invitations, marriage documents and records of Jewish burial grounds.

All this information is now under one roof for the first time. There is a database with a record of 34,000 Scottish Jews over time, maintained for the purpose of family history research including enquiries from around the world, and media enquiries.

There are also back copies of Shul magazines, a full set of the Edinburgh Star, cine film, DVDs, the Jewish Echo, material about the Edinburgh University Jewish Society, and the minutes of the Edinburgh Zionist Association. An oral history collection has been developed, as well as artefacts such as cups, trophies, and sculptures and paintings including those of Benno Schotz and Hannah Frank.

The basement of Garnethill Synagogue houses a museum display and historical timeline. The Edinburgh material at the

Centre includes the circumcision registers, lists of burials, Edinburgh Zionist Association minutes, syllabuses of the Jewish Literary Society, and the newsletter of Sukkat Shalom. Minutes and records of Edinburgh synagogues from the 1860s onwards are housed in Salisbury Road.

Looking at the 1901 Census for Edinburgh, Harvey Kaplan found 1,300 Jewish names. Most lived on the south side near the University with a larger percentage in the lower age range. He found that 55% were born in Britain and Ireland in contrast to the Gorbals community, making Edinburgh a more ‘anglified’ community. Many of the immigrant families had moved around such as moving from Dublin to Edinburgh, as records of the births show.

Occupations included running a fruit shop, dressmaker’s assistant, tailors and drapers with many travellers, hawkers, and peddlers. There were also those in the jewellery trade, music, pictures, tea, hardware, waterproof garments, butchers, pawnbrokers, Hebrew teachers, sugar/coal merchants, a law clerk and a medical student. It was found that the Census clerk could not understand many of the responses; therefore occasional inaccuracy may occur.

Jewish religious life in Edinburgh in 1901 centred round the main synagogue in Graham Street – a converted chapel, although there were five congregations in Edinburgh for 1300 people. There were smaller congregations meeting in Dalry, Richmond Street and Lothian Street. Graham Street had a young men’s association. It was a fragmented community with an influx of refugees, and immigrants along with some benefit systems in place for the needy such as that provided by the King Edward Lodge.

In 1890 the Edinburgh Zionist movement had the support of Edinburgh leaders, there was also a Ladies Zionist Association with 200 hundred ladies, and also some Christian support for Zionism. At a cultural level an Orchestral Society was formed, and the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society was set up in 1888.

The talk ended with questions and answers where issues such as funding of the SJAC, the research opportunities provided by digitised interviews, the cohesion of the community as being already well under way by 1915, and the evolving role of the Rabbi, were all discussed.

It was also seen that that despite some tensions between Shuls, that Jews, in general, liked Scotland. Some of the earliest material of the 19th century may have been lost – and no doubt some of the committee meetings may have been of a lively nature.

Yiddish had a uniting effect, and there is still material that requires sorting and classifying. Harvey Kaplan suggested that there is potential for a history of the Edinburgh Jewish population. It was more scattered than the Gorbals community (6000) as indicated by the 1901 Census.

A primary school headmaster wrote in his log book of that time that Jewish children were clean and well behaved, and in the 19th century it is seen that several Jews were already involved in civic and political life with roles such as burghers, mayors, baillies, and Lord Provost; as they are even more so today.

AGM of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation
Chairman’s Report

Hilary Rifkind

Hilary Rifkind, the Chairman of the Board of Management, welcomed the 33 members who attended the AGM of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, which was held on Wednesday 24th June in the Community Centre. She said how grateful she was that so many had made a special effort to attend, as there were a significant number of people away on holiday.

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

The following 12 members were elected to the Board of Management: Malcolm Cowan, Anthony Gilbert, Melissa Gilroy, David Goldberg, Steven Hyams, Anita Mendelssohn, Gershon Mendick, David Neville, Arnold Rifkind, Hilary Rifkind,

The Jewish community was well liked in wider Edinburgh and Scotland.

Visitors to the Centre include researchers, pupils, postgraduates, journalists, television producers, tourists, family historians and others. As mentioned there is still much work to do at the SJAC, and photographs and information about Jews in Scotland are always welcome. Relatives of Edinburgh Jews can now be found all over the world, and thus the SJAC helps people put their stories back together again.

Currently there is a new exhibition entitled ‘A New Life In Scotland’. Lectures and symposia are held, as are Open Days, and visits can be made, with prior notice being required for this. Books include ‘The Gorbals Jewish Community in 1901’ by Harvey L. Kaplan, and ‘Scotland’s Jews’ by Dr Kenneth E. Collins.

The SJAC has a website (www.sjac.org.uk) and email address: info.@sjac.org.uk with a bookshop and DVDs. There is a committee that produces two newsletters a year and the Centre is an Associate member of Museums Galleries Scotland.

Jackie Taylor, Raymond Taylor. Morris Kaplan and Philip Mason were elected as Senior and Junior Wardens respectively. Malcolm Cowan, John Cosgrove and Philip Mason were re-elected as Honorary Vice-Presidents. Hilary Rifkind was re-elected as Chairman of the Board and Malcolm Cowan was elected as Honorary Treasurer.

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

Hilary Rifkind praised the Community Centre Committee for the various enjoyable events that they have organised and for their successful fund-raising. The Chair of the committee, Steven Hyams, presented his report, thanking the committee members for all their hard work and also everyone who had supported functions throughout the year.

The Chairman then reported on the many diverse activities of the year and commented that our relationship with the wider community continues to flourish. Our strong links with the City of Edinburgh are marked annually by the Civic Service, Holocaust Memorial Day and the service for Yom HaShoah and we have an excellent relationship with Lothian and Borders Police. She also reported that the Cheder is thriving, with a delightful number of young children, and that the teachers, together with the teenage helpers, create a happy and active environment. There is a lot of support from the parents, several of whom are Israeli and whose input adds an important dimension to Cheder activities; they helped make the Yom Ha’atzmaut celebration one of the highlights of the year.

During the last year there have been more people offering to help with preparation for various events. The Chairman said she has been particularly gratified that the group of Cheder mums offered their services to make the desserts for one of our Friday Night Dinners, and also in the preparation of food for Yom Ha’atzmaut.

More men have committed themselves to helping make a Minyan using the Evite online invitation website and in fact since it started it there has been a Minyan for every Friday night and erev Yom Tov service.

The Chairman concluded her report by saying that managing the affairs of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation is going to become even more difficult in the immediate future: there is ever-increasing

legislation to contend with; we are soon to be losing several members, who are leaving Edinburgh to be nearer their children, whose active contribution to a wide range of communal activities has been immense, who are greatly valued and will be sorely missed; and we have to face essential financial constraints. There is a critical need for more people to be prepared to join the Board and take on management roles.

Sidney Caplan noted that during the question and answer of any other competent business, the Hon Life President, Mickey Cowen, suggested setting up a sub committee, which could think about future eventualities. With the continued fall of numbers, maintaining the property could amount to financial suicide. Not this or next year, but possibly in five years time, consideration might have to be given to move from the current Shul building to a smaller place.

Au revoir to Irene and Philip Mason

Edward Green

Visiting Irene and Philip Mason in their welcoming home in Fairmilehead, you are immediately immersed in the comforting glow of Yiddishkeit. The display cabinet sparkles with Kiddush cups, Menorahs, Chanukiahs and other religious artefacts that you know are there not just for show, but also for use.

For Irene and Philip have been two of our most active members in the Community since their move to Edinburgh over thirty-seven years ago. Originally coming for a period of three years, Irene and Philip moved to Edinburgh for Philip to take up a post as a senior scientist within the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology just outside of the city. They had met while Philip had been doing his Doctorate at Cambridge and Irene had been working as a scientist. Philip recalls being asked by his Director to take this young lady who had come for an interview for a coffee and to introduce her colleagues. Philip's boss had singled him out as he suspected that Irene may have been Jewish. He was not to know that this would lead to romance and marriage.

Philip was born in Bristol in 1942 and Irene in Luton some years later. They married at North Finchley and Woodside Park Synagogue in August 1970, remaining in Cambridge for their first year of marriage. However, on moving to Edinburgh, they were soon to be most impressed by the civility of the city and its people, and the warm welcome from within the Edinburgh Hebrew Community. Irene recalls walking into the Dominion Furs Company with Philip looking for a warm coat with which to battle the Edinburgh winter, and meeting Irene Hyams as her first and very welcoming introduction into Edinburgh Jewish life. Irene was to sell her not only a coat but the joys of the local Jewish Community.

They were to immerse themselves into Jewish life very swiftly; firstly joining the Jewish Literary Society and soon meeting other couples like themselves. Many regard this period in EHC's history as the golden years post-war, where there were many families with young children; the thriving Cheder boasting over sixty boys and girls. Their two sons were born soon after



David & Jonathan Mason

their arrival in Edinburgh, David in April 1973, and Jonathan in June 1975.

Both the boys were to enjoy wonderful childhoods in Edinburgh, attending George Watson College, being barmitzvahed in Salisbury Road and having the strong influence of not only their parents with their traditional Jewish home, but the Rabbis (Sam Knopp, Danny Sinclair and Shalom Shapira) and others within the Synagogue to nurture them to become the successful young men that they are today. Gaining his degrees from the London School of Economics, David is now the well-known and much loved Rabbi of Muswell Hill Synagogue in London, and Jonathan having attended the Dental School at Sheffield University, a dentist in North London with a strong practice and a fine reputation.

Philip feels the greatest strength of the EHC is its mutual support and the way the community crosses many differing groups and ages. He also felt it had always been a very vibrant community as a result of all the warm, strong, determined characters that it has been fortunate to have throughout the years. Irene likes to feel that Philip has always brought a calming and unifying influence to any group or committee that he has been involved with. This is beyond dispute for Philip has been a most popular and active member of the Community for so long and been involved in so much. In his time, Philip has served as the Parnas and Gabbai of the Synagogue, the Secretary, Treasurer and President of the EHC, the Secretary and Chairman of the Community Centre, the Secretary and President of the Edinburgh

Jewish Literary Society, the Secretary and President of Bnai Brith, the Secretary for seven years and the Master for four of Lodge Solomon, a Committee member of the Burial Society and a member of the Tahara team, a member of the board of this esteemed publication, an active member of the Association of Jewish Refugees, the Treasurer of the Friends of Israel, Vice Chairman of ScoJec, and if that has not been enough has sung as Second Tenor in the Choir for more than 30 years!

Irene has been active in her role not only in supporting Philip in all that he did and does, but also as Treasurer of WIZO in Edinburgh for many years, a member of the Committee for the Community Hall and cooking for the Luncheon Club.

But now with their children making their lives in London and the arrival of their five grandsons and one granddaughter, Irene and Philip have decided that it is time for them too to make the move. As expected with loving and giving parents, such as Irene and Philip Mason, both their sons and Elisheva and Deborah are fighting as to whom Irene and Philip will settle closer. In true Solomon style, they have decided to make their home in a different area, further enough away not to crowd but close enough to be able to see them easily. And indeed, had it not been for their sons, Irene and Philip would have remained in Edinburgh enjoying the many friendships they have made over the years.

Philip says what he likes most about Edinburgh Jewish life is the routine and the way that the community all know each other. He knows that by moving to Bushey Heath where the Jewish

Community and the Synagogue are many times larger than here, he will never enjoy the feeling that he has here of being a member of a large extended family with so much goodwill.

But they are much looking forward to taking a greater part in their children and grandchildren's lives and watching their grandchildren develop and grow day by day. Irene who has never heard Philip over the years saying no to any request made, hopes that he will take life a little easier. Even Philip acknowledges that he often had wished to say no at the time, but heard himself saying yes, but always, he emphasizes with no regret. For their lives have been ones of communal giving, of generosity in time and spirit, and of patience and concern for others.

Philip tells me that the Shul in Bushey is not half as beautiful as the one in Edinburgh. He knows that he will one of a very large congregation on Shabbat and Irene and Philip know that they will miss the intimacy of Edinburgh Community enormously. Both hope that their decision not to get involved in Communal work in Bushey, will allow them more time for their own personal interests such as tutoring local youngsters in biology as well as enabling Philip to build on previous links with the Royal Botanic Garden in Kew.

They will miss all their friends from the Community but our loss will be greater. There is no doubt that Irene and Philip's departure will leave an enormous void in the Edinburgh. We will feel that we have lost not just a couple but also a significant number from our midst.

Reviews

“Blitz” by Lionel Bart

performed by The Southern Light Opera Company 10-14 March 2009.

Janet Mundy



One of my favourite selections on “Children's Favourites” in the early 1960s was a song called “Mums and Dads”,

sung by a cockney children's choir. I had no idea where it came from and I could not hear most of the words, but I was entranced by the “let's play mums and dads” chorus. Eventually I discovered that it was written by Lionel Bart of “Oliver!” fame and that it came from a musical called “Blitz!” (he liked his exclamation marks). I knew nothing else about the musical, but its title and the children's chorus stuck with me.

Roll forward over 40 years and I'm sitting at a meeting of the Jewish Book Group in Edinburgh, when someone mentions that a local amateur operatic company is performing “Blitz!” the following week. At last, I can discover the source of this delightful ditty. A quick scan on the Internet revealed that Lionel Bart was going back to his roots in the East End of London during the war to tell a story of rivalry between Jewish and Irish market stall holders in a surprisingly multicultural society and their experiences of surviving the Blitz. Off I went to the theatre, ready to be transported (evacuated?) back to my youth, and back to the early 40s.

“Blitz!” opens with a scene on the platform of the Bank underground station where the inhabitants of Petticoat Lane are taking refuge during a regular air raid. We are introduced to the two main families – the Jewish Blitzteins, led by matriarch Mrs Blitztein (I don't believe we ever learn her first name) and the Irish Lockes, whose father Alfred has a long term feud with Mrs Blitztein. The two never speak to each other directly (singing a song called “Tell Him, Tell Her”), only through their children, despite (or perhaps because of) their holding adjacent stalls at the market. Their experience of the war, however, is similar, and their respective sons, Harry and Georgie, are on embarkation leave from the army. A further source of tension between the families soon arises, as Georgie and Carol Blitztein fall in love.

Like most musicals, romance is at the heart of “Blitz!”, as Georgie and Carol's relationship is affected by their traumatic but different experiences of the war during their separation. (Incidentally, “Far Away”, Carol's lament for Georgie when he's away fighting, was a hit for Shirley Bassey in the 1960s.) However,

the undoubted star of the show is Mrs Blitztein, a grotesque stereotypical Jewish mother, but it is a portrayal that we recognise as coming from a loving Jewish son with deep affection. Her dialogue is full of clichés – “I thought he was going to be a lawyer – at least a doctor, and all he can think about is girls. Look, another one he’s picked up, a Schicksa” and “Company – chumpany. So she can’t find a Jewish boyfriend?” – but, like Fagin, there’s more to her than caricature. It’s a pleasure to see a musical with a middle-aged Jewish woman stealing the show, and she certainly dominates throughout, making us laugh and tugging at our heartstrings, especially when she sings to her dead husband “So tell me Jack, what do I do now?”. She sings one of her answers to this question – “Bake a Cake”!

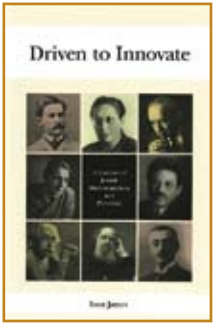
Although “Blitz!” is far less well known than “Oliver!”, it ran for over 500 performances in London’s West End in the early 1960s. Like “Oliver!” it includes a large cast of children, sent away as evacuees, then returning to play “Mums and Dads” outside the pub while their parents are boozing inside. It also includes a picture of East End lowlife, as Harry Blitztein becomes a black marketeer. Alfred Locke, and his pal Ernie Nearmiss, provide much of the comedy and the latter often moves the story forward, bringing reports of bombings that he’s witnessed. It is unashamedly sentimental and nostalgic, including “The Day After Tomorrow”, a song written by Bart and recorded by Vera Lynn especially for the show, relayed as a radio broadcast along with the voice of Winston Churchill. The production I saw was performed by Edinburgh’s Southern Light Opera Company. The cast were neither Jewish nor cockney, but made a pretty good job with the accents and language – as an amateur company, they must be forgiven if the Scottish brogue occasionally slipped through. Particular praise is due to Dorothy Johnstone, who performed Mrs Blitztein magnificently, and to Margo Dunn, the wife of a Church of Scotland minister, who made a fine job of playing one of the minor Yiddisher characters, Mrs Josephs. But of course, it was the children who brought tears to the eyes of the proud parents, and transported me back to my childhood, listening to “Mums and Dads” on Children’s Favourites.

Driven to Innovate by Ioan James

Anthony Gilbert

This is a rather different book from those customarily reviewed in the Star; it is a book about Jewish mathematicians and physicists of the highest calibre, born roughly between 1820 and 1900, written, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, by the non-Jewish mathematician Ioan James. As this is not entirely expected, a few words about the author are in order. Ioan James is an emeritus Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University. He has had a highly distinguished mathematical career, specialising in Geometry and Topology. Now in his early eighties, in recent years he has written a number of books focussing more on scientists than science itself, and he has tended to point his microscope at various minority groups distinguished in one way or another. Among the titles are: ‘Remarkable Biologists’; Remarkable Physicists’; Remarkable Mathematicians’ and ‘Asperger’s Syndrome And High Achievement: some Very Remarkable People’. This latest offering certainly seems to fit into the same mould.

The bulk of the book is devoted to relatively short biographies of thirty-five leading Jewish mathematicians and physicists born in the years mentioned above; actually ‘Jewish’ has to be interpreted pretty liberally here. It is probably true that most of them could claim some Jewish ancestry, in at least one case only through a grandparent, but one reads with depressing regularity how many, born Jewish, converted to other faiths through the exigencies of the times and circumstances in which they lived. It is also true that while some were proud of their Jewish heritage, for most their Jewishness was a matter of small importance to them, and very few indeed practised the religion in any way. There is an extensive bibliography at the end of the work, which would suggest that Professor James has researched his subject thoroughly, but one gains a strong impression that these cameos, while



interesting, are in a sense all second-hand, that there is nothing that is really novel in the book other than the fact that they have been brought together in one volume.

Among the cameos themselves there is a certain recurrence of pattern, which can get a bit mind-numbing if read quickly...so maybe the book is one to dip into rather than read from cover to cover. Paraphrasing somewhat, one reads about the birth and family background of the subject, the alarming intellectual precociousness in school, the speedy advance through university; and then...the struggle for acceptance, because the book clearly brings out the very strong whiff of anti-Semitism (or, of course in fascist Germany, much more than a strong whiff) that was rampant in middle Europe, both in society in general, and, depressingly, in universities in particular, throughout the period covered. Great Britain and America come out of this as rather more liberal-minded, but not overly so: Jewish mathematicians trying to escape to America from Germany in the 1930’s found themselves up against severe quotas in American universities and some outright anti-Semitism from highly distinguished American mathematicians. One can’t help feeling that if they were that bright they might have had the intelligence to overcome their prejudices, but this was not so. Continuing with the theme of the cameos, because of the brilliance of their research, the subject eventually finds a distinguished backer and is able to establish him or herself; then moves around various establishments turning out more remarkable research and building their reputation; finally, if they did not die too young, retirement full of honours. This pattern within the biographies is at least mollified somewhat by some insights into the characters of the people portrayed; and in this respect they are pretty much a microcosm of society at large; some brash, some finding relationships difficult, and yet others universally loved.

In some ways the sections that precede the cameos are more interesting than the cameos themselves, because Professor James sets the biographical scene by giving a bit of a potted history of the Jewish people and then surmising as to why it is that in the roll call of intellectual

achievement, Jews box so remarkably above their weight. The reasons advanced are pretty much the standard ones, notably a reverence for study, and a need to be able to think on their feet owing to the social exclusion over long epochs, but the interest in this section derives from its tentative character. There are of course no firm conclusions, but it gives the reader something to chew over.

As someone working in a Mathematics Department (with at least 3 members among 40 or so who could claim Jewish extraction), and with a training primarily in Physical Applied Maths, I would imagine that most of the figures in the book were more familiar to me than most readers, and this raised some questions for me. Who is this book aimed at? My hunch would be that the book would be of only

limited interest to a non-specialist, and in some ways it seems to miss the mark for a specialist too, because there is actually very little detail about the Maths or Physics that these remarkable people discovered (but of course any such detail would probably be hard going for the non-specialist). That’s not to say that I did not find the book interesting: I did, and in some ways the book confirmed a loosely held belief of mine, and in others it gave me quite a surprise. The former was that while there are Jewish physicists of the absolute summit of eminence (notably Einstein), Jewish mathematicians have not quite made those heights. A few of the most utterly pre-eminent mathematicians are Euler, Gauss (but these two date from an epoch which largely predates the Jewish emancipation and the emergence of Jewish scientists) and more recently,

Poincaré, Hilbert: none of them are Jewish. On the other hand, one can see that there is a goodly number of Jewish mathematicians in the rank immediately below these giants, and this was the surprise, because when you study Maths, you learn about important theorems which have the name of distinguished mathematicians associated with them, but you rarely learn much about the people themselves. What the book revealed to me was how many of these were of Jewish ancestry; I had had no idea. Picking a few of the earlier ones, the highly distinguished names of Jacobi, Eisenstein, Kronecker and Cantor were all completely familiar to me, but their Jewishness was not, so that was a very pleasant discovery. And then there was one more question... on whom will Professor James turn his beady eye next?

Professor Sir Neil MacCormick (1941-2009) A Personal Memoir and an Academic Tribute

Rabbi Professor Daniel Sinclair

In the course of my doctoral studies in Jewish law at the Hebrew University during the early 1980’s, I developed an interest in the philosophy of law in general, and in the nature of legal reasoning in particular. As a result of that interest, I looked for a post-doctoral opening in the field of jurisprudence, and upon consultation with my good friend and colleague, Prof. Bernard Jackson, I first heard the name Neil MacCormick. Bernard strongly recommended him as a potential mentor for me in the area of legal reasoning. At the time, Prof. MacCormick was Regius Professor of Public Law at the University of Edinburgh; Director of the Centre for Criminology and the Social and Philosophical Study of Law at the University, Dean of the Faculty of Law, and a scholar of international renown in the field of jurisprudence.

Prof. Jackson also informed me that the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, of which he had been a member during his stay in Edinburgh, was looking for a Minister, and he suggested that I apply for the position. The combination of academic and spiritual opportunities offered by Edinburgh was a highly attractive one, and I began to correspond with both Prof. MacCormick and the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. My letter to Prof. MacCormick outlining my academic interest in the philosophy of legal reasoning, and my plan to use it in the context of Jewish law elicited a warm and enthusiastic reply, and our first meeting in the course of a short visit to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1983 confirmed my impression that Neil MacCormick was the ideal person to supervise my post-doctoral studies. During that visit, I met with the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and officiated at the High Holyday services. In the spring of 1984, I arrived in Scotland together with my family, and commenced

my duties as Minister of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation on the understanding that I would also be pursuing post-doctoral studies at Edinburgh University.

Neil was both a wonderful mentor and an exceptionally fine human being. He guided my first halting steps in the philosophy of law with just the right blend of patience and academic rigour. A year and a half after my arrival in Edinburgh, he invited me to become a tutor in jurisprudence, and I continued in that role until the end of our three and a half year stay in Scotland. I should point out that Neil was an absolutely compelling teacher. He was an extremely eloquent speaker, even in the most casual of contexts, and had a wonderful sense of humour.

Undoubtedly, the most remarkable feature of my academic association with Neil was the very fact that he was prepared to commit to a project which was ultimately based upon Jewish law. It indicated generosity of spirit, faith in people from different traditions, and belief in the universally compelling nature of rationality. His faith in the integrity of my analysis of Jewish law, and his belief in the application of a universally valid jurisprudential approach to a religious system such as halakhah, made the project possible.

At the level of human relations, working with Neil was a rare privilege. His warmth, generosity and enthusiasm were always in evidence. If Neil said that a particular suggestion was “a grand idea” - and he did so not infrequently - there was no doubt that he meant it, and one would spare no effort in order to work it up into a plausible academic thesis.

His respect for all people was profound and absolutely genuine, and came out in his dealings with students, administrative staff and colleagues alike. In that respect, he was a model of “menschlichkeit”.

Neil, who was a native Glaswegian, and whose Master’s degree was obtained in English literature and philosophy at Glasgow University, certainly enjoyed life, and a working lunch with him was a serious challenge to my capacity to imbibe liquid refreshment. It was quite evident that in that respect at any rate, a Yeshiva education did not quite provide the same type of preparation for life as did an undergraduate training at Glasgow University!

This brief memoir would be incomplete without mentioning the occasion on which I had the pleasure of welcoming him at a Shabbat morning service in the Synagogue in Salisbury Road. It was the Bar Mitzvah of Benji Adler, son of Mike and the late Ruth Adler. Ruth wrote her Ph.D. thesis under Neil’s supervision, and was working with him at Edinburgh University at the time. Needless to say, she was also a great fan. Neil attended the service and spoke at the luncheon. He gave a wonderfully witty and wise after-dinner speech, and generally graced the simchah with his presence.

Neil came from a staunch Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) family, and from 1999 until 2004 he was an SNP Member of the European Parliament. Indeed, he was voted Scottish Euro MP of the Year three times at The Herald Politician of the Year Awards.

Amongst his many distinctions, he was knighted in 2001, and in 2004, he received the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

In 2008, he retired from the University after 36 years as Professor. He planned to continue lecturing in New York, and to devote himself to Scottish governance, travel and time with his family. His final academic book, Practical Reason in Law and Morality appeared recently.

Neil and I met on a few occasions following my return to Israel in 1987, and we corresponded from time to time. It came as a great shock to me last winter to hear that he was suffering from a serious cancer, and my immediate reaction was to call. He answered the phone in his usual buoyant manner, and after a cursory reference to his illness, proceeded to talk about matters of mutual academic interest. At the time, I was writing a piece combining legal philosophy with Jewish law, which I mailed to him the week after our telephone conversation. The very next day, I received a mail from him with a number of penetrating and concise critical comments, and, in true Neil MacCormick fashion, a generous compliment on the article as a whole.

Neil bore his final illness with great fortitude and courage. He is survived by his wife Flora; by three children from his first marriage to Karen Barr, and three step-children.

MacCormick on Legal Reasoning

In his classic text on legal reasoning, Legal Reasoning and Legal Theory, published in 1978 by Oxford University - Neil’s

second alma mater at which he took a first in jurisprudence at Balliol College - he deals with one of the thorniest questions in the philosophy of law, namely, is legal reasoning a genuinely deductive exercise in terms of formal logic, or is it merely a formalistic smoke-screen for the ideologies and social policies of the legal profession and the judiciary? Much ink has been spilt on this debate, and legal philosophers have generally lined up on either side of it. Neil succeeded in finding a middle way between the two extremes, and in his typical pellucid style, laid out a model consisting of two parts. The first part is based on formal logic and demonstrates that fairly straightforward legal cases can be successfully subsumed under the categories of logically sound argumentation. The second part shows that, in more complex cases, many of which may involve serious moral issues, rationality still reigns, and the three criteria of consistency, coherence and consequences, when elucidated in a richly-textured fashion, are sufficient to explain how jurists and judges reach their conclusions as to the legal result in the case at hand.

The idea that reason alone is insufficient to guide choices in matters of moral complexity goes back to the 18th century Scottish philosopher, David Hume, and is still widely shared in its strong form by many philosophers. MacCormick points out that Thomas Reid, Hume’s younger contemporary who succeeded Adam Smith in the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, adopted a much more generous view of the role of reason in making such choices. MacCormick argues in favour of interpreting Hume in the light of the approach adopted by Reid and other Scottish thinkers who shared his view of the role of rationality in moral decision-making. MacCormick characterises this type of reasoning as practical reasoning, and argues for its logical rigour. Indeed, the logical pedigree of practical reason goes back as far as Aristotle. On this basis, MacCormick is able to make a convincing case for the application of rational modes of resolution to complex and morally challenging cases, as well as to straightforward ones. In his own words, his theory “sets a course between two extreme positions”, namely, the claim that “pure reason alone can wholly determine what we ought to do”, and total irrationalism (Legal Reasoning and Legal Theory, 265).

In addition to the Scottish philosophical tradition to which he was heir, Neil MacCormick’s search for the rationally-justifiable middle ground in the legal reasoning debate was also grounded in the views of the celebrated Oxford professor of jurisprudence, H.L.A. Hart, who was both a senior colleague and a friend of Neil’s when he was a Fellow and Tutor at Balliol College (1967-1972). In 1981, Neil published a critical study of Hart’s contributions to jurisprudence, a second edition of which appeared in 2007.

Scottish Nationalism

It is tempting to try to identify a link between Neil MacCormick’s philosophical doctrine of practical reason and his politics. Neil’s father, “King John” MacCormick, a prominent Glasgow lawyer and leading Scottish Nationalist was a major influence on him, and one of Neil’s last written contributions was an introduction to his father’s book, The Flag in the Wind. Nevertheless, his approach to Scottish Nationalism, was a pragmatic one in the sense that it attached major significance to achieving practical results aimed at improving the well-being of the Scottish people, rather than pursuing an ideologically pure nationalist agenda.

His ideas were expressed with typical clarity and precision in a collection of essays he edited in 1970 entitled The Scottish Debate. At the end of the day, therefore, his legal theory and his political views may very well represent two sides of the same coin.

The MacCormick Model of Legal Reasoning in Relation to Jewish Law

The debate concerning the nature of legal reasoning is also a feature of Jewish law scholarship. Traditionalists contend that halakhic conclusions are based upon logically rigorous canons of interpretation, whereas many modern academic scholars argue that in many instances, such conclusions are ultimately shaped by considerations of religious policy, expediency or religious ideology. The ramifications of the latter view are aptly captured

in a phrase penned by R. Abraham Kook in 1912: “If there is a rabbinic will, there is a halakhic way” (Orah Mishpat no.112). The MacCormick model may very well provide a basis for claiming that the traditionalist claim is accurate as far as straightforward cases go, but that more complex ones are resolved on the basis of rational but less neatly definable concepts such as consistency, coherence and consequences. It is not simply a matter of “rabbinic will”, but of definitive interpretive categories which are, however, wider in scope than those championed by the traditionalists. In this respect, Neil MacCormick’s ‘s intellectual contribution to the philosophy of law is also relevant to Jewish law.

Prof. Sir Neil MacCormick passed away on 5th April, 2009 in Edinburgh. May his memory be a blessing.

Miriam Lichtenstein

12 April 1916 to 27 June 2009

Asher Selig Kaufman

Miriam (always known as Meechie) was born during an air-raid in WWI. Her secondary school and university education mirrors that of the Jewish student body in Edinburgh in the 1930’s, including her protective elder brother Abe.

Her sensitivity to her younger brothers Mordechai and me was shown when I returned home from a fall from the pram. Her tears welled up when she saw my forehead heavily bandaged from a severe gash. Nine years separated us; I as a primary-school boy grew up listening to Meechie conjugating Latin roots amo, amos, amat for tests in Boroughmuir School. After school, we had the daily Heder. The curriculum included Humash with Rashi commentary.

Although Meechie was part of a large Zionist family - two aunts and our grandmother had already settled in Palestine - she, unlike Mordechai and I, was not exposed to a Zionist youth movement. Habonim did not reach Edinburgh until 1939 and Bnei Akiva later. For Meechie and her friends there were the Edinburgh University Jewish Society and the Inter- University Jewish Federation (IUJF) linking students in Britain.

Open house welcomed Meechie’s friends, Sylvia Lindey, Sylvia Daiches and Adèle Pass to name a few. From time to time, joyous parties were held at home. Notable was Arthur Furst’s theatrical performance given specially early for us youngsters, after which at 8.45 we were expected to retire to bed. These were happy days.

Meechie always dressed elegantly, even to the end. Seemingly all of us came under the spell (genetic

Meechie & Iona



Meechie 1952t



or otherwise) of our mother. Meechie gained her M.A. in the Arts Faculty at the University of Edinburgh. She closely followed our scholastic achievements, adding encouragement, so much so that the next natural step after our schooling was nothing but university.

She loved to sing to her own piano accompaniment. It was this that brought her to know Meir Lichtenstein, a medical doctor who had the intuition to leave Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania, and come to Edinburgh before WWII. Meir quickly entered the life of the Jewish community and organised a choir singing Hebrew songs, culminating in a great performance at a Purim fancy-dress ball. Meechie and some of her family and friends participated in the choir. The duet of Meechie and Meir singing to their piano

and ukulele playing, soon led to their engagement. The wedding took place on a significant day, the last day of street lighting before the country was plunged into the blackout of WWII.

After a hard struggle, Meir was allowed to practice medicine. The family moved to Glasgow during the second half of WWII and joined the Queen's Park synagogue. Meir, fluent in Hebrew, became a prominent member of the local Hebrew-speaking circle.

The family, now with two young daughters, was happily settled in Glasgow. However, in 1949 Meir received a call to join his mother and brother who had moved from Kovno to San Francisco before WWII. Despite our family's misgivings - if a move has to be made, better to go to Israel

and join the family there - San Francisco gained the upper hand. Their visits to Britain and to Israel and reciprocal visits to SF, could not replace the closely-knit family-life in Scotland. Meechie was proud of her family's achievements. She was blessed to participate in two great-grandsons' Bar Mitzvah celebrations.

In Jewish sheltered accommodation in White Plains, NY, close to her American born son, although physically and speech limited, her power of endurance and a clear mind sustained her till her 94th year. One word epitomizes Meechie - SUPPORT: initially, support for her younger brothers, then support for her husband Meir and support for her children Ilona, Evelyn (Chava) and David. May her resting-place be one of honour.

audience, the show was an absolute celebration of growing old both gracefully, and disgracefully. The audience delighted in her songs and reminiscences, and just loved being dragged into the performance along with her. The show attracted attention from various publications, independent radio and the BBC, and was filmed by The British Library for posterity.

As well as an afternoon show where **Lynn Ruth** told her traditional stories, she also hosted a show at night called **Cabaret Gone Wild**, which showcased performances from other Fringe Shows, including several comedy singer songwriters, the two most notable being **Tom McDonnell** and **Jay Foreman**, with hilarious material and marvellous voices. It was mostly a musical cabaret, and she'd even persuaded some fat bloke in a straw boater and bow-tie onto the stage to sing original Jazz and a couple of tributes to **Louis Armstrong** and **Benny Hill**. Still, there's no accounting for taste!

Also at the Counting House in the Free Fringe was **Lewis Schaffer is Bigger and Blacker**. It had been some years since I first saw his act, and it was rather fun to see him again being bigger and blacker. He seems to rather pride himself in being slightly out of kilter with mainstream comedy, and was ever so proud of one his reviews that had given him 1star, with the description "mildly racist". It's like being slightly pregnant, he quipped. He revelled in the fact that some people miss the irony of him being Jewish, and the "mildly racist" jokes illustrate how stupid racism is. His self-deprecating humour was typically Jewish and very entertaining.

One of my surprise treats was also in the Free Fringe, this time at The Hive. I had been looking for a different show and had been misdirected to the wrong venue. I was delighted to see a well kent punnim beaming out at me from a poster. I had first seen it at his premier at The Gilded Balloon 5 years ago, and the year after too, so happily sat down to watch **Sol Bernstein - I Only Wanna Hear Good!** It was an hour well spent, and along with the rest of the audience, spent the time platzing in merriment and mirth. **Steve Jameson** plays Sol, an 84 year old recently out of retirement, billed as the oldest Jewish Stand Up Comedian in the world working the circuit today! There was so much Yiddish in his routine you'd think you were in The Catskills, but he took the time to translate for all the Nisht Frum Inzerer in the audience, but it seemed unnecessary, as they'd all been hooting with laughter anyway. His material ranged from the innocent and traditional to the absolute offensive, coarse and smutty, but, as I've always found, if the punch line is in Yiddish, you can get away with anything! His audiences ranged from teens to octogenarians, and they all delighted in having his attentions turned on them. The topics ranged from how Tzekrochen he was, to doing stand-up with Hitler before he became a dictator, and speech writing for Churchill in the war. His material was so clever and witty and brilliantly performed, it was an absolute joy to watch!



Steve Jameson as Sol

Festival Fun 2009

By Lord Julian Goodman

As the city struggled to move with the tramworks and extra visitors, The Edinburgh Festival Fringe came to life. I have to say that despite the frustrations of getting around town, the buzz of this year's Fringe was one of the liveliest in recent years.

Looking through the programme initially, I wasn't that convinced I'd find enough Jewish content to write about, but thanks to a whole programme of shows presented by **New End Theatre** at the Sweet Venue in the Grassmarket, there was more than enough to choose from at a glance, and plenty more to see around the Fringe that just didn't bother to advertise its Jewish credentials. As ever, the best way to find shows is by word of mouth in the first week, and quite a few finds were purely serendipitous, but stumbling across things by accident seems to be something I do a lot in general these days!

For my first show, I decided to play it safe and I went to see an old favourite, **Lynn Ruth Miller** in the Free Fringe at the Counting House. Yet again, at 76, **Lynn Ruth** was defying her advanced years, and performing in three advertised shows a day, as well as appearing in many other shows to showcase her talents. Her late night show, **Aging Is Amazing Redux**, was again character based, and told the tale of Minerva, a rather confused resident of The Last Gasp Residential Home, describing a Friday Open Day at the facility. Using a whole new collection of song parodies, interactive Scrabble games, and feeding and watering the



Restoration Comedy, The School For Scandal

Steve Jameson was also appearing as the Jew in the Restoration Comedy, **The School For Scandal** over at The Pleasance Courtyard. Along with an all-star cast that included **Marcus Brigstocke, Lionel Blair, Stephen K Amos, Miss Behave and Phil Nichol**, they were playing to packed houses in the biggest venue at The Courtyard. In period costume, but a few modern touches in the music, the cast were having so much fun on stage, it was like watching a pantomime purely for adults without any time wasted on kids; the audience couldn't help but enjoy themselves. With everyone trying to upstage and out-ham (excuse the expression), each other, **Steve Jameson's** extra schtick with a calculator and mobile phone was as well received as **Lionel Blair's** extra dance steps, and **Steven K Amos's** line in his powdered wig of his appearance being "equal opportunities" casting. Apparently the show overran with all the extra business, but none of the audience seemed to notice with all the fun they were having.



Lionel Blair

As I mentioned earlier, **New End Theatre** had brought a clutch of Jewish shows to the Sweet Venue in the Grassmarket. The first one I saw was **Daniel Cainer - Jewish Chronicles**, an hour of semi-autobiographical songs and chat that explored his Jewish roots and upbringing. The scene was set on stage by the Yamaha label on the keyboard being adapted to read "Yamalka"! The songs ranged from historical ancestry covering immigration, The Holocaust and assimilation with a melancholy motif, to a humorous family tale about the birth of Burtons in **A Tale Of Two Tailors**, and a rather funny family saga in **The Surbiton Washerama**. The performance was warmly received from the evenly mixed audience, and in turn, they were complimented on their Chazzonos when they joined in some of the singing.



Daniel Cainer - Jewish Chronicles

The next show I saw there was **Mother/Son**, an award-winning solo play, written and performed by Jeffrey Solomon, depicted his Jewish Mother's reluctant journey out of the closet as the parent of a gay son in America before she develops a terminal condition and dies. Solomon played both himself and his mother with typical exchanges over the phone about denial, never calling, unwanted matchmaking and hidden relationships. While his characterisation was excellent and full of funny lines, as well as moving moments, I found it hard to have any



The Timekeepers

sympathy with the mother's personality, and wondered what he could possibly find left to love in such a harridan, but even I got ferklemt as the mother died, and the tears did well up much to my surprise!

Also at Sweet was **The Timekeepers**. Set in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, the play told the story of an outrageously camp German homosexual thrown into working with an elderly, conservative Jewish inmate, who repairs watches taken from all the new arrivals at the camp. At first he is reluctant to share his skills with his new colleague, as this essential skill is keeping him alive. However initial prejudices and mistrust gradually give way to friendship through humour, a mutual love of opera, and the equal desire to help each other against the evil tortures of their criminal inmate overseer. Presented and performed by an Israeli theatre group, the night I saw it, the writer was in the audience and it was the first time he had seen it performed in English instead of Hebrew. The performances were excellent by all three members of the cast, and the topic was very moving. I found it odd to be laughing during a play set in The Holocaust, but on leaving the venue, I overheard several Yidden commenting on how tastefully all the issues had been handled making it a valuable portrayal of such a topic, and it was certainly very well received by the whole audience.

Immediately following this show was a very heartwarming performance by a young American called **Jordan Herskowitz** making his Fringe Debut. **Jordy Pordy: Taking The Bull By The Horns** was the autobiographical story of his life as a

professional sports mascot, growing up as a Jew in Texas, with both his brothers diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, and his family's battle with the disease to save his brother Ritchie's life through organ donation, while following his dream to become an actor. His first real recognition of his Jewish identity came with a student chaplaincy trip to the site of The Twin Towers, where all the students held hands and sang Oseh Shalom. His journey through life was fascinating, his fortitude and compassion for others came through despite his modest description of events. His brother was the youngest and first to have a double lung transplant, which was successful for 8 years till he sadly died at 17. The show was not melancholy though, rather a testament to Ritchie's lust for life, and a great source of strength to Jordan, and an example to us all. The journey was both funny and moving, and the show finished with an appeal towards Ritchie's trust, and like at his shiva, closed with a moving rendition of Oseh Shalom again.

I next took my annual musical interlude. Over the road at The Lot, once again **The Yiddish Song Project** were charming the audience with an hour of Yiddish songs both old and new. Featuring the vocal talents of EHC's own **Stephanie Brickman** accompanied by **Phil Alexander** on the piano and accordion, and guest violinist **Gavin Marwick**, the programme had a definite fiddler feel to it this year. With a great mix of old favourites in the repertoire, and some new ones too, it was a great evening's entertainment. I particularly enjoyed the "Oy Oy Oy" medley and the enlarged modern addition to **A Yiddishe Momme**, and was delighted to hear the encore of **The Chicken Soup Freilech**, which almost seems to be a signature tune.

My final show was back at the Sweet Venue. **Tap And Chat with Lionel Blair** was a nostalgic trip along Lionel Blair's 60 years in Show Business. Elegantly attired and gliding onto the floor singing **The Soft Shoe Shuffle**, the audience were treated to his life story and anecdotes from his amazing career peppered with great show songs and dances. Having had no formal training, he learned to dance by copying his barber father who was testing out the new lino by tap dancing. His first role was at the age of 12 and premiered in Edinburgh. When he was too old for juvenile roles, and too young for adult roles, he decided to become a dancer. The list of stars he'd worked with was endless and the stories were charming. One of the highlight of the show was a film of his appearance at The Royal Command Performance in 1961 with **Sammy Davis Jr.**, and the dancing was just spectacular. Another was when he persuaded a 91 year old lady in the audience to join him for a waltz. He admitted that his favourite partner had been his late sister Joyce, and the day I was there, his wife had just arrived in Edinburgh and was in the audience too, and featured greatly in the anecdotes as a consequence. The question and answer section afforded the audience even more insights and the show closed with him dancing to the audience singing **Me And My Shadow!** They say nostalgia isn't what it used to be, and they're right – it gets even better with age, and this was one of the best-received performances by an audience I saw this year!

However my **5 Mogen Dovids** this year has to go Sol Bernstein, simply because he did exactly what it said on the tin. **I only wanted to hear good** and that's just what I got!



שנה טובה

Happy New Year

JNF KKL Scotland

222 Fenwick Road,
Giffnock,
Glasgow G46 6UE

Tel: 0141-577 8232 Fax: 0141-577 8233

E-mail: info@jnfkklsotland.co.uk

Obituaries

Ida Skubiejska

1914 to 17 July 2009

Marcel Kalfus

Ida was born Ida Tintpulver (affectionately called “Jushka”) in Krakow, Poland in 1914 to Maurycy and Maria Tinpulver. She had two younger sisters, Helena and Hanka. Hanka, my mother, was the only surviving member of the Tintpulver family.

Ida enjoyed a very loving and happy home life receiving private school education. Attending university in Krakow, Ida majored in Geography and Zoology. She graduated with a Masters of Philosophy; an extraordinary achievement in pre World War ii Poland in which anti-Semitism was an unwritten law and in which most Jews (let alone females) were barred from the opportunity of admission to university at all and of obtaining tertiary education.

Ida also trained for War Emergency at the University’s Medical School and became an officer of the International Red Cross.

At the end of the war in 1945, Ida was working in a centre to rehabilitate limbless soldiers, near Perth. Here Ida met a very handsome Polish Officer who was serving as a liaison officer in the UK helping with the resettlement of the Polish Army under British Command.

This officer, who had been a lawyer and judge in Poland before the War, and who had fought in Poland, France and Africa, was Alfred (Fred) Skubiejska, the love of Ida’s life. Ida described Fred as “an officer and a gentleman”. Ida and Fred married in Perth on the 2 June 1945.

When Ida and Fred retired, in 1989, they sold up their home in Hendon, London, and moved to Dalgety Bay, near Edinburgh. Ida was now re-connecting with Scotland.

In 1999, Ida lost her beloved Fred. After a short-lived return to London, following Fred’s death, Ida returned, yet again to Scotland, to take up residence in Edinburgh, where she would see out her days to the mighty age of 94 years.

It is clear Ida was a courageous person. She was decorated by the British Army for bravery for her exploits during the Second World War. (Ida’s story in Issue 51)

But this was no ordinary woman. Her steely determination, allowed her to take on numerous challenges. She refused to allow ailments such as anemia, sciatica, arthritis, glaucoma, and a heart condition to overcome her. Ida attended university in Poland and, though dangerous, was not afraid to travel as a lone woman to many far-flung parts of the world.

Ida was a soldier in life, and God help you if you stood in the way of anything she chose to do.



Ida was a profoundly intelligent woman. I am sure most of us have been confronted with Ida’s iron will, with that truly frosty look she could fix upon you if you disagreed with her view on any topic or if you opposed any thing she wished to do. Ida did not suffer fools gladly and to use an Australian expression, “there were no flies on her”. Ida’s relatively recently acquired and dear friend, Joe Goldblatt, recalls, shortly after meeting Ida for the first time, that when he began singing some traditional Jewish songs to please her, Ida turned to him, fixed him with her stare and said, “you are off key”. Joe then sang more softly, to which Ida responded, “you are out of tune”. Despite this dialogue, Joe and Ida became great friends.

This is not surprising, because in reality Ida had a great love of humanity, and easily made friends with all. She was a woman with a great passion for life. Despite an apparent serious nature and a sometime withering tongue, Ida was a person with a marvellous and wicked sense of humour and, again to use another Australian expression, a “bit of a larrikin”.

Joe also recalls that on arrival at a recent visit to see her in hospital, where she was critically ill, Ida said, “Do you have a car?” Joe then asked “why?” Ida replied, “Help me escape! They are trying to kill me!” Yes, my aunt was unique.

Despite being separated by 20,000 kilometres, and therefore never having met in our early years, Ida was a devoted and loving aunt to both my sister Irene and myself.

Every single year of my life, until this year, I received a birthday card and gifts from Ida. She supplemented my education enormously and I learned so much from, and because of her.

Ida is the only aunt I ever knew, the others not surviving the

Holocaust. My parents emigrated to Australia in 1950. In the early 1960’s she selflessly provided financial assistance to my newly immigrant parents. Due to Ida’s sheer persistence, my mother, Hanka, made a successful application for German war compensation, enabling my parents to buy their beautiful Sydney home, which forever changed my family’s life. Ida and my mother always remained close.

I was struck when I first saw my aunt arrive in Sydney in 1961. She came down the gang plank of the ocean liner, the P & O “Oriana”, and how incredibly petite she was; a huge package in a tiny parcel who has influenced the lives of so many.

Ida’s interest in life enabled her to make friends throughout life, of all ages. At the time of her death Ida had devoted friends, some of whom were more than 50 years her junior.

For much of Ida’s later years, she was heavily involved in Jewish life in both London and Edinburgh. Until not so long ago Ida would regularly attend the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Luncheon Club. I daresay Ida was one of its most senior attendees, if not its oldest.

The extraordinary Sukkat Shalom Community in Edinburgh gave Ida, a 90th birthday party a few years ago, which profoundly moved her and of which she was immensely proud.

My family can never forget what Ida’s friends, especially Jonathan Kish and Stephanie Brickman, have done for her. Maurice Naftalin, Stewart Green, Ricky Hogg and their families, and Mike McLellan, senior social worker of Jewish Care, were also greatly supportive. In the last period of her life Elizabeth

Annual Festival Civic Service

Ian Shein

On August 22 a large congregation attended the Annual Service commemorating the opening of the Edinburgh International Festival. The Lord Provost, the Rt Hon George Grub, the Lady Provost, City Councillors, Bailies, High Constables and senior representatives of Lothian and Borders Police, were all in attendance. The choir, under the direction of David Mendelssohn, sung Ma Tovv in greeting of the colourful procession headed by officials carrying the City Mace and Sword. In his sermon, Rabbi David Rose commented on the value of the Festival in this great City and stressed the prominent role religion played in creating harmonious relationships with all who participated. Another interesting and general expansion of his sermon was that religious leaders should be held responsible if good citizenship was being substituted by criminal actions, as it was their duty to impart the moral message more persuasively and that they were failing in their duty not to do so.

At the Kiddush, following the service, Hilary Rifkind, Chair of the Board of Management, warmly welcomed the civic dignitaries and commented on the tremendous support given to the Jewish Community by the city authorities, and the close liaison, which

Bennett, manager of Marian House, and her staff, including Ida’s carers, in particular Kamilla and Agneshka, all showed genuine love and unflinching commitment and devotion to Ida. Sadly it is impossible to mention all.

Ida had a very high regard and fondness for Rabbi Rose and an appreciation of all his work in the community.

The only regret that Ida might have had in her passing now, is that she could not hold on to life for another 6 years. She was so looking forward to receiving a personal message of congratulations from the Queen on the occasion of her 100th birthday. You must know Ida and the Queen were good friends. That was our Ida.

Ida was a most complex person who touched all our lives in different ways, in a manner I am sure we cannot and will never forget.

Sport

In March 2009, Robbie Ansell Forsyth took up a post as youth football director at a new football academy in Portland, Maine. He is currently coaching, including two Portland Phoenix ladies teams in the Super Y-League, and developing and running youth football camps.



existed between the local divisional police and us. She added that the Annual Service gave us the opportunity to show its appreciation to the City Council for all it did to enhance this relationship. She also expressed pleasure at seeing Rabbi Professor Daniel and his wife Debbie, in the congregation. Rabbi Sinclair, who was Minister of the community between 1984 and 1987, recited the Musaf service. He replied expressing his delight at being back in Edinburgh.

The Lord Provost, in reply, thanked Hilary and spoke of his pleasure at attending the Synagogue with his colleagues on this special day. He mentioned his close affinity with Jewish families from boyhood days and commented on the excellent contribution that the Jewish people had made to the City. It was part of tradition that had always existed

In conclusion, Hilary wished to thank Dr Eve Oppenheim for sponsoring the Kiddush in memory of her late husband, Dr Nate Oppenheim, an ex-President of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and who had contributed so much to it.



Over 100 people had two unforgettable weeks at Tribe Summer Camp 2009.

Come and join the fun in 2010!

Email: summer@tribeuk.com to reserve your place now.



Tribe is a part of the United Synagogue. Registered charity number 242552.

Letters

A Wedding in Jerusalem

On June 28th, I had the great joy of seeing our granddaughter Laura married to Shlomie Rengel of New York in Jerusalem. The wedding took place in the beautiful Kibbutz Hotel Ramat Rachel, which is situated on the outskirts of Jerusalem, a truly spectacular venue.



There were two open reception areas. The bride seated on a white chair, accompanied on one side by her mother, Hilary and me, and on the other by her bridegroom's step-mother and future sister-in-law, greeted guests as they arrived.

Drinks and a buffet meal were served and then with singing and dancing, the groom brought in by his Yeshiva friends to greet his bride-to-be and 'bedechi the callah'.

The guests then proceeded to the seating where the beautiful chupah, overlooking the hills, enhanced by a lovely evening sky, awaited the wedding party.

Shlomie and the two fathers carrying candles were followed by my grandson, Martin (Laura's twin brother), who escorted me to my seat. Two little ones with their mother scattered rose petals and three year olds, Jasmine and Ari, carried the ring on a cushion. Bridesmaid Jennifer, preceded the lovely bride with her parents carrying candles.

The two mothers and Laura encircled the groom the traditional seven times before the ceremony began. We were delighted when our Edinburgh connection, former Rabbi in Edinburgh, Rabbi Shapira, and Hazel and John Cosgrove's son-in-law sung two of the Shiva Brochot. We were overjoyed that good Edinburgh friends, Gerald and Sylvia Glass, cousin, Norma Brodie and Joyce and Johnny Sperber were able to celebrate with us.

To see one's granddaughter married is a truly wonderful experience. My only sadness was that my dearest husband, Norman, was unable, through illness, to be with us on this happy occasion.
Joyce Cram

Dear Editor

I happened to be given a printout of a page from your magazine when I was interviewing Asher Selig Kaufman for an article in Kol Vatikey Habonim, which we produce here in Israel bi-annually. He showed me a copy of it (dated Oct 2005) and many of the names mentioned in it were familiar to me as I have strong ties with Edinburgh.

My late father was Maurice Poliwansky whose family came from Lithuania when he was a baby. One of a family of nine, the next six children were born in Scotland. The youngest son was Simon Poliwansky whose name Selig had added to a list of soldiers lost in World War Two.

Uncle Simon was drowned in a convoy which was going to North Africa and his name is on a memorial somewhere in Southern England. He was newly married, having got married on his embarkation leave. I believe his widow married someone else in the family and kept the name Poliwansky, but I cannot vouch for this.

My oldest uncle, Myer Poli, a noted caricaturist, although greatly over age during the war, was employed at one time at Prestwick Airport camouflaging aeroplane hangars. Many years after he had died, a note came from the Bank of Scotland, Monkton (Ayrshire) Branch, stating that he had money there in an account and it was I who remembered being told by him of his work during the war, thus solving a family mystery. Then there was a picture of Doreen Gordon's (Rubin) father who was a Gordon Highlander in World War One. As they didn't have the Poliwansky Highlanders, my father, Maurice Poliwansky, who volunteered early on, had to settle for the Royal Scots (The Dandy Ninth). However I have commemorated him through the



story I wrote about him in a book I have published.

My name before I married was Sylvia Polli (Poliwansky) and our family lived in Glasgow but I had close ties with the many Habonim members in Edinburgh. A member of Glasgow Habonim, I was on the Machon le Madrichei Hutz L'Aretz in 1950, returned to work in Habonim and came on aliyah in 1953 and have lived here ever since. But that is another story.

Sylvia Flowers (nee Polli)
Flora and Fauna by Sylvia Flowers will be reviewed in the next edition of the Star.

Thank you

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

This year we have purchased the following items:

1. An 'optic switch' for the speed and communication unit. This enables two children who have very limited movement, and no speech. The optic switch enables them to communicate with their eyes as the optic switch reacts to light and is sensitive to the slightest movement. It is programmed to recognise specific messages such as 'I want to drink, I am in pain, I want to play, I want to go to the bathroom etc, giving all the children a voice.
2. A bathroom wheelchair for patients in the active rehabilitation ward, in addition to the patients already in the ward for demonstrating to parents, their use at home.
3. Two adjustable chairs and tables for occupational therapy in the Medical and Rehabilitation and Education Centre.

I trust you will all feel that your donations have been wisely spent. I hope that the New Year will bring real peace to Israel and good health and happiness to all our friends and donors.

Clarice Osborne
(Chairman – Scottish Friends of Alyn)

Congratulations

Dr Anthony Gilbert for receiving the Edinburgh University award for 'Best Director of Studies' in May



Freddie Green on his Bar Mitzvar 2 May



We should like to convey a hearty Mazeltov to **David Mason** following his Induction as Rabbi of Muswell Hill Synagogue by the Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks on Sunday 3rd May 2009. Best wishes and congratulations to **Elisheva** and the family, and proud parents, **Irene** and **Philip**.

Judy Sischy on receiving the OBE. The investiture took place at Holyrood Palace on 30 June and the award was made by The Queen.



Congratulations to **Sylvia Donne** on becoming President of the Edinburgh Jewish Burial Society. She will be taking over from Gerald Glass, who has filled that role most ably for the past 15 years.

Carole & Mickey would like to thank everyone for their cards and good wishes on the arrival of granddaughter **Sadie Rose** born on 15th May 2009 to **Sally** and **James Barker** and brother **Samuel**



Avigail Sperber on her engagement to **Mikael Pommert**.



Forthcoming Events

September

19 Saturday

First day Rosh Hashanah

28 Monday

Yom Kippur

October

3 Saturday

First day Succoth

11 Sunday

Simchat Torah

19 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00pm

November

WIZO

7 Saturday

Evening with John Cairney

8 Sunday

EJLS – Antony Lerman - (a former director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

16 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00 pm

December

12 Saturday

First day Chanukah

19 Saturday

Chanukah Social 7.30pm

21 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00pm

January 2010

18 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00 pm

February

15 Monday

Lodge Solomon 7.00 pm

28 Sunday

Purim

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members homes. For further information contact James Hyams or Maurice Griffin.

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday (meat) and Thursday (fish) 12.30pm. New volunteer helpers always welcome.

All meetings take place in the Synagogue Community Centre, Salisbury Road, unless otherwise stated. Information above may be subject to alteration.

Thank you

The Lowrie, Monina and Sharman family would like to thank Rabbi Rose and all those who kindly supported Vicky in hospital, and attended her funeral and stone setting.

Yours sincerely, Tom Lowrie