

THE EDINBURGH

# STAR

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY

## The Edinburgh Star

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## Cover Picture

'There was a soldier...'

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# From the Editor

I was shocked to come across a group of protesters outside the Scottish Parliament comparing the Israel – Palestine situation with the Holocaust and to insure that nobody had any doubts, there was a display of little shoes on the ground. The protestors consisted of a group of middle-aged to elderly, white, non-Palestinians. If anything was designed to incite racial hatred this small ignorant group of people were guilty of doing so.

Shortly after this episode, on 31st May, Israeli soldiers came under attack when they tried to enforce the well-understood inspection of all ships sailing into Gaza. This is a well-established practice in armed conflicts, recognized internationally, and by the UN Charter and is carried out impartially. The Israeli military stops and searches all boats headed for Gaza Strip landing areas to make certain that only humanitarian goods are being transported. Minimal force is employed in its efforts to stop boats that break the agreement. The so-called peaceful aid to Gaza flotilla from Turkey tried to enter illegally.

The soldiers succeeded in stopping five of the six boats in the flotilla by using troops with crowd control equipment. When approaching the sixth boat using the same methods, the soldiers were brutally attacked by "peace activists" wielding knives, axes and metal rods. At some stage, shots were also fired at the soldiers. Inevitably innocent bystanders were the tragic victims but it was not these terrorists, prepared to use innocent people as human shields that were condemned, but the soldiers who simply exercised an agreed right to defend themselves.

Israel has been forced to use a blockade which is purely intended to prevent continued rocketing of Israeli civilians. The UN appears to be calling for selective enforcement of rules and this puts not just Israel but every democratic country at risk. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is a time for introspection, individual and community accountability. Loyalty to our ancient inheritance as members of the Jewish race is severely tested in modern times. Despite that fact and that we are a people

dispersed throughout the world, we still hold deeply ingrained common traditions which are expressed in a variety of cultural ways and though it may often seem that we are constantly living on a knife edge, for every critic there still seems to be a supporter who admires us for our indomitability. We enjoy hearing about the Jews around the world and in this edition the Star travels to Peru and Holland. Going back to our past and tracing our roots is also very traditional and in this edition you will see that once again Harvey Kaplan has successfully unearthed some background stories of local Jewish soldiers who served in the First World War but Harvey would still be pleased to hear from anyone who might have some more for his ongoing archives collection.

A business that goes back many generations is also 'furnishing' us with an interesting history (see page 28).

One of Israel's greatest, contemporary artists, Avigdor Arikah, recently passed away. We are grateful for the fascinating and touching account that has been written here, in memoriam, by expert Duncan Thomson. By good fortune, Robin Spark recommended Duncan, and we anticipate an article by Robin himself, about his own route to becoming an artist.

Two interesting book reviews by Rabbi Rose and Janet Mundy might entice you to broaden your reading and as ever, at this time of year, we have fun at the Festival. Old favourites and young writers all make for a 'Edinburgh Star' that hopefully has something for everyone. May the New Year bring fond memories of the past and an ongoing belief in peace for the future.

Members of the Board of the Edinburgh Star wish all our readers Shanah Tova and Tsam Kal.

Happy New Year and an easy fast.

Judy Gilbert

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STAR

# Rosh Hashanah Message

The beginning of the Jewish year consists of an intense cycle of four different festivals, each containing its own message while sharing common themes.

One of the overarching themes of this period is that of universalism and particularism. Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the creation of the world while Yom Kippur concentrates intensely on the relationship between G-d and Israel. Succot is the most universal of the festivals, whereby we connect with, and

pray for all the nations of the world, while Shemini Atzeret is regarded as an intimate private feast between G-d and the Jewish people. So the holiday season fluctuates between particularism and universalism, and thus serves as a metaphor for Judaism itself. As the Chief Rabbi has encapsulated it, while the G-d of Abraham is the G-d of everyone, the religion of Abraham is not.

This dichotomy is especially important as we enter into this New Year. We face daunting challenges both as a community and as a people. We could follow a path of extremes, either diluting our identity

in an attempt to appease the outside world or closing ourselves off from it particularistic circling of the wagons. Both extremes would be a mistake. This holiday period teaches that we must be both strong within and engaging without. We must strengthen ourselves and help others; stand firm in our position, while effectively presenting our case. To do this successfully is the challenge and the opportunity of the coming year, and may G-d bless us with success in all that we do.

A Happy New Year  
Rabbi David Rose

## Edinburgh's War

Harvey Kaplan



WW1 – Jewish servicemen outside Graham St synagogue 1917

The photograph says it all. It is Pesach in 1917, three years into the most horrendous international conflict that the world had ever seen.

Over fifty young Jewish men and boys are posing in front of the Succah at Graham Street synagogue. Some of them would have been immigrants from Eastern Europe, or the children of immigrants, yet many of them are wearing kilts, or the caps of Scottish regiments. They are all loyal Scots now. Many of them are grinning – do they know of the carnage and squalid conditions that might lie ahead for them in the trenches across the Channel?

**On 10 December 1915, the Jewish Chronicle reported that:** 'A great recruiting meeting will be held in the Synod Hall, Castle Terrace next Sunday at half past three, under the auspices of

the 5th Royal Scots, in conjunction with the Jewish Representative Council. Lord Scott Dickson will preside.... The band of the 5th Royal Scots will also be in attendance. It is desired that a large representation of the Jewish community should be present.'

As elsewhere around the country, young Jews stepped forward to serve their country and Roll of Honour plaques at Piershill Cemetery and the Edinburgh Synagogue list 19 Jewish men who gave their lives.



WW1 memorial, Piershill Cemetery

A project is underway to record Edinburgh's experience in the First World War. Edinburgh's War is a joint venture between the Centre for the Study of the Two World Wars at Edinburgh University, City of Edinburgh Libraries and First World War community history groups. A virtual history archive will go live in October, coinciding with a launch exhibition at the University. An approach was made through ScoJec to obtain information about Edinburgh Jews in the First World War and, as a result, the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre has been working with Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation to bring together suitable material. Some of the material will be placed on the project website. Contributions have come from the Archives Centre collection, while Hilary Rifkind gathered reminiscences and photographs from members of the Edinburgh community. All the material will be added to the Archives Centre collection of war experiences and some of it will be displayed in the Centre's information folder on Jews in the First World War.

Joyce Cram told us how her father, Henry Vinestock of the

Royal Scots Regiment, was wounded in France in 1917 and taken to a German hospital where he stayed for two years. He had 19 operations on his legs. He was told that if he had gone to a British hospital, his right leg would have been amputated, as the bone was so badly shattered. He came back to Eden Hall, which was an Army hospital in Musselburgh, from where he was discharged in 1919.



L to R, Robert, Henry & Benjamin Vinestock

Lennie Berger's father, Alex Berger, was called up to fight and as Signaller Private Berger (no. 221), was sent to Palestine to join the 38th Royal Fusiliers.

'It was a very important job as only three battalions were left to hold on to the Suez Canal (like at El Alamein in the Second World War). Battalions 38, 39 and 40 were all Jewish soldiers and the army felt they could work well together. The War Office were delighted with their achievement. Their cap badge was a menorah. My dad was the last Jewish serving soldier in the First World War.'



Alex Berger – extreme left

**The Jewish Chronicle of 6 August 1915 reported on the boys of the Nathan family:**

### A Patriotic Family

Lance-Corporal A L Nathan, who was recently wounded and is now in the 15th General Hospital, France, first did service in the 5th Royal Scots (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles) and then in the London Scottish. When war broke out, he immediately put aside a lucrative appointment and enlisted as a private in the 5th Seaforth Highlanders. He has a brother in the RGA and another lieutenant in the 17th Royal Scots (Service). He also has twelve cousins serving. An uncle is Quartermaster Maurice Nathan. He is the third member of this patriotic family to be wounded.'

Mrs Cissie Eppel of Vancouver sent letters written by her brother-in-law, Private Bennie Eppel of Edinburgh, who served in the Royal Scots 29th Division in Egypt and France. Twenty year old Bennie was writing to his parents, Isaac and Rosa Eppel of West Preston Street. On 8 March 1916, he writes to thank his mother for the watch and Postal Order for 15 shillings which he had received:

'...the watch is in good condition, except that the glass was broken...'

Life was tough for Bennie:

'...the heat today is worse than ever...the flies and mosquitos ...bite like anything.'

His kit bag had been stolen, including his tzitzit and tefillin, but he promised to try to obtain replacements in Alexandria.

He had also had a spell in hospital, where he was visited by 'a rov from Palestine.'

However, Bennie was seeing the world:

'I was at a place called Luxor, about 18 hours journey by the train from here. It is on the Nile and is full of nothing else but old temples. We visited the Temple of Thebes and saw some wonderful sights there...'



Louis Price



Louis Price' regiment

Lilian Dorfman's uncle, Louis Price, was given a particularly dangerous job on the Western Front. He was to take a field telephone and go out to where the British were dropping shells, pinpoint where they were landing and phone back to confirm if they were hitting the target. He realised he wouldn't survive this and he could see all his friends being killed.

When he got leave prior to taking on the new job, he decided not to go back and deserted to Southern Ireland until after the war. A few years after the war, there was an amnesty.

He found his World War I gas mask useful in later years for when he chopped horseradish for Pesach (the festival of Passover)!

As in other cities, the community rallied round its servicemen:

'The Edinburgh Ladies' Lodge, Order Achei Brith & Shield of Abraham will give a Chanukah entertainment and tea on Sunday the 16th inst.

At their Hall, 78 Potterrow, from 2 till 6, to all naval, military and wounded Jewish men stationed in or near Edinburgh. The Secretary, Miss Beatrice Harris, 15 Hope Park Terrace, will be glad to hear from those who think that they will be able to attend.'

(Jewish Chronicle, 7 December 1917)

Harvey Kaplan is director of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre at Garnethill Synagogue in Glasgow ([www.sjac.org.uk](http://www.sjac.org.uk))



Jewish Memorial, Altdamm, Pommern, Germany

# Jewish Museum London

Harvey Kaplan

After a two year closure for a ten million pound refurbishment in its Camden premises, the Jewish Museum in London recently reopened with great fanfare, to fulfil its role of being 'an inspirational place for people of all ages, backgrounds and faiths to explore Jewish culture, heritage and identity.'



Jewish Museum – London

Having tripled its space, the museum is on four floors of what was once two converted buildings and a former piano factory. The ground floor includes a gift shop, small kosher café and auditorium. Its centrepiece is a reconstructed 13th century mikva (ritual bath), the remains of which were uncovered in 2001 in the City of London. On the first and second floors are exhibits illustrating Jewish life cycle events, rituals and customs, immigrant trades, charities, education and leisure activities.

Under the theme of religious life, exhibits include an ornate Aron Kodesh from a synagogue in 17th or 18th century Italy, which once served as a wardrobe in an English castle. Eerily, in one alcove are a table and chairs laid out for Friday night dinner, with candles, challot and Kiddush cup. In the background, there is a recording of a family discussing the rituals and singing Sabbath songs. But like the 'Marie Celeste', the people are nowhere to be seen.

The Holocaust gallery tells the story

of refugees, the Kindertransport and survivors, with a mixture of exhibits, film and music.

All in all, the museum is well-designed, with interesting and sometimes unusual exhibits, state of the art computer technology and lots to keep the attention of young children. There is an interactive game akin to Snakes & Ladders about Jewish immigration to Britain, with the high points and pitfalls, such as bags stolen at the dock, being found to have cholera on arrival and sent back to Europe or met on arrival and provided with accommodation at the Poor Jews Temporary Shelter.

My only criticism is that the museum is perhaps too London-centric. Visitors are faced at the outset with changing screens showing excerpts of interviews with 'ten Jewish people living in Britain today.' There is nothing to suggest that these are not ten Londoners. The first floor exhibition is entitled 'History: A British Story', yet you would struggle to find mention of the vibrant Jewish life which has at one time existed in communities from Inverness to Cardiff, Dublin or Plymouth. Perhaps it was decided that these communities are adequately covered by the Jewish Museums of



Exhibition board in new Jewish Museum

Manchester and Dublin and the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, but a link to these other institutions would be helpful to tourists and others. The exception is one small computer with touch screen access to basic information about Jewish communities around the country, including the 9 present or former Scottish communities. The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre has provided images of these communities for this feature. For example, Edinburgh is represented by a synagogue wedding with Rabbi Weinberg and others, a view of Braid Place cemetery, the former Graham Street synagogue and a stained glass window in the present synagogue.

All in all, the new, improved Jewish Museum is well worth a visit - and bring the family, but remember that there is also Jewish life north of Watford!

Harvey Kaplan is director of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre [www.sjac.org.uk](http://www.sjac.org.uk)

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# The Life & Art of Avigdor Arikha

(1929-2010)

Duncan Thomson

**My first meeting with the painter Avigdor Arikha was not a particularly auspicious one. He had come to Edinburgh from his home in Paris to visit the Poussin exhibition that was held in the National Gallery of Scotland in 1981.**



My first meeting with the painter Avigdor Arikha was not a particularly auspicious one. He had come to Edinburgh from his home in Paris to visit the Poussin exhibition that was held in the National Gallery of Scotland in 1981. He came with an introduction from his curatorial friends in the Louvre (since settling in Paris in the mid-1950s his friends in the art world had tended to be museum curators rather than practising artists – though Giacometti was an exception to this rule). At the time I was an assistant keeper in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and, along with my colleague at the National Gallery, Hugh Brigstocke, one of the curators of the exhibition, was assigned the duty of welcoming Avigdor, viewing the exhibition with him and offering him hospitality. Excitable and passionate, he launched into a disquisition on what he thought we should know about Poussin's methods, and history painting in general. Although he obviously knew what he was talking about, I was never very keen on being lectured to and I asked one or two deliberately dumb questions. Thus provoked, he stared at me in disbelief. Rather more seriously, I questioned his absolute certainty that Poussin had painted from life (I was later to discover that working directly from life had become central to Avigdor's own practice.)

Our argument did not entirely spoil the lunch that followed at the late-lamented Edinburgh Wine Bar, but we parted with a fair degree of mutual incomprehension.

It did not seem likely then that we would in future years become such intimate friends, discussing a myriad of issues (artistic, museological, political) in long telephone conversations or when we met in Paris, London and Edinburgh. We would later frequently joke about our initial meeting. It was a friendship that, once the quirks and vagaries of his personality were appreciated for what they were – an expression of a passionate integrity that took no prisoners but overlay a deep and humane warmth and

generosity – deepened into a profound love, certainly on my part, and I think on his. I think fondly now on that initial skirmish and what it would eventually lead to in my own life – and so aware now of the void left after his brave, even astonishing, departure from our mortal coils earlier this year.

Although I did not meet Avigdor Arikha until 1981, I was already aware of his work as a painter. An exhibition of his paintings and drawings had been brought to Edinburgh in 1978 by Sandy Moffatt, then director of the New 57 Gallery. I had been deeply impressed, even unsettled in the way that great art should unsettle, by their combination of ordinary, everyday subject matter – a sweeping brush, hanging coats, his wife Anne and daughters Alba and Noga for example – and an obliqueness that seemed both casual and determined. This was what reality looked like but it was a new reality. Their straightforward painterliness which was almost 'styleless' and what was also, paradoxically, a kind of exoticism that was shatteringly truthful lodged itself in my mind then, and later, and has never departed.

There was to be a practical outcome to all of this as far as I was concerned. The year following our initial meeting I became Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and was

determined to initiate a series of portraits of eminent Scots who were still living, something that was then outside the Gallery's remit. I was also certain in my own mind, once the Gallery's rules had been altered to allow this change in policy, that the artists chosen to make these portraits should not be portrait painters per se (my theme was 'death to the boardroom portrait!') but artists whose work was redolent of their own time, 'contemporary' in the fullest sense of that word rather than a mere echo of past traditions. It was for this reason, when a decision was taken to commission a portrait of the late Queen Mother as the first in the series, that I was able to eventually persuade Arikha to undertake the portrait. It was a series that would later, for example, include portraits by Patrick Heron, who portrayed Jo Grimond, Maggi Hambling who painted Mick McGahey, and the aforementioned Sandy Moffatt who created the now famous image of Muriel Spark. But Avigdor was to be the first and initially he had grave reservations, for he had never been commissioned in this



Avigdor Arikah – Self Portrait

way before and had no vision of himself as a 'portrait painter'. In the event, he was persuaded by his close friend Samuel Beckett to accept the challenge on the grounds, rather paradoxically given my aims, that it was part of 'the great tradition'. A week after Avigdor and I had strolled down from the Marlborough Gallery (which represented him for most of his painting life) for a preliminary meeting with the Queen Mother, the portrait was completed in a three-hour session at Clarence House. Normally Avigdor worked at a furious pace, in silence, but on his occasion he could not avoid a long conversation about Ben Gurion whom the Queen Mother had known!

This was to be the first of three portraits that Avigdor would paint for the National Portrait Gallery, the others being a portrait of the statesman Lord Home (Alex Douglas Home) and a double portrait of Ludovic Kennedy and his wife Moira Shearer. The Home portrait (which illustrated Avigdor's obituary in *The Guardian* where he was described as a portrait painter, something he never was) now seems one of the great portraits of the twentieth century – austere, time-ridden and intensely human. It was painted in the course of a single day (his firm practice) in a grey, wintry London. The Kennedy/Shearer portrait has a quite different liveliness, the interacting couple mildly bickering in the bright light flooding the artist's Paris studio.

By the time these portraits had been painted, Avigdor's life had acquired a distinctly Scottish dimension. A painter to whom natural light meant everything (and a sworn adversary of museum curators who showed paintings that had been painted in daylight in artificial light – and who knew where to find the light switches in the Louvre, as I can attest!) he loved the light of Edinburgh on the occasions he came here. These were either for the unveiling of his portraits, including one of Sir Bob Reid and Sir Jack Shaw the last governors of an independent Bank of Scotland which I had facilitated, or the opening of a major retrospective exhibition of his work at the Gallery of Modern Art, before it moved to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Such was Avigdor's thoroughness in everything he did and his unwavering dedication to this principles (allied to a certain intolerance of the opposing views of others) that I dubbed him a Calvinist Jew, which highly amused him. He had really become an honorary Scot.

In 1994 Phaidon Press published my study of his life and work. This had been preceded by long hours of discussion and question-and-answer sessions in his Paris apartment and studio in the Square de Port-Royal and in walks in the city's parks and galleries. I grilled him pretty fiercely about the extraordinary circumstances of his life, aware that he had difficulties speaking about his earlier years. He had been born on 29 April 1929 near Czernowitz into a reasonably well-to-do family who soon after moved to Bucharest where he spent most of his brief childhood – a childhood cut short by the catastrophic events that were a preliminary to the Holocaust, something that made him spurn any description that labelled him a Romanian. At this time his family name was Dlugacz, a fact that only transpired late in our conversations, a reflection I think of his ambivalence about how to recall the terrible times he had lived through.

In the ferocious winter of 1941 the family were deported to the complex of concentration camps in Transnistria, the vast area between the Dneestr and Dnepr rivers, where many thousands would die or be put to death. His father Karl was beaten to death on the march, though his mother Perla and his sister Lya would survive. Avigdor, although only twelve, worked (or was worked) in an iron-works within one of the camps and here, strangely and against the odds, he made his first surviving works of art: untutored drawings of deportees, shootings, soup queues, piles of corpses being thrown into common graves. Carefully hidden, for such a record put his life at risk, in 1943 they were shown by a complicit official within the camp to members of a delegation from the International Red Cross who had been allowed to witness the more tolerable aspects of camp life.

Their astonishment at these drawings led to Avigdor finding a place in one of the convoys evacuating orphans from the camps (although, as a worker, he had to assume the identity of a child who had already died). Many of the evacuated children would lose their lives when their rescue ships were attacked as they crossed the Black Sea, but Avigdor and his sister survived to reach their ultimate destination, British-ruled Palestine.

Almost immediately, Avigdor was sent to a kibbutz about ten miles from Jerusalem where he was given his new name of Arikha – which he loved. Though lonely, he was happy in the kibbutz and his artistic gifts were encouraged. In time he joined the defence force Haganah and was given a primitive gun, later to be replaced by a much better Czech rifle which, with a horrible irony, had a swastika marked on its butt. As strife in his new country increased, he was caught up in action and was so severely wounded with dum-dum bullets that he was virtually given up for dead. He recovered, however, with wounds to his body which would always remain visible and can be clearly seen in some of his naked self-portraits made (perhaps in emulation of Dürer) much later in life. He eventually returned to service in what had become the Israeli army by 1948 as a map-maker and this he was able to combine with studies at the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem. This was run on Bauhaus lines and he was to learn much more about the practice of his art there than he would in the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris which he was to enter in 1949.

As an aspirant artist his principal urge now was to grasp 'modernity' and by and large that meant abstraction rather than figurative art. Between 1958 and 1965 he produced a group of paintings of tumultuous, apocalyptic shapes and tonalities that nevertheless were articulated with the finest precision. These gained him a considerable reputation throughout Europe where he was exhibited widely – ultimately to be represented by the Marlborough Gallery – and also in Israel where, although he no longer lived there (though he always kept an apartment in Jerusalem), he came to be seen as a significant 'national' artist. Yet, despite having achieved this degree of success, he came to feel dissatisfied with what he was doing – 'painting from painting', he would call it. In 1965 his beliefs and manner of working were thrown into disarray when he saw a group of paintings by Caravaggio in an exhibition in Paris and it dawned on him that, like Caravaggio, he should be working from life – from whatever his eye could grasp. For the next eight or so years he pursued his new course with a near-puritanical dedication, working only in black and white and their infinite gradations which his subtle draughtsmanship could imply – wash drawings in ink or pencil and metal point drawings. Then, in 1973, he grasped his wife's coat (he had married the American poet Anne Atik in 1961 with Elie Wiesel as their best man) hung it up somewhere and started to paint, realising that the colour he had shunned had lain dormant in his drawings all along. Next, he painted an open door and the dim corridor beyond, virtually making art out of a non-subject!

From that point on he dedicated himself to an art that was concerned with discovering the strangeness of the ordinary – 'all that beauty' to use his phrase, though he meant a beauty that lay beyond mere description of the everyday things he painted.

To achieve the kind of 'intensity' of perception he hoped for – that virtually inexplicable, hidden force that is the essence of any great art – he arrived at the highly unusual method of always completing a painting or drawing within a single day. It was a method that had inbuilt terrors for him and his fear of failure was never far away. In time, however, it became clear that he had not really repudiated 'modernism' but rather what he considered the dead ends of modernism and he re-established his reputation as this new kind of 'realist' painter, exhibiting mainly in New York and London.

This brief life only touches on the major aspects of the life of an extraordinary individual. In addition to what he accomplished in his painting, drawing and print-making, there were his highly original art-historical contributions: for example, exhibitions he curated on the work of Poussin and Ingres or his unscripted exposition of the work of Velázquez in a BBC film directed by Patricia Wheatley in 1992, one of the best documentaries about an artist ever made. A posthumous edition of his writings on a variety of art topics which he was working on before he died will be published next year.

I last saw Avigdor in June 2009 in Paris at the celebration of his 80th birthday. At a reception in the Print Room of the Louvre his friends presented him with a Bonnard print, the room where we were gathered specially hung with some of his favourite prints and drawings from the art of the past – works by Chardin and Rembrandt – all part of the 'great tradition' which meant so much to him. We then walked across the Tuileries gardens in a beautiful Parisian summer evening to a dinner party at the flat of the photographer Martine Franck (widow of Cartier-Bresson, one of Avigdor's closest friends) in the Rue de Rivoli. As we walked in the early dusk he said a little, with his usual mixture of reticence and revelation, about the cancer that was attacking him – but he seemed fit enough and as vigorous as ever in conversation. Among our last conversations, sadly, was one the following spring after Anne had phoned me from his hospital bedside. He had decided to stop having any further treatment and was going home. The vigour had gone from his voice – but not his

urge to paint. By what must have been an enormous effort of will he summoned the strength to paint a half-length portrait of his daughter Noga in a brilliant blue dress, heavily pregnant with his grandson Vigo. Though simply observed as always, there was doubtless an underlying theme (though he always scorned the literary in art) of binding the past and the future together, rather as his art as a whole could be interpreted as an effort to give permanency to what was fleeting, borne of an awareness of the ever-present possibility of annihilation that he had learned in the camps of Transnistria. The portrait is a towering achievement that shows him painting at this very best, as Titian had done, right at the end of his life. Though now terminally weak, he made the effort not only to tell me how he had painted the portrait – I still hear his weak voice saying, as so many times before, 'Would you like to see it?' – but to photograph it (his usual practice) and send me the image by email. He died on 30 April, the day after his 81st birthday. A few days later, at a Jewish burial service in the Montparnasse cemetery, I said farewell to Avigdor by pouring a little earth on his coffin. It was a cold, grey, blowy day, just like Edinburgh weather! There were many eulogies, including one by Michel Laclotte, a former director of the Louvre and another of his oldest friends. They all recalled a life of extraordinary achievement and we were left to ponder on it.

For myself, I miss him because he was one of the few people with whom I could discuss the practice of painting in any real sense. Coming out of the Wallace collection in London soon afterwards I was desperate to ring him up to discuss Dutch realism, Poussin, Rembrandt, Velázquez, only to realise with infinite sadness that it was no longer possible.

Dr Duncan Thomson was Keeper of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery from 1982 to 1997. He has published a wide range of art matters, including a book on George Jamesone, curated numerous exhibitions – most recently the Sir Henry Raeburn exhibition shown in Edinburgh and London in 1997/8. His book on Arikha, first published by Phaidon in 1994, has been reprinted many times and remains in print.

# The Jews of Peru

## A historic Diaspora dwindling

Molly Seckl

**It is not just Paddington Bear who left Peru seeking education, adventures and a life in the UK. I too was born in Lima, the capital and home to a long-standing, if little documented community of Jews.**

When I grew up in Lima, Peru's capital, the Jewish community was busy and

prosperous. It had its own amenity and sport campus (Hebraica), a Jewish school (Leon Pinelo), which brought teachers and shlichim all the way from Israel to teach us Hebrew and Jewish History, and at least four synagogues. I do remember occasional bouts of anti-Semitism. These were often linked to the festivals of other religions, notably when one of the synagogues was stoned and all its windows broken during Easter time. But, by and large, we lived a good, community-based, Jewish life alongside a host of other immigrants (Italian, British, French,

German, Arabs, etc). In my youth, Jews and Lebanese businessmen worked together. Sadly, much has changed since then. The Jewish community has dwindled from 4,000 to about 2,400. Many of my generation are either in Israel, the USA or Europe (some say that Peruvians have even come to Scotland!). Sadly, Why? Well, the history of the existence of Jews in Peru is a long one. There have been Jews since the Spanish Conquest, in 1532, as Jews who escaped Spain (after the expulsion of 1492) travelled to South America. There are stories that



**Molly Seckl**

indicate that Jews were even part of the Christopher Columbus ‘team’ (like Rodrigo de Triana, who was the first to sight land, Maestre Bernal, a physician, and Luis De Torres, the expedition’s interpreter).

Jews co-existed in peace with the conquistadores and the local population, but with the advent of the Inquisition in South America many Jews were persecuted and some executed, including an infamous ‘auto-da-fe’ when a dozen ‘New Christians’ were burnt at the stake in Lima in 1639. Others more successfully converted to Catholicism (‘marranos’) merely to escape the Inquisition and persecution. Rather poignantly, in the old building of the Spanish Inquisition in Lima, you can still see clearly written on the walls the ‘Shema Israel..’.

Jewish history in Peru reappears around the middle of the 19th century with the arrival in Lima of merchants and engineers from central Europe. By 1870 these largely male Jews formed a community, La Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita de 1870, which exists to the present day. However, women were scarce, intermarriage therefore common and none of these founder families is represented in the modern Peruvian Jewish community, a salutary lesson for Jewish Diasporas everywhere.

Rejuvenation of the community occurred in the 1910s and 1920s when Jews arrived primarily from Germany and other parts of Europe. Before and after World War I, Jews from Turkey and Syria also came to Lima to escape their Ottoman Empire countries ravaged by war. These again were mainly male, and the poor, scraping a living in Lima and two other of Peru’s other larger cities, Trujillo, and Arequipa. They joined the few German Jews who were members of community institutions dating from the 19th century and utilized their own cemetery. By the end of the 1920s Lima had around 400 Jews. My great grandparents arrived in the 1920s; my maternal great grandfather and great grandmother from Ukraine (Kiev), my maternal grandfather from Turkey (Adrianapolis, or Edirne, via France, and the Sorbonne). My grandfather left Turkey at the age of 18 as he was understandably not that keen on serving in the army under Kemal Ataturk. My paternal grandparents came from what was then Romania. During this time other Ashkenazim arrived. Eventually, the Sephardi Jews separated and created their own Synagogue. 1925 saw the creation of the first Zionist movement in Peru (‘Organización Sionista del Peru’), and by the end of the 1920s, with the assimilation of the German Jews, the population reached 1,000.

In the 1930s Jews gained some financial security, both from the efforts of the earlier immigrants, who concentrated mainly on textiles and related business, and as immigration of around 500 relatively wealthy Jews from Germany and Austria began in earnest, especially after 1933. The Jewish Beneficial Society of 1870 was re-established and a variety of youth movements instigated (Maccabi, Hashahar, Hashomer and Betar). The community bought buildings for the synagogues. The Peruvian government banned Jewish immigration in 1938. The number of Jews had risen then to about 2,500.

The Community strengthened and many organisations flourished; the cemetery was enlarged; a home for the elderly was established and the Leon Pinelo Jewish School (where I studied) was founded. The various youth organizations integrated into Hanoar Hatzioni and Betar. Three women’s groups (Wizo, OSE and Pioneer Women) were organized. During this decade, the relationship between Jewish education and Zionism significantly intensified and by the end of the 1930s, despite the restrictions on immigration, the number of Jews in Peru reached about 4,000 people.

By the 1950s Jewish families were typically financially well off and the Jews in other areas in Peru moved to Lima to become part of the greater community. The Jewish community purchased land and expanded its institutions (The Jewish Beneficial Society of 1870, The Union Israelita, the Israeli embassy, sports club Hebraica, Bikur Holim and Hevre Kadisha). An old age home Afilantis was established and the Adath Israel Synagogue was built. By 1960 Lima’s Jewish population exceeded 5,000.

In the 1960s a new generation, born and bred in Peru, assumed key leadership roles and the ties with Israel strengthened. Keren Hayesod had more impact in the community and Aliya to Israel increased. More than 80% of Lima’s Jews were connected with the Jewish school and shlihim served as teachers and as the principal. The Hebraica Organization hired a foreign co-ordinator for its activities and three new rabbis were engaged by synagogues. Lima’s Jewish population increased and reached 5,500 people.

The military coup of General Velasco Alvarado (1968-1980) marked the beginning of the decline of the Peruvian Jewish Community. He brought socialism to Peru and restricted private property and freedom of the press. Having lived through this period, I can clearly recall that we Jews started living in fear, as did many of the local Peruvians. 'Toque de queda' or martial law was imposed with a curfew after 10pm. This meant a 'shoot to kill' policy by the police. Tanks became a common sight in the streets and there was a lack of basic produce in the markets. At this point, many Jewish people were affected financially due to the 'reforms'. In rapid succession the regime nationalized the banking system, railroads, public utilities, the important fishmeal industry, and Peru's giant copper and iron mines.

All of this contributed to Jewish youth emigrating, especially to Israel and the United States, both to study and work. I myself left Peru in 1979 in order to emigrate to Israel. The beginning of open anti-Semitism, (hidden under the support for Palestinians and the standard anti-Zionist slant) as well as rampant crime and corruption, all led to a higher emigration and the Jewish population declined to some 4,500 people by the end of the decade. This decline continued through the 1980s with the advent of prolific terrorist groups such as the notorious quasi-Maoist 'Shining Path' which controlled large swathes of the country and killed many middle-class (and of course poor) people. Leon Pinelo school which had had 1,014 students at its peak dwindled to a roll of only 540. At the end of the decade, due to intermarriage and emigration, the number of Jews in Peru declined to 3,200. This trend continued in the 1990s as unemployment soared and poverty increased. Jews were no longer mainly emigrating to Israel, perhaps due to Israel's internal conflicts and uncertain economy, but went instead to live in the USA.

On a different note, amongst the elderly population (including my parents, generation), a religious revival began and a Habad rabbi arrived and was welcomed in Lima. The first decade of the new millennium saw four separate communities (each with its own rabbi); the Ashkenazi Orthodox; the Sephardi Orthodox; the Conservatives and the Chabad. By now

the Jewish population has declined to around 2,300.

As I visit Lima, both with a sense of belonging to the community and reminiscence, I carry a feeling of sadness for its decline. In late 2005, the rabbi of the largest synagogue expressed concern at the number of anti-Semitic attacks and the rise of neo-Nazi groups that threaten the country's Jews. Compounded with this, there is a new Nationalist movement which avows 'Peru for the Peruvians' and this means indigenous populations only (who naturally have long interbred with a host of incomers from Europe, the Caribbean, Asia and so forth). Nevertheless, even if the Jewish community is dwindling, we have had (and still have) Jewish people in prominent positions, for example, the prime minister and the finance minister during the time of President Fujimori's regime [1990-2000], and the second vice president, David Waisman, in the current government.

Leon Trahtemberg, a historian and principal of the Colegio Leon Pinelo, believes Peruvian Jewry is now "at a crossroads", as the community dwindles, intermarriages increase and emigration continues apace. "We have a broad base of services and they are flourishing," he says, "but without forward-looking leadership, we'll eventually lose them."

Rather amazingly, despite the declining population, Peru still has groups practising Judaism outside Lima, the capital and financial hub. In the Amazonian Jungle, a group of Jews was found in the past few years. They are the descendants of immigrants who made their home in the city of Iquitos, a thriving centre of imported Italian marble with a theatre designed by Gustave Eiffel, during the time of the rubber boom. They were mainly Jews from Morocco, Gibraltar, Malta, England and France who were following their star in search of riches and adventure. As the rubber trade collapsed, a few stayed and clung to their Jewish beliefs.

After the chief rabbi of Lima's largest Ashkenazi synagogue agreed to oversee two large conversions, a number of them made aliya to Israel. The exodus included nearly the entire Levy clan, descended from Joseph Levy, a Moroccan adventurer

who put down roots in the jungle in the 19th century.

A different group, The B'nai Moshe, (or "Inca Jews)," are former Christians, who practiced Judaism from the 1950s -- inspired, they said, by the Psalms. They lived mainly in the north of Peru (Trujillo and Piura). They prayed wearing shawls, ate only fruit, vegetables and fish with scales, read from a homemade Torah scroll and were circumcised. They were formally converted in 1980 and made aliya (140 of them) to Israel, where they settled in Elon Moreh, a religious community in the West Bank.

Peru's Jews have a long history, born in adversity of the Inquisition, flourishing during the 20th Century, but now dwindling as fortunes are sought elsewhere. The largely ageing population will have increasing difficulties in sustaining itself. Echoes of the issues for others in the more remote regions of the Diaspora perhaps?

And finally, despite the dietary preference of Paddington, most Peruvians don't like marmalade sandwiches!

Peru covers 1,285,220 km<sup>2</sup> (496,226 sq mi). It neighbours Ecuador and Colombia to the north, Brazil to the east, Bolivia to the southeast, Chile to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. It has 29 million inhabitants. Peru has the fourth largest area of tropical forest in the world after Brazil, Congo and Indonesia.[53]

Further information:  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/peru.html>

The Jews of Peru at the Crossroads – Journal of Jewish Genealogy, The Israel Genealogical Society, June 2002, Vol 16, N3.

Molly Seckl was born and schooled in Lima. She lived in Jerusalem for 5 years studying archaeology at the Hebrew University, and then completed an MSc in London. She moved to Edinburgh in 1987 and now works as a counsellor in the NHS and private practice. She regularly visits her family in Peru who, contrary to popular myth, do not subsist solely on marmalade sandwiches.

# Jews of Holland

## Samuel Myer Isaacs

The man who dedicated 47 synagogues in the USA

Peter de Haan

### Family reunion of descendants

A number of people, including Anthony Gilbert, son of Gilbert Isaacs, were very interested to know about Samuel Isaacs and his family history. On the first weekend of July, 2010, I had the pleasure of hosting nineteen of the descendants of Samuel, who had arrived from the USA, UK and South Africa, to his birth place Leeuwarden. The family were given a reception by the deputy-major, Mr. Zandberg; walked along the Jewish highlights of the town; listened to lectures about the relations between Jews and the local population; the first recorded ancestor, Samuel Isaacs, and his home region, and visiting the house of his childhood. It was a great pleasure and even honour for me as a non-Jew to be the host of such a nice group of descendants of our famous 'son' Samuel Isaacs.

Samuel Isaacs was born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands in 1804. The city was in those days the fourth largest Jewish community in Holland after Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. When young Samuel arrived in 1804, he could not have suspected that two centuries later his name would appear on the website of [www.famousamericans.net](http://www.famousamericans.net). The information which follows is based on *The Forerunners, Dutch Jewry in the North American Diaspora (1994)*, by the American professor Robert P. Swierenga and my article in the book *Famous Frisians in America*.

When Holland was formally annexed by France, the Isaacs family began to think seriously about leaving the country. In addition to the economic situation, the fact that their Orthodox beliefs were diametrically opposed to the enlightened ideas of the French oppressors may also have played a role.

The family left behind hearth and home – as well as their debts – in search of a place of refuge in England.

### England as place of refuge

The Isaacs family arrived in Spitalfield, in East London. Father threw himself into his rabbinical duties and instructed his children in the Talmud. It was assuredly no accident that four of his five sons became rabbis. One of them, Samuel's brother David, would later become the chief rabbi of Manchester.

Solomon Hirschell, the chief rabbi, was a well-known figure in London in those days. Ten-year-old Samuel Myer Isaacs soon came under the influence of him. Rabbi Hirschell found Samuel to be a talented, inquisitive young man, who stood out because of his speaking skills. In addition to his schoolwork and the lessons with his father, he also studied Hebrew and Jewish history at the synagogue school.

This period saw a wave of emigration to such countries as Australia, Africa and above all North America. The new synagogue Bnai Jeshurun (Sons of Israel) placed itself under the authority of London and the Rabbi Hirschell. He was bombarded with questions from a 'leaderless' New York congregation. It soon became apparent that the New York synagogue on Elm Street was in need of someone who resided in the city and was endowed with the oratorical gifts necessary to attract and retain a congregation. Although Samuel had no formal rabbinical training, Hirschell saw in this man from Leeuwarden the necessary leadership qualities, and asked him to devote his considerable talents to this pioneering task.

### Jewish leadership in New York

Several days after his wedding to Jane Symmons, the 35-year-old Samuel

stepped on board the Brig Emery in London to take up his post as cantor and preacher in a world which was totally foreign to him. But he did know that the Bnai Jeshurun synagogue was then the largest Ashkenazi congregation in New York, with a total of 17,000 members.

“Samuel Isaacs delivered the very first English sermon ever heard in a New York synagogue.”

Shortly after his installation, Samuel Isaacs delivered the very first English sermon ever heard in a New York synagogue. Up until then the languages of choice were Hebrew and German. Samuel's sermons were oratorical masterpieces which were rooted in Jewish orthodoxy but also able to withstand the ravages of time. He transformed the Jewish afternoon school associated with his synagogue into a Hebrew-English school which was open on workdays: the New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Institute. He founded also a Jewish secondary school. He himself taught for many years at this private school, known as the Hebrew High School, which catered for Jewish students of all denominations.

Isaacs decided to preside over a new congregation: Shaaray Tefila on Wooster Street, and later on 44th Street. Samuel's rituals remained conservative (traditional prayers, no mixed choirs, no instrumental music during worship). And yet, from the beginning Shaaray Tefila flourished. No doubt this had a great deal to do with the exceptional personality and eloquence of the minister.

In 1857 Isaacs launched a weekly newspaper, the Jewish Messenger, which proved to be a most effective means of

communication. Not only could he make the most of his talents as a writer, he could also set the tone. Initiatives which followed from these efforts included a Jewish orphanage (1859) and Mount Sinai Hospital (1852). This was the largest American-Jewish hospital in the country, and Isaacs served as its vice-president.

While Samuel Isaacs was imbued with strict Orthodox views on faith and the

world, he refrained from pronouncements on genuine political issues. But when the Civil War broke out, he could not help exhorting the readers of the Jewish Messenger to 'Stand by the Flag!'

#### **Contacts with presidents**

The social position which Samuel Isaacs had attained was underscored at the funeral of the assassinated president Abraham Lincoln in New York: Isaacs was one of the officially designated clergymen

invited to attend the memorial services in Union Square. We know that Samuel Isaacs was also friendly with the 18th president of the United States, General Ulysses S. Grant. If at all possible, the two met whenever the president visited New York. His sons Myer, Isaac and Abram would also serve the Jewish community in New York in a very considerable way.

# A Short History of the Jews of Friesland

Peter de Haan

I would like to add some new found facts relating to the birth house of Samuel, the original of which was written with the support of Prof. Swierenga in the book 'Famous Frisians in America'

Leeuwarden, also known as Friesland, had its own culture and by law, its own officially recognised language over the centuries.

In this respect there can be seen a similarity with the Jews: they too had their own identity, languages, (Hebrew and Yiddish) religion, and rules to name but a few. Although I am generalizing, both like to make autonomous choices. Maybe that similarity is the reason that every two years a Yiddish Festival is organised in this town and nowhere else.

The Jews needed their own rules; they were able to survive as a minority but by so doing for many years, they failed to integrate into a society that wished to welcome Jews initially accepted as poor refugees and who would soon bring great trade opportunities. The First Jews from Portugal and Spain went to Amsterdam, the international capital from the beginning of the 16th century. With 10,000 Jews, Amsterdam had the largest Jewish community in Europe, around 1700. Here in the north most Jews came from Germany and Poland in the 17th and 18th century, often from, or via, Emden. Their language was Yiddish, and because they were not allowed to participate in and work for the guilds they had to work in trade, mostly cattle, meat, textile and

lotteries. In Leeuwarden there was even a 'Luck Office' that was run by a smart Jew.

Although the Jews had much more freedom here than in other countries, their situation was not always ideal. Here too, people were not without prejudice, but compared to the pogroms in Eastern Europe Jews considered this area a safe heaven. In the French period (1796), when the Isaacs lived in Leeuwarden, Jews were essentially given equal rights and Frisian representatives had unanimously supported that law. Frisians are said to be strong freedom lovers, and they were the first in Holland, and second in the world, to recognise the independence of the USA.

During French rule all citizens had to have a formal surname. Some Jews chose Frisian names. From about 1850 the Jews integrated more and more into society and thence were elected in the council of Leeuwarden. Despite improved civil rights, the Isaacs-family immigrated to London because of the combination of debts, (the English-French wars here caused economic recession) and they might too have believed that they could more easily be Orthodox Jews. The rich merchant

“The statue erected in their honour must surely be the only one in the world dedicated to a peanut seller!”

Abraham Levi moved to London in 1815 dying a bankrupt in 1843. Samuel Isaacs and his family moved at more or less at the same. It would be interesting to study the relationship between these families in consideration of their shared experiences.

Among the Jews in Friesland Samuel Isaacs was no doubt a man who attracted great international recognition. Another is Samuel Coronel who published extensively on improving public health living here from 1867 until 1890. He received the first prize of the Société Internationale d'Économie Sociale in Paris. Yet another, Alexander Cohen, famously became an anarchistic writer and published extensively in France. One positive move during the French period to integrate Jews into society was to move the main market day from Saturday to Friday. Jews could celebrate their Shabbat and also participate in trade at the market. Many Jews were street pedlars. Today the main market day in Leeuwarden is still Friday. Two Jewish pedlars became so famous that there were even statues dedicated to them: one is dedicated to the twin sisters Betje and Roosje Cohen who sold peanuts. Everyone in town knew Roosje who worked for more than 65 years. The statue erected in their honour must surely be the only one in the world dedicated to a peanut seller!

The other statue is erected in the centre of Amsterdam, dedicated to the Leeuwarden born Meyer Linnewiel alias Prof. Kokadorus, a title he said he got honoris

“Holland also had its fascist political party”

causa from the Amsterdam University; this really famous hawker sold braces ('the best to hang your mother in law' he said...) Once he was invited by the Queen to show his act; it was the only time in his life that he was too nervous to speak a word, nevertheless from that moment he called himself Purveyor to the Royal Household 'Hofleverancier' and was also honoured with a statue.

It was not exceptional at that time for the Jewish community in Leeuwarden to belong to the Orthodox branch. In the 19th century Chief Rabbi Baruch Dusnus was in charge. Jews also had their own clubs; sport, debating, academic and theatre clubs and also a women's club.

Within the Frisian Museum, which is the Netherlands largest regional museum, is the Resistance Museum. Here can be seen a place of remembrance, with the names of the more than 600 Jewish citizens who were expelled from Friesland or murdered.

Holland also had its fascist political party, the NSB. They were less influential in Friesland, than in the north, middle and southwest. It was in Leeuwarden that hundreds of Jewish people were hidden during the war, aided by individual people and organisations that could identify places of hiding. Some of them were interviewed by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education in Los Angeles, erected by Steven Spielberg in response to his film Schindlers List. Friesland was a popular place of shelter because there was

sufficient food and relatively low numbers of collaborators or traitors.

The last Chief Rabbi of Friesland was the sociable Abraham Salomon Levisson, who founded the Association of Jewish Academics in Friesland. Before the war he was responsible for the spiritual care of the people in camp Westerbork and because of his personality, was known as Rebbe Simche, (Rabbi Joy). He died in an evacuation train after Bergen-Belsen was liberated. Only 100 of the 700 Jews who lived in Leeuwarden before the war survived returned. The synagogue became too big for the remaining community and now there are only 46 members of the Jewish community living in Leeuwarden.

There are nine Jewish cemeteries In Friesland, the first of which was founded in 1670.

## The Leeuwarden Jewish Community

Evelyn van Pinxteren-Nagler

Recently I was asked to write a few words for your paper about the Jews living in Leeuwarden, the main town in the province Friesland, or Fryslan as it is called in the regional language, a 96,000 town in the North-East of the Netherlands. So here are those words....

In 1645 the first registered Jews arrived in Leeuwarden, coming from Emden in North Germany, a town well known in the area due to trade and shipping.

In 1670 the city granted the Jews their own plot of land to lay their dead to rest, a cemetery was created.

Some years later, probably in 1754, 2 private houses in the Sacramentstraat were united to be the first formal house of worship, the first synagogue. By 1805 a larger synagogue was built on that location, designed by Gerrit van der Wielen, that could have 300 men and 200 women. For the Jewish community had grown and grown, becoming the largest one outside of Amsterdam and so big it even had its own rabbi and schools.

“After the war, only ninety or so former Jewish inhabitants of Leeuwarden were known to have survived”

Alas, soon, at the turn of the century, the community started to become less important with less members, so when the Nazi invasion took place, less than 400 Jews inhabited the city. After the war, only ninety or so former Jewish inhabitants of Leeuwarden were known to have survived, far too few to be able to keep the synagogue in proper state and use, so after the reconsecration in 1948 and the celebration commemorating its 150th anniversary in 1955, which 81 members attended, the decision was taken in 1964 to sell the synagogue for 1 ceremonial guilder to the municipality and find a cultural destination for it. It now is a ballroom dancing centre.

The inventory was shipped to Kfar Batya, a children's village in the centre of Israel, the most precious ceremonial objects were donated to the Jewish museum in Amsterdam.

The Jewish community did, however, continue to have services in the house adjoining the synagogue, using the interior of the Gorredijk synagogue. It was inaugurated in 1980 and till this day is the central location for the community, now totalling 41 members. There are services on holidays and every third Shabbat, on Sunday evenings, mishna is studied and meetings and celebrations take place. The present community is a mixture of Jewish families who originate from Leeuwarden, families coming from other parts of the Netherlands, refugees from the former USSR, from Iran and Iraq, Israelis looking for a more stable climate than their beloved country can provide and students from all over Europe who spend a few years in town. So, the services have become a unique mixture of traditional Dutch nigunim, often sung by balakore Jaacov de Leeuwe, ashkenazi, Sephardi and sometimes even Moroccan or Yemenite ones, as the members together put in an effort to let the services

“prayers are repeated in order to provide a possibility to share each other’s traditions!”

continue. On the Holy days, in order to accommodate every person’s need, some prayers are repeated in order to provide a possibility to share each other’s traditions! Being such a minute community, one strives to support each other, bringing kosher food for all who want to have it from Amsterdam, Antwerp and Paris, whenever a person is able to shop there. The cemetery is cared for, however

help is accepted when offered, eg from the ‘Dutch foundation for Penance and Reconciliation’, who try to make up for the Dutch attitude in the Second World War by restoring Jewish cemeteries all over Holland. The monument for those who perished in that war, was restored in 2001 with the aid of the Netherlands-Israel Association. Celebrations such as on Purim, Yom Haatzmaut and Chanuka are organised by WIZO, so all Jews in the area who care to, can join in and no barriers are created between Orthodox, Conservative or other religious connections. The regional library includes the “Fuchs collection”, a vast collection of Yiddish and Hebrew books, donated by Professor Fuchs to “the area where good people

“as it may be, the Jewish community in Leeuwarden continues to survive!”

hid a Jewish boy in order to survive the war”...since many come to see that collection, a two-yearly Yiddish festival is now put up by the library together with the municipality, the municipal film theatre, the historical centre and many others. This year for the first time a Limmud will be organised in September.

So, small as it may be, the Jewish community in Leeuwarden continues to survive!



Leeuwarden Shul

# Around and About

## The Shein Scene

### FILM EVENING

A film evening took place within the Community Centre on 7 March when "The Mascot" was shown to an appreciative audience. The film dealt with a young Jewish boy of five who, having concealed his identity, was adopted as a good luck charm by Nazi soldiers and lived as a 'Mascot' with them for many years. He lived with this secret for fifty years until a series of remarkable events served as a catalyst to prompt him to search for his real identity. Prior to the film, a light buffet supper was enjoyed by the audience.

### YOM HASHOAH 5770

The annual service for Yom HaShoah took place on Monday 12th April in the Peace Park in Princes Street Gardens, once again on a beautiful Spring evening, with over 70 members of the Edinburgh Jewish communities present. The Vice Chairman of the Board, Raymond Taylor, delivered an excellent address welcoming Bailie Donald Wilson and Councillors representing the City of Edinburgh. Bailie Wilson replied, expressing his pleasure at being able to be present and spoke with sincerity and compassion about the Holocaust, making a poignant reference to his personal experience of visiting Auschwitz. A memorial candle was lit by Benjamin Danzig beside the Holocaust Memorial Stone, followed by a minute's silence in memory of all the victims of the Holocaust. Rabbi Rose conducted the service, during which the Chairman, Hilary Rifkind, delivered readings in English. After the Mourners' Kaddish, recited by David Goldberg. Raymond Taylor concluded the proceedings, thanking everyone who had attended.

### YOM HA'ATZMAUT 5770

On the evening of Monday 19th April there was a good attendance at the annual services for Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, held in the Synagogue. Refreshments followed and 25 members stayed on for the showing of a very enjoyable film.

The celebrations for Yom Ha'atzmaut took place on Tuesday 20th April, beginning

with activities for children at 5pm. The main Hall was filled with families of young children busily occupied with activities, and other members joined the party at 6pm. An Israeli buffet followed and then dancing, one of the students, Leah Hurwitz teaching the dance-steps to the children and everyone present enjoyed the atmosphere of the evening.

### AGM

The AGM of the Congregation took place on 30 June in front of a large attendance of members. The Hon. Treasurer, Malcolm Cowan, presented his report and went over details of income and expenditure. He indicated that although the year showed a deficit, the Congregation's finances were healthy and solvent although obviously a watch would be maintained on costs. Thermostats were installed on the radiators throughout the Synagogue complex and a new boiler was installed at 8 East Parkside where the Rabbi resides. Investments were attracting low rates of interest due to the overall economic situation although savings had been made with new insurers. The accounts were adopted after which Hilary Rifkind thanked Mr. Cowan for all his work during the year. The following were elected for the coming year:

### Board of Management

Chair, Hilary Rifkind; Hon. Treasurer, Malcolm Cowan; Jackie Taylor; Anita Mendelssohn; Joyce Sperber; Arnold Rifkind; Raymond Taylor; Anthony Gilbert; David Goldberg; Steven Hyams; Gershon Mendick; David Neville.

### Honorary Vice Presidents

John Cosgrove; Malcolm Cowan

### Senior Warden

Morris Kaplan

### Junior Warden

Malcolm Cowan

Raymond Taylor, Vice Chairman, praised Hilary for the first class leadership she had shown during the past busy year and

the nonstop work she readily undertook on behalf of the entire community. He also thanked the "silent helpers" within the community who were available to offer their services on many occasions.

A proposal was put to the meeting that no one should serve more than a four year term as chair of the Board of Management. Should no suitable candidate be found after that period, the chairman could serve for another year. Clarification was sought on this and after discussion it was agreed that the Constitution be amended to above with the proviso that if no suitable nominations be received after the aforementioned year, the incumbent could continue in office until such time as a suitable nomination was received.

Steven Hyams, chairman of the Community Centre Committee, gave a report on the activities of his committee which saw several successful events during the year. He thanked all who had participated and who had helped.

Hilary Rifkind outlined a recommended plan for the enlargement of the Beth Hamedrash and its use as an alternative Shul during the winter months. Professional advice had been sought and it transpired that this was a feasible proposition. The number of congregants, who regularly attend Shul on Shabbat, could comfortably be accommodated in the new Beth Hamedrash. This would conserve and offer a more acceptable environment for the congregation during the winter months. The Board was seeking approval at this meeting to proceed and seek estimates for the conversion. Thereafter, a special general meeting would be called to discuss the proposal. A building fund would subsequently be set up. Approval was given.

# Further Afield

Stephanie Brickman

## LIMMUD SCOTLAND 2010



Crowds at Limmud

Scotland was gripped by Limmud fever one weekend with a range of events starting on Friday night and culminating with the day Limmud on Sunday 14th February. Scotland shared the date with day Limmud events in Chicago and Los Angeles. Some 350 participants from all over Scotland attended the fifth day Limmud since 1990. 57 of them were presenters. Attendance was on a par with the last event in 2008 but the number of sessions had been increased to 61 from 50, achieved by skipping the lunch break. Presenters included Israeli TV celebrity food journalist Gil Hovav, who gave a cookery demonstration, in which he made Israeli Tabouleh and also chillshi, a spicy pumpkin paste.

Rabbi Steven Greenberg, the first openly gay orthodox Rabbi in the US, presented two lively sessions. The first, entitled "Perverse sex and humour: comic scenes from a rabbinic wedding", explored the links between theology, sexuality and humour. The second - "Wow! That's a Shul?!" - looked at how synagogues could be reinvented in today's world. "The continuity effort here is laudable and I respect it," said Rabbi Greenberg. "But sometimes that effort gets in the way of reinventing. It's wonderful to have a Shul with three services but if they struggle to get ten people what should the synagogue do to serve new generations of Jews?"

Ayelet Shahak from Israel presented a moving session on the writings of her daughter who was killed by a suicide bomber when she was 15 years old. She also animated a session for 30 young people organised by UJIA on Thursday 11th. Using her late daughter's diaries she gave her audiences a powerful insight into what it means to grow up in Israel in the shadow of terrorism.

Limmud proceedings began on Erev Shabbat with an Oneg Shabbat featuring Clive Lawton, Jonathan Wittenberg and Steven Greenberg at Giffnock's Eastwood House. Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation also held a Friday Night Dinner with presenters, Norwegian scientist Daniel Reisel, and Maureen Kendler, Head of Education at the London School of Jewish Studies. This was followed by a variety of Shabbat morning services featuring

various presenters at Newton Mearns Hebrew Congregation and Glasgow Reform Synagogue. The first ever Masorti services in Scotland were held at Clarkston Halls. Saturday night saw the launch of the UK Jewish Film Festival at the Fotheringay Centre in Glasgow, sponsored by Limmud.

Chair of Limmud Scotland Fiona Brodie told the JC: "It's been stimulating and heart-warming. The 'ruach' on the Friday night was beautiful and the day itself was uplifting. I'm just thrilled with the pool of talented people who agreed to come to Glasgow."

Exhausted as the team are, plans are already underway for Limmud Scotland 2012.

## WINDOWS FOR PEACE

The Windows for Peace Summer School began this week in Edinburgh; it's the second time the event has happened in the UK. The charity aims to promote dialogue and understanding amongst Jewish, Arab and Palestinian young people in Israel and abroad.

The project began as a magazine publishing short letters young people wrote to one another and articles about their situations. In recent years this process has been extended to workshops with some ten Summer Schools in which a group of youngsters from all backgrounds meet in a neutral country for two weeks of intensive workshops.

A Summer School was held in Edinburgh in 2008, the first in the UK, organised, by Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation member Judy Sischy. Director of the Scottish Council for Independent Schools by day, she was first introduced to Windows for Peace in its magazine form, by a trustee of the UK branch of the charity Window for Peace UK.

"It fired my enthusiasm because it's about young people. They showed me a very early newsletter that was short letters from the children to one another. They were such moving letters."

On hearing about summer schools from Windows Director Ruthie Atsmon, Mrs Sischy immediately asked if they would like to come to Edinburgh and then set about raising the money.

Initially she was aided by her friend Brenda Beecham but when Mrs Beecham had to step down on health grounds, Mrs Sischy carried on undeterred, raising the £30,000 necessary from trusts and individuals.

"It was a very big promise I never thought would materialize, let alone twice!" exclaims Mrs Sischy. "I think the only hope is to start with the youngsters."

## RABBI MARK SOLOMON'S INDUCTION

Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, formally welcomed Rabbi Mark Solomon as their Rabbi at an induction ceremony on Sunday 25th April. Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, conducted the induction ceremony following a service led by members of the community and Rabbi Solomon himself. The event was held in St Mark's Unitarian Church and was attended by 100 people including

representatives from the wider Jewish Community, other faiths and Gavin Strang MP.

Australian-born Rabbi Solomon has been associated with Sukkat Shalom since 2005, initially as an informal “foster rabbi”, and in late 2009 he was appointed. He is also Rabbi of Manchester Liberal Jewish Community and Associate Chair of the Rabbinic Board of Liberal Judaism. He is well known for both interfaith activities and for pioneering the rights of gay Jews.

Dr Gillian Raab, Chair of Sukkat Shalom, said: “It was wonderful, especially the induction by Rabbi Danny Rich. At one point he whispered advice in Mark’s ear as he passed the Torah scroll to him and it was really moving.” Rabbi Solomon is known for his beautiful singing and was in fine voice on the day. The service ended with the congregation singing Adon Olam to the tune of the Burns Song “My love is like a red, red rose”.

### SPECIAL BAR MITZVAH

Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community, the only Liberal Jewish Community in Scotland held a very special bar mitzvah celebration on 19th June. The young person to be celebrated was Ben Naftalin, aged 17, who is autistic and non-verbal.

In the service Ben held the Sefer Torah and helped to parade it around the room assisted by his parents Maurice and Ruth and his brothers Isaac, Daniel and Joe. Using a computer he then activated a recording of the braches for reading the Torah spoken by his twin brother Joe. His brother Daniel then read the portion. Rabbi Mark Solomon, who officiated at the service, came up with the idea in conjunction with Ben’s father, Mr Naftalin, who is a computer scientist.

“I’ve never done this before,” Rabbi Solomon explained. “Ben loves playing with computers and it’s something he does well.”

“We had to ask ourselves what this bar mitzvah was for. On one level we had to question how much Ben was aware of what was happening. Ben will never be a Bar Mitzvah in the legal sense. So it’s not so much about the Mitzvot that Ben can do but about the Mitzvot that we, as his family and community, can do with and for him, in showing him love and including him as much as possible in the community.”

“He stayed in the service the whole time with his arm around Joe and clearly knew and enjoyed the fact that the day was about him.”

Some 80 people attended the service that was held in the hall of Marchmont St Giles Church in Edinburgh. Mr Naftalin said:

“One thing that has made Ben what he is, is the love of his three brothers. That clearly showed that on the day. We had a lot of encouragement from the community, which is very serious about inclusion. People expected something to be done for Ben. The community really joined in our celebration of Ben and that meant a lot.”

### PURIM



Edinburgh Purim

Once again Purim celebrations were held in the community centre of Edinburgh Synagogue. The happy atmosphere was enjoyed together with members of Sukkat Shalom Liberal Community.



Steven Hyams at the book stall

### COFFEE MORNING

Edinburgh’s Jewish Community Centre held a Fundraising Coffee Morning on Sunday 9th May in the Jewish Community Centre Hall on Salisbury Road. Held twice yearly, the Coffee Mornings are popular events in the community calendar and raise funds for the Community Centre premises. Around 60 people attended raising £350 through a plant sale, cake auction, raffle and second hand book sale.

Organiser Steven Hyams said: “It’s a chance for the community to get together. People enjoy the event as well as raising much needed funds towards the upkeep of the community hall.”



Refreshments for Josh Brickman

# Windows for Peace

Sarah Levy

**Windows for Peace is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting dialogue between Jewish, Arab and Palestinian youths living in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.**

The young people who are involved in Windows for Peace from the Middle East are given a rare opportunity to speak with people from different cultures and religions to themselves, who they would otherwise never be able to meet. They meet regularly in Israel to debate and produce their collaborative magazines "1948 and Us" and "Open Window", and also spend time travelling to promote the work that Windows for Peace is doing.

A group of 16 young people travelled to Edinburgh in the summer to meet and discuss the issues facing their societies in a peaceful environment. The teenagers that came were a mixture of Jews from Tel Aviv, Muslims living in the West Bank and Muslims currently living within Israel. They spent the two weeks talking about the Middle Eastern conflict, seeing the sights of Edinburgh and getting to know each other.

I was given the opportunity to go and meet these youths during their stay in Scotland, along with various Muslim and Christian teenagers who also live in Edinburgh. Before being allowed to

meet the young people, we were spoken to by Nancy Adams (who is involved in Windows for Peace within the UK), and warned that many of the teenagers were very upset due to an earlier debate they had had with each other, and we were to act sensitively towards them. We were also given a brief introduction to the Middle Eastern Conflict and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Upon meeting the Middle Eastern teenagers, we all introduced ourselves, and with the help of several translators we were able to chat with each other. I discovered that I had much in common with many of the other young people, as we all enjoyed doing many of the same things and had similar hobbies. Together, we proceeded outside to hang out on the grass, and before long, the British teenagers had taught our Middle Eastern counterparts how to play "Kickball Rounders". As we played together, it was hard to remember that in their home country, these teenagers would never have the chance to interact with each other at all. Even the Jewish Israelis and the Muslim Palestinians living in Israel would never meet, despite the fact that they live so close to each other, because of the stigma that has been placed on each group. It was so important for these youths to be able to meet and spend time together in a peaceful environment and hopefully they were able to disperse some of the vicious stereotypes that have been

cast upon each other by society. As the day drew to a close, we all exchanged email addresses and 'Facebooks', in the hope that we would all be able to keep in touch.

Just two days later, I returned to Merchiston Castle School where the Windows for Peace Project was based to hear the organisers and participants of the project discuss their experiences. The presentations were very interesting and informative and I think that the large audience comprising of various religions and ages thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon.

Considering the current situation in the Middle East, projects like Windows for Peace are becoming increasingly important. Although some people may think that 16 teenagers from different backgrounds making friends will do nothing to contribute to the quest for peace, I think that that it really will make a difference. As young people, it is we who will go on and become the future world leaders, politicians and protestors. Projects like Windows for Peace aim to open our minds to the world around us and help us to form opinions and make decisions in a fair and informed way. We are all guilty of judging others by how they look and where they are from before we get to know them, and unless we find a way to disperse our prejudices, we can never live at peace with one another.

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Joe and Margaret Aronson  
15 Arden Street  
Edinburgh

James and Sally Barker (née  
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Clarice Been

Shirley and Peter Bennett

Barbara and Leslie Bennie

Avril and Norman Berger  
3 Kirk Park  
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Marcia & Lennie Berger, Yvonne,  
Gillian, Gary, Talia and Hannah,  
19 Springwood Park, Edinburgh

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450 Hounslow Avenue  
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Micheline, Duncan,  
David and Shrutee Brannan  
31/3 Rattray Grove, Edinburgh

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Portland OR  
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Stephanie and Josh Brickman  
and Miriam

Norma Brodie, Simon, Sarah,  
Caitlin, Eilidh, Maia,  
Daniel and Michael

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Christine and Dave Burns

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6 The Crosspath  
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7 East Castle Road, Edinburgh

Bernard and Irene Davidson

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Fay, Max and Rodney Dorfman

Rachel and Bernard Dorfman  
and family

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Jerusalem

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Dorfman, 19/32 Shlomo Hamelech  
Street, Netanya, Israel

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Jonathan Field

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Marla and Adam Gamoran  
Madison WI  
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Einan and Merav Gardi  
Omri, Lotem and Shlomit

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and family

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Shiona and Alasdair

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Haifa, Israel

Irene and David Hyams

Gary Hyams

Susan and Steven Hyams,  
James and Amandan

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Rosalyn and Bernard Jackson

Howard, Valerie  
and Jacqueline Kahn  
27 Blinkbonny Road, Edinburgh

Sheryl and David Kaplan  
Stanmore, Middlesex

Myrna and Morris Kaplan  
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Edinburgh

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Saul and Joshua Korn  
Ra'anana, Israel

Ian and Joan Leifer  
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Benjamin, Penicuik

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Livingston

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Stanmore, Middlesex

Hilda Levy and family

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Edinburgh

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Kate and Debra  
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Sheva and Ann Lurie  
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Rabbi David and Elisheva Mason  
Hodaya, Netanel and Akiva

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Zack, Natan and Benjamin

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Michele, David, Sarah-Beth and  
Katie Neville

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Eve Oppenheim and family  
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Anne Sterne, Tel Aviv  
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Sukkat Shalom  
Edinburgh Liberal  
Jewish Community

Jackie, Raymond, Lawrence  
and Michael Taylor

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Carole Weinberg  
6 Lyntonvale Avenue  
Gatley, Cheadle, Manchester

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Laura and Shlomie  
Pinner, Harrow

Madeleine Whiteson  
28 Mayfields,  
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# The Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010

Lord Julian Goodman

I don't know if you've noticed, but Jewish Festivals are NEVER on time, they're either early or late!

With Rosh Hashanah starting earlier this year, it was impossible to see everything on offer in time to make this edition, but that's not such a bad thing when you consider it means Jewish Entertainment is as prolific as ever at the Fringe. However, it all had to be crammed into a week and a half, and as you read this, I'm probably still oysgematted and lying down in a darkened room somewhere to recover!

With so much to choose from, I started with a bit of nostalgia and headed to **The Famous Spiegel Garden** to see **Jest like Danny Kaye**. Famous for his Improvisation Shows, Melbourne actor Russell Fletcher, threw himself wholeheartedly into the role of Danny Kaye. With amazing tongue-twisting verbal dexterity and manic energy, he recreated a wonderful selection of Danny Kaye's best loved songs and monologues. Accompanied by his musical director, Greg Riddell as the Symphony Orches..... erm..... I mean Piano, we were treated to Professor Grunwald performing "The Liddle Fiddle" and other sketches from "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty". Other songs included, Anatole of Paris, Malady in 4F, a sing along selection from "Hans Christian Andersen", and two volunteers from the audience became the dancing girls to the wonderful "Balling the Jack". Original material included a Danny Kaye inspired German conductor leading the audience in performing The Flight of The Bumble Bee, and an explanation of the inspiration that Danny Kaye had on



Cast in **Spontaneous Broadway**

Russell Fletcher from his first childhood record, Tubby the Tuba, and on to his other material. The show culminated in a selection from "The Court Jester" including "The Duke, the Duchess and the Doge", the Basil Rathbone swordfight with an audience member and a pair of chopsticks and of course, the much loved "Vessel with the Pestle" routine. Looking

and sounding like Danny Kaye throughout, it was a performance that delighted children of ALL ages.

Over in **The Famous Spiegeltent**, Russell Fletcher was playing the MC, Randy Patinkin, in **Spontaneous Broadway**. With a cast of wonderful "luvvy" characters, such as Dame Helen



Julia Zemiro in Spontaneous Broadway

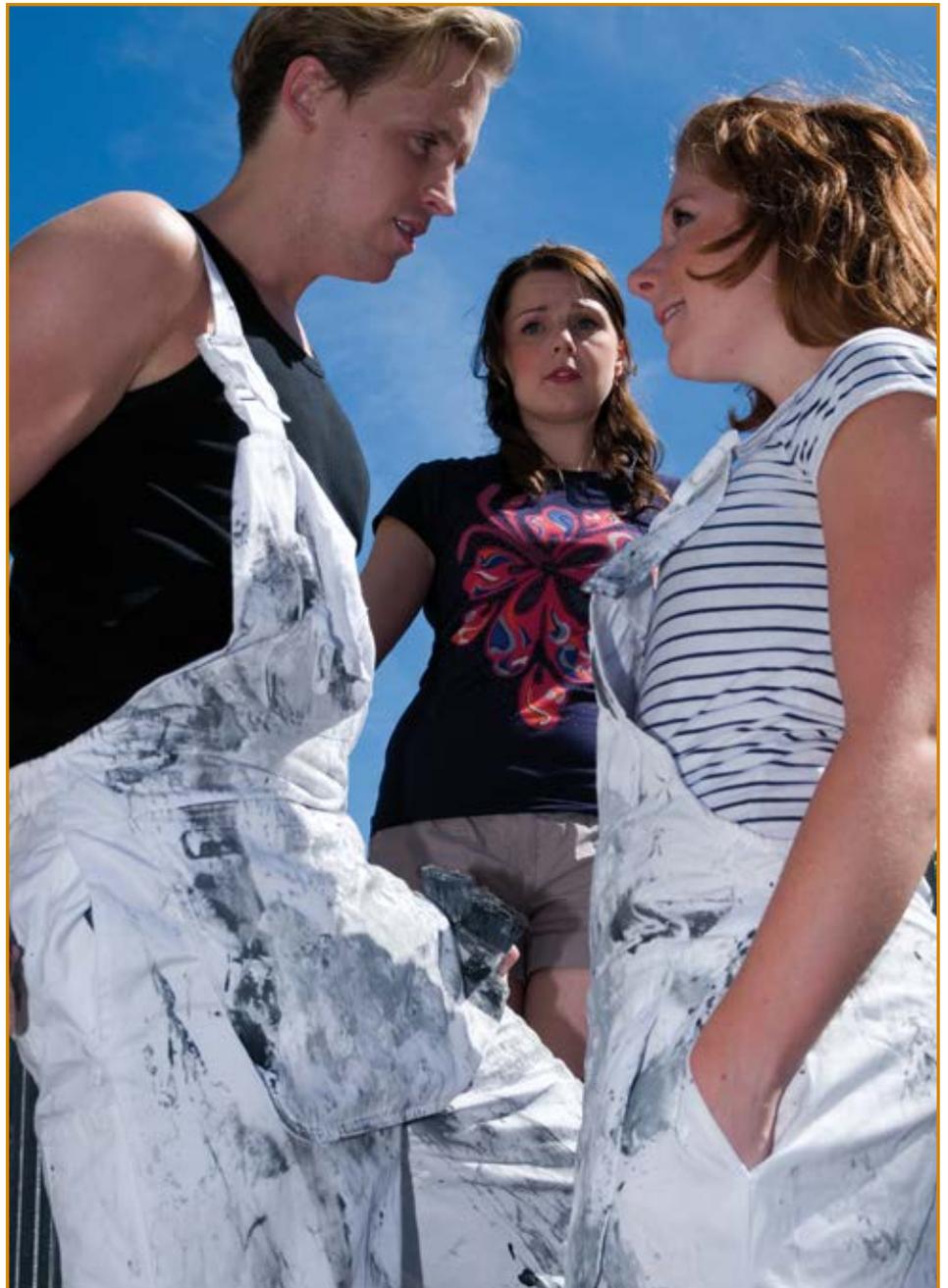
Highwater, Gordon Supwell from the Mecca of Musical Theatre (Tasmania), Sally Ann De Finklestein GLAMDA (that's the GLASGOW London Academy by the way), and all the way from Broadway, Chad Bradley.

A huge success in Australia and worldwide, Spontaneous Broadway claim to know every song that's NEVER been written. The audience were given little slips of paper on which they wrote original song titles they had just thought of. The cast members then selected a song title, and not only improvised the song, but the story of the musical from which it came. After hearing a full selection, the audience then had to vote for their favourite song, and not only was that song performed again, but the whole musical was improvised around it. This was the best improvised comedy show I had seen in ages, and I was delighted when Dame Helen Highwater performed my offering, "I don't need to look at the world through rose coloured spectacles because my eyes are naturally bloodshot" from "Optometry- The Musical", in the style of Lilly Allen for good measure! Sadly I was robbed, and the winner was "Life is a Hall of Mirrors" from the musical "Carnival of Dreams". Carlos the Mind Reader sings about Madge the Bearded Lady, who is the partner of the Strong Man in a failing carnival. The whole musical dreamed up was an absolute hoot, full of daft characters and crazier songs. The show was clever, funny and most importantly, tons of fun!

As part of the Festival, Bruce Bierman brought a dance workshop to the **Community Centre in the Shul – The Joys of Jewish Dance!** He explained the history of Jewish Dance Music. In chronological order, the four different types that make up Jewish dance, Yemenite, Chassidic, Yiddish/Klezmer and the youngest, Israeli. Basic dance steps for each type were shown and then each full dance was performed by everybody taking part. I would gladly have joined in if it weren't for the mechitza in place. Oddly enough, the mechitza only separated me from the other participants, but who am I to argue? The music was interesting, the history fascinating, and the dance steps quite original in places. Those in attendance seemed to really

enjoy themselves, and it was certainly fun to watch.

My next show was over at **The Pleasance Dome**. It was a musical called **Jump** by Toby Herschmann & Kelly Kingham. Opening with Danny, a North London Jewish Reform boy, approaching 30 and perched on the 10th floor ledge of a Hampstead apartment, he is being interrogated by a tabloid reporter trying to get his story before he jumps off the ledge. Having gone to art school, he meets a girl, Niamh, from a council estate and falls in love. His parents don't approve of either his girlfriend or his occupation as an artist. His mother in particular wants him to marry his childhood friend Sarah, who is both Jewish and wealthy. Sarah



Jump

is a bit frumpy and no competition for Niamh, so Danny's mother Ruth, decides to glam her up in time for Danny's art exhibition. She employs the talents of Miss Cassie Nova, who turns out to be a transvestite who is having an affair with Ruth's husband Maurice. The plan actually works, as Danny disillusioned by his failure as an artist, realises that Niamh has been touching up his work to improve it, leaves her and marries Sarah, joins her father's financial business, and starts a family. Years later, Niamh comes back into his life as a successful artist, he thinks he still loves her, leaves his wife, loses access to his twins, finds out that Niamh is actually married and happy, his father-in-law's business is fraudulent, and things are looking grim. The twist at the end is that he wasn't planning to jump, but was planning a publicity stunt to highlight the unfairness of his lack of access rights, but hides on the ledge when his wife returns unexpectedly with a man. There is a happy reconciliation and ending to the show, but despite the complicated relationships in the plot, it has a lot of comedy, funny characters, great one-liners, entertaining choreography and really catchy tunes. It was excellently performed, and on learning that this was a specially abridged version of the show for the Fringe, I really wanted to see the full version.

At the **Pleasance Courtyard**, I went to see **Ronna and Beverly: You'll Do a Little Better Next Time**. Two perfectly portrayed Jewish women from the USA, pushing their self help book *You'll Do a Little Better Next Time – A Guide to Marriage and Re-marriage for Jewish Singles*. The show was a really funny mixture of advice and chat about relationships while plastering over the cracks in their own relationship. That isn't entirely true, as the pickaxe came out quite a few times to dent their fragile friendship. Ronna and Beverly have been friends for 38 years, but didn't speak for 2, after Beverly turned up to Ronna's son's Barmitzva in exactly the same dress as Ronna. Well not exactly, they were different colours. Beverly's was lavender while Ronna's was lilac. For 2 years Beverly spoke to Ronna's answering machine, but they're all back to normal now. Almost! They talked about their relationships and Beverly's many marriages, their children – Ronna's



**Ronna & Beverly: You'll Do a Little Better Next Time**

lovely son and Beverly's twin girls. One is beautiful but dumb; the other is in Israel "finding herself!" "Just like Lisa" exclaimed a member of the audience. "Exactly like Lisa" retorted Beverly. "She had so much potential. Then she ate her way to disaster!" They went through the chapters of their book, dispensing advice to the audience – "My girls are dreadful. 'Mommy, I hate you!' So I write them another cheque. It's like giving a porpoise a treat!" "Men, don't be afraid to be a man - Ladies, if someone harasses you – it's a compliment!"

They also had two guests on the show, both appearing in the Fringe, the singer Barb Younger, and comedy improviser

Mike McShane. They were questioned about their shows and then their relationships with hilarious results. Both Ronna and Beverly were talking ten to the dozen, ignoring each other, talking over each other, asking different things, giving different advice. It was a joy to watch, and the special guests were in fits of laughter themselves. It was a really fun show, and they must have been giving good advice, because I wasn't the only member of the EHC sitting there taking notes!

The final show was **Stop me if I'm kvetching**.... with Rachael Sage & The Sequins at the **C Central Cabaret Bar**. An American songstress with a penchant for kvetching, this revue was a showcase for her original songs backed by a jazzy 4 piece band. Of course the lyrics may have

seemed a bit melancholy and mainstream (musically & linguistically), but the whole show was definitely Jewish. There were refreshments on the tables in the form of candies with her name through them, groggers and kazoos for the audience to join in with, and the first words she spoke after the opening number to her soundman were, “A bissel more with the balance!” The music was excellent as was the atmosphere. The anecdotal chat between songs was like being in Conversational Yiddish, and the audience members were encouraged to join in. Everyone was given a slip of paper on

which to complain. Either a three word kvetch, or three one word kvetches. Rachael then improvised a song about the kvetches. These included “Too many shows, not enough time”, “Frizz – Have you got something against Jewish Hair?” and finally, from someone who didn’t follow the instructions and wrote an essay, “My boss Ben is a really unfunny guy, I wish he’d stop telling jokes, and my other boss is really working me far too hard!” It was a really great way to finish the day and my tour of Yiddishkeit in this year’s Fringe.

Sure enough as I finished scouring my notes and memory, I was inundated with suggestions for other shows that might tick all the boxes. PG there’ll be just as many to see next year, and more time in which to see them. This year I was torn between two shows, so for the first time ever, The five Mogen Dovid’s are jointly awarded to **Jest like Danny Kaye** and **Ronna & Beverly**, for they both equally totally engaged their audiences and left me ginning like the Cheshire Cat!



Rachael Sage in Stop Me If I'm Kvetching

# Five Generations On

## TAYLOR'S FURNITURE STORES

Ian Shein interviews Raymond Taylor

Harris Taylor was one of thousands of Jews who fled the pogroms in Lithuania in the early 1900s. He found his way to Cork in Southern Ireland and, having worked as a cabinet maker, established a small furniture factory there.



Harold Taylor



Lewis Taylor

Having lost his Ketuba, and the moral climate in that era being somewhat more restrictive than that of today, he was not permitted to live with his wife. Fortunately fellow Lithuanians living in Cork testified that they had attended Harris' Jewish wedding, convincing the local Rabbi to write a Ketuba officially blessing the union.

Harris had two sons and seven daughters. His elder son Lewis reputedly left Cork as he was forbidden to ride his bicycle on Shabbas. He moved to live with relatives in Glasgow when he was twenty. It is not known whether the ban on Shabbas cycling followed him there! Lewis began business like so many of his compatriots, buying goods from a warehouse in Glasgow and selling items such as Ayrshire blankets and sheets on credit to residents in mining villages in Central Scotland. Travelling by bus, he slowly built up a solid customer base selling and collecting dues from previous transactions. At the end of the First World War he married and in 1921 opened up a furniture shop in Falkirk.

Lewis's son Harold continued the business in Manor Street. In due course additional premises were acquired directly across the road. This proved to be the ground floor of a Catholic chapel and for some years one of the shops sold furniture and the other carpets. Town development resulted in the demolition of the chapel in the early 1990s and Taylors Furniture Stores reverted back to the original building which, having been extended in the 1960s, was further extended in 1992. This now comprises three floors selling a wide range of furniture. Raymond fondly recalls how he overlapped the running of the business with his father Harold as did the latter with his own father Lewis.

At one time Falkirk boasted a tiny Jewish community and several Jewish shops including a furniture store owned by Edinburgh's own Joe Riffkin. The community had its own synagogue with enough male members to make a Minyan. Sadly and predictably the synagogue no longer exists. Several years ago Jackie wrote a nostalgic article in the "Star" on Jewish life in Falkirk in which she referred to the services in the synagogue. After this closed Minyans for yahrzeits were carried out in private homes.

A bizarre situation existed as the man who conducted the service was also the porter at Falkirk High Station. Consequently the minyan had to be timed to coincide with the train timetable. He had to be collected at the station as soon as the Edinburgh train had departed, taken to the minyan and then conveyed back to the station in time to meet the Glasgow train.

Harold's son Raymond was born in Falkirk and attended Falkirk High School. He regularly travelled to Glasgow for religious education and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at South Portland Street Synagogue. Leaving school at the age of sixteen, he immediately joined the family business and became the youngest buyer in the trade, travelling extensively and widening his horizon well beyond the confines of his local environment. During one trip he was encouraged to participate in a blind date and a hugely successful initial meeting culminated in his marriage to Jackie Jacobson from Manchester. Jackie was educated at Broughton Jewish Primary and King David High Schools. She attended college to take a secretarial course that led to employment at the North Manchester General Hospital.

Apparently on his first date Raymond took his future wife to a 'Silent Night' furniture exhibition. They were married by Reverend Olsberg in Heaton Park Synagogue in 1988 and the couple set up home in Falkirk. A desire to be part of a Jewish community saw them become members of Queens Park Synagogue in Glasgow and ultimately the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation in 1997. They have two sons, Lawrence aged 20 and Michael aged 16. Lawrence joined the business two years ago and makes proud his father's claim that, as the business enters its 90th year, five generations of Taylors have been involved in its progress.

The quality of the product and service has also brought forth four generations of customers to the store. Having previously been involved in hospital radio, Raymond does his own voice on radio advertising over the local media. The business being so long established, he is a well known personality within the local area, and has often met customers on holiday who have slept on his beds! Raymond has a sound and attractive philosophy; "keep business simple, small and controllable. I like to be personally involved; personal service is of great importance to me and I endeavor to give this to the customers".

There is no doubt that this philosophy has given Taylors Furniture Stores the reputation it has. It also has governed the couple's involvement within the Edinburgh community where they have indelibly made their mark. Jackie is Hon. Secretary of the



H Taylor & Son – Cork

Congregation and is renowned for the efficient and methodical way she attends to these duties. Raymond is Vice Chairman of the Synagogue Board of Management amongst other duties and is ever willing to assist in any situation which desires active help and encouragement. They, Lawrence and Michael have always shown strong commitment to the Edinburgh community. It is indeed fortunate that on reaching the M8 the Taylors headed east to give us the inordinate pleasure of their warmth, friendliness and sincerity.



Raymond Taylor's Furniture Stores



Raymond Taylor



Laurence Taylor

# Society Reports

## Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

“The Sea of Azov”, with Ross Bradshaw, Anne Joseph and members of the Lit.

**Sunday 21st March**

**Heather Valencia**

“What is a Jewish short story?” “Do British and Israeli writers write differently?” “Is it difficult for writers to write about the places they live in?” These were some of the questions posed at the last evening of the Lit for this session – posed not, as usual, by the audience to the speakers, but the other way round. And the audience responded enthusiastically, giving rise to a truly interactive evening.

The guests were Ross Bradshaw of Five Leaves Publications, and Anne Joseph, a freelance feature editor and writer, and the evening centred on “The Sea of Azov”, a volume of short stories by Jewish and non-Jewish writers, edited by Anne and published by Ross. The book is the result of a project to raise the profile of and funds for World Jewish Relief. Anne talked about the important work of the organisation which, under its original name, The Central British Fund for German Jewry, organised the Kindertransports during the Nazi period, and is now the leading overseas aid arm of the UK Jewish community, not only helping Jewish communities throughout the world, but also responding to global emergencies such as the Darfur crisis. She described how the book came about: authors were invited to write stories with the broad theme of “connection”, and the resulting volume contains short stories

by fifteen contemporary writers including Amy Bloom, Etgar Keret, Micheline Wandor, Tamar Yellin, Richard Zimler and “our own” Ellen Galford.

The highlight of the evening was the performance by three well known members of the “Lit”: Lesley Danzig, Elaine Samuel and Ellen Galford each read one of the stories from the volume. They read superbly, capturing the humour, irony and nuances of their chosen pieces: Etgar Keret's witty and humane story about the bus driver who wanted to be God, Micheline Wandor's hilarious satire on academe, “Jewish Values”, and Ellen Galford's wonderful “Prophet Margin”, a time-travel tale with a Jewish twist.

Ross Bradshaw was a delightful, informal master of ceremonies, facilitating the lively interaction between audience and participants which made this a rewarding final session, exemplifying the Lit at its best.

## Community walk over the Eildon Hills

**Anthony Gilbert**



View from Wester Hill of Mid-Hill in front of North Hill

A group from JETs, as we rather breathlessly call ourselves (see below), cast customary caution to the wind for the May walk and scaled the three Eildon Hills, Trimontium as it was known to the Romans. Despite the hint of dash in our title, this was definitely a bit more adventurous than we had attempted before; the walk hardly constitutes a bit of Munro bagging, but it still has enough up and down to get the blood moving. Judy



A welcome lunch stop

and I had done a preliminary recce on a glorious day in late April, so glorious that some of us came home slightly sunburnt, and while the hills are not especially high, the view from the tops was stunning. Forewarned is forearmed: the recce had revealed some ‘interesting bits’ – a slightly hairy descent, fairly steep and on rather loose shingle, off Mid-Hill, and a somewhat alarming walk on the top of a wall, about 2 feet wide, but with a drop of at least 5 to 6 feet on either side into (take your pick) rough ground on one side or the River Tweed on the other.

Despite warning of these potential pitfalls and unpromising weather, ten JETs met up in Melrose on the appointed day in May and bagged the three Eildons. The walk first climbs unrelentingly up the tallest of the hills, Mid-Hill (1384 feet). On this much



On the top of Mid-Hill

less favourable day, while the rain did in fact hold off, it was distinctly cool at the top, so we paused only for a few minutes to admire the view, and then gingerly made our way down that stony descent to a sort of col that lies below all three hills. A brief detour to take in the lowest of the hills, Wester Hill, and then back to the relatively sheltered col for packed lunch. As we munched our way through our sandwiches we were greeted by three friendly, slightly dishevelled mountain bikers slowly, and with considerable effort, walking their rather ponderous vehicles up to the top of our final summit, North Hill; it looked a pretty unrewarding activity, but...

Lunch over, we redonned our sacks, and then made the very steady climb up to the rather flat top of North Hill. There was a bit of a party atmosphere on the summit among the fair number of walkers whom we found there, and we enjoyed a bit of amiable banter with the three cyclists. At last they mounted their beasts of burden, and set off down the hill. But these weren't beasts of burden any more; they were hinds; they flew down the hillside to the admiring amazement of the onlookers at the top. It was clearly a big effort for them to drag the bikes to the top, but my word, you could see the pay-off.

We then made our own descent of North Hill through gorse and all the way down to the banks of the Tweed, walking through lovely flat waterside meadows, but then came the wall. It is unquestionably the intended route, and though it is not particularly difficult, walking the 300 yards or so on that relatively narrow ledge with a sheer though not particularly great drop on either side is certainly rather disconcerting; it needs constant concentration. Dismounting the wall brings the walk almost home; a final walk along quiet Melrose roads, past the woollen mill, where we had a tea stop, and

we were done.

Who constituted this fearless band? Tom Griffin and Carol Levstein, Susie and Dan Kelpie, Julia and Malcolm Merrick, Judy Sischy, Jonny Sperber, Philip Wadler and me. And JETs? Why it's Jewish Edinburgh Trekkers (or something like that!). As Wallace said to Grommet, it was a grand day out, and if this has whetted your appetite, just ask Betsy Dorfman to put you on the circulation list.

## WIZO Garden Party



### Kate Goodwin Chairman of the Edinburgh Group

What incredible luck! WIZO Annual Afternoon Tea Party, at the home of Kate and Ronnie Goodwin, fell on a warm, sunny Sunday.

We sat in the garden and enjoyed a stylish, traditional event with silver teapots and three tier cake stands with sandwiches, scones and delicious cakes produced by a number of guests. It was a well attended fund raiser with faithful WIZO supporters and some very welcome new faces.

We are very pleased to have the support of a number of non-Jewish members which makes it possible for us to continue



with our WIZO work in spite of the ever diminishing community.

We enjoyed a most pleasant afternoon and raised over £400.

### View from a happy guest

Lesley Danzig

We came down the steps into a scene out of a Jane Austen novel. Afternoon tea was laid out on prettily covered tables, some under gazebos. Silver cake stands brimming with delicious bite-sized cakes of every description and plates of crustless sandwiches awaited us. The best china (I know because I sneaked a look under one of them) and tea cups ready to be filled from silver teapots were waiting for the guests.

It was of course the WIZO Afternoon Tea held on a sunny Sunday afternoon in Mayfield Road, home of Katie and Ronnie Goodwin. They were well supported by the whole Goodwin family, including grandchildren who made sure the tea flowed and the plates were never empty. It was great to sit and chew the fat with friends old and new in such a relaxed atmosphere. Well done Katie and WIZO for creating yet another lovely afternoon tea in the garden.



# Happy New Year



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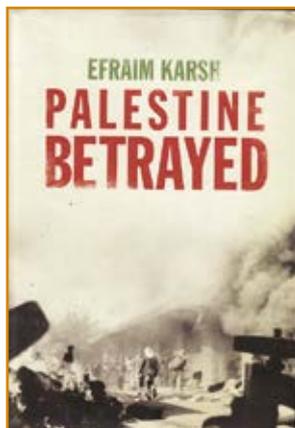
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# Reviews

## Palestine Betrayed by Efraim Karsh

Rabbi David Rose

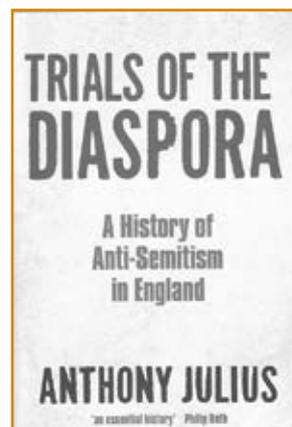


In the whole saga of the Israeli-Arab conflict one period stands out as crucial for both sides, the period of the birth of Israel and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. In bitter fighting between the Partition vote at the end of November 1947 and the second truce in July 1948, 10% of Israelis lost their lives and Palestinian society collapsed, creating hundreds of thousands of refugees. No topic is more politically charged or emotive and none has a greater bearing on the attitudes of the parties to the conflict. But what actually happened in this period? It is this question that this book seeks to answer. Professor Karsh begins by tracing the relationship between Jews and Arabs until Partition. He describes how, despite the wish of both Jews and local Arabs to co-exist, corrupt Arab leaders seeking to further their own interests fanned the flames of conflict. Especially culpable in this regard was Haj Amin Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem. Not only did he totally reject any accommodation with the Jews but killed anyone who did, leading the parties down the road to catastrophic conflict. Karsh then examines the period of the War of Independence or Palestinian Nakba. Basically dividing the period into before and after 15th May 1948, he attempts to show how Palestinian actions themselves lead to the collapse of their society and the flight of its population. Taking examples from the mixed cities of Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem as well as from the village population, he shows

how the shambolic Arab military effort, the departure of the Arab elites for the duration, and exaggerated and often false atrocity stories contributed to the flight of the Arab population. Leaderless, frightened and confused, Palestinian society collapsed. By the time the Arab leadership realised their policies were leading to catastrophe, it was too late to stop the rout and the exodus had taken on a momentum of its own. He also describes how the Jewish leadership, far from encouraging Arabs to leave, often, as documented in the case of Haifa for example, begged them to stay. He does not, however, hide the fact that in at least one documented case, that of Lod and Ramle, the Israeli authorities themselves ordered the expulsion of the population. He also, near the end, provides an interesting sketch of the development of the refugee problem and how the 300,000-400,000 figure accepted by everyone at the end of the war, suddenly ballooned into something much bigger. In conclusion he argues that the Palestinian 'Nakba' was a self-induced catastrophe whose main culprit was a corrupt and incompetent Palestinian and wider Arab leadership.

This book is well written and extremely well researched using Jewish, Arab and British sources. By tracing the history of Arab-Jewish relations up to the conflict Karsh shows that not only was there no Zionist plot to dispossess the local Arabs but that both Jews and Arabs on the whole wanted peaceful relationships. He convincingly shows that the lion's share of the blame for the conflict and its consequences must be placed on the shoulders of the corrupt Arab leadership. In sketching the course of the war he provides an invaluable account of the period up to May 1948 and the events in the mixed cities and villages, especially on the road to Jerusalem. Where the book however is somewhat disappointing is in its treatment of the period after Independence. This important juncture, which saw half of the refugees leave, is sparsely treated and leaves more questions than answers. This is with particular regard to villages in the coastal plain, whose fate, and the reasons for it, are often left unclear. All in all, however, the book makes an invaluable contribution to the study of this period and an important answer to the accusations of the so called 'new historians'.

## Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England by Anthony Julius Janet Mundy



Anthony Julius is the barrister who acted for Princess Diana in her divorce from Prince Charles. However, it is the other famous case that he was involved in that provides a clue as to his motivations for writing this book. In 2000, he represented Deborah Lipstadt in the libel case unsuccessfully brought by David Irving against her book Denying the Holocaust in which she had described Irving as a Holocaust denier. Julius's interest in anti-Semitism goes back much further, to his days as an English student at Cambridge where he investigated literary anti-Semitism for his PhD. This book, specifically looking at English anti-Semitism, is the culmination of that investigation. It is over 600 pages long, including a 58-page introduction, and covering a period from mediaeval times to the present day. It is an ambitious project, as thorough as one would expect from a lawyer, and written from a viewpoint that the readership of The Edinburgh Star will feel comfortable with. However, Anti-Semitism is always a controversial subject, and there is much to debate in the content of Trials of the Diaspora.

The lengthy introduction gives Julius the opportunity to explain the background to his decision to write the book, including his limited personal exposure to anti-Semitism (mainly during the royal divorce case) and his discovery of a more extreme form in literature, which was largely ignored by literary critics. He also uses the introduction to introduce four categories of anti-Semitism which he considers to have "an English provenance" – the radical anti-Semitism of mediaeval times,

the literary anti-Semitism that flourished during the 400 years after the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, what he calls “a modern, quotidian anti-Semitism of insult and partial exclusion” which has predominated in the period since Jews were readmitted and lastly the anti-Zionism of recent years and the related decline in the philo-Semitism of the preceding decades.

The first chapter of the book, entitled “Enmities”, describes different types of enemy of the Jews over at least the last 2,000 years, and relates them back to Biblical enemies such as Balak and Amalek. He investigates the extent of the anti-Semitism of each type, comparing Haman to Nazi anti-Semitism in its generalising of the hatred of one Jew to all Jews. This chapter also discusses the conspiracy theories that have beset the Jews for thousands of years, from the assumption that Jews murdered Jesus, the blood libels of mediaeval times and the alleged plots for world domination, even when based on complete forgeries like the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a fake set of “minutes” of secret meetings between Jewish leaders to discuss their plans to take over the world. He expands on the definition of these libels in the second chapter on “Defamations”.

Chapter 3 covers the period leading up to the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, when they were subject to anti-Semitism dominated by Christianity. It was at this time that the myth of wicked Jews killing Christians, particularly children, took hold, a fallacy that fuelled the period of literary anti-Semitism, which Julius covers in the next chapter. He takes the works of the most famous authors on the subject in their context, discussing Chaucer’s *The Prioress’s Tale*, Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and Dickens *Oliver Twist* as the most influential of their period. Interestingly, his opinion is that the greatest works held the greatest threat to Jews, stating for example that “Had Shakespeare not responded to Marlowe [the Jew of Malta], English anti-Semitism might well have been laughed into extinction”. He brings fresh insight to George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, which is in startling contrast to depictions of Jews in other works of the period. He points out that there are many Jews in the book, none of them stereotypical and all but one sympathetically portrayed; also that

the villain of the novel is not Jewish, but also not anti-Semitic himself. This chapter ends, to me, rather oddly and abruptly with discussion of two contemporary works, Tom Paulin’s poem *Crossfire*, comparing Israeli policies with Nazism, and Caryl Churchill’s play *Seven Jewish Children*. Both these works, which are discussed again later in the book, have been accused of expressing anti-Semitic attitudes. My concern at their being included in this chapter is that they are of considerably lesser literary merit than the other works discussed, and that they are therefore inappropriately discussed alongside literary giants. Julius’s contention is that literary anti-Semitism flourished during the 400 years of Jewish expulsion, having nothing to challenge it. Once Cromwell readmitted the Jews in 1656, the nature of anti-Semitism evolved into what he describes in Chapter 5 as “Modern English anti-Semitism” which he says “could be verbally aggressive, without ever endangering the lives or physical well-being of Anglo-Jewry” despite many crises including the Boer War, Balfour Declaration, World War II and the founding of the State of Israel. Interestingly, he hardly touches on the Suez Crisis, except to point out that it did not lead to any anti-Semitic episode. In Chapter 6, he investigates “The Mentality of Modern English Anti-Semitism”, looking at every aspect from jokes and cartoons to the intellectual anti-Semitism of the likes of Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton.

Chapter 7 covers the uncomfortable present. Entitled “Contemporary Secular Anti-Zionisms”, it investigates the way in which public opinion has gradually turned against Israel since 1967 and the extent to which opposition to Zionism has extended to the Jewish people and religion as a whole. Julius delves into many questions which regularly concern Jews today – why the Israel/Palestinian conflict receives so much more attention than the many other conflicts in the world, why the Left in this country is so supportive of the Palestinians and so critical of Israel, the extent to which criticism of Israel is linked with opposition to perceived American imperialism, for example. Leftist opponents of Israel such as Tom Paulin and Caryl Churchill, as well as liberal MP Jenny Tonge, who claimed she would consider becoming a suicide bomber if she were a Palestinian, are taken to task for being one-sided and disproportionate

in their criticism. I find his explanation fascinating of why anti-Zionism has become a major preoccupation of the Left in this country, in an age of causes rather than ideologies. However, I was relieved when finally, on page 500, a question that had been nagging away at me for a few hundred pages, was dealt with – “What kind of non-anti-Semitic criticisms can be made?”. Julius then lists some of what he considers justifiable criticisms of Israel, stating that “many of them seem to me simply to be true, and what is true cannot be anti-Semitic”. I find that “seem to me” interesting – admitting that defining what is true is merely an opinion, and open to debate. It seems to me that this is the reason why discussion of Israel, between Jews and non-Jews, or even between Jews, is so fraught with “danger” today, and is often avoided. Julius points out that critics of Israel are often described by other critics as “brave” but I think that term could apply to anyone prepared to give any opinion on Israel of whatever flavour. Julius also looks at the media, with *The Guardian* and BBC seen to be the leaders of the new anti-Zionism. I discussed this aspect of the book with a friend of mine, a pro-Palestinian sympathiser. We agreed that the BBC is biased, but we both believe its bias is against our own point of view – perhaps the case against the BBC is, in the words of Scots law, “not proven”! There is also an interesting section in Chapter 7 discussing the concept of “fellow travellers”, originally individuals who sympathised with Soviet communism without becoming communists themselves. Julius compares these with modern Palestinian sympathisers, suggesting that they are idealistic, suppress or excuse atrocities, deny the reality of anti-Semitism and that political practices that would be condemned in the West are accepted in the country admired. Indiscriminate murder is held to be a necessary evil or an example of “sanctified acts of resistance”. Both types of fellow traveller ignore the existence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union/Middle East respectively. Knowing many people who could be described as “fellow travellers”, I’m not sure that I would take the parallel as far as Julius has done, but it is an angle that I have not come across before. Chapter 8 looks at the different forms of anti-Semitism within Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The contemplation of Jewish anti-Semitism is not a pleasant

thought, and I do believe that it is far less widespread within even the widest definition of the Jewish community than Julius permits. Anti-Zionist Jews of my acquaintance would, I think rightly, balk at any accusation of their being anti-Semites.

The length of this book illustrates the difficulty of getting to grips with the subject of anti-Semitism, which Julius rises to admirably. He provides many facts and insights and it is a fascinating and exhaustive study of the development of anti-Semitism, particularly in England. It would be interesting to make a

comparison with its development north of the Border. Anthony Julius himself makes it clear that this will be the last book he will write on the subject, so a Scottish investigation will have to wait. I do wonder at the choice of title, which is explained in the introduction thus: "English anti-Semitism is exemplary, while the anti-Semitism of other nations are in most instances but variants of them.... These English anti-Semitism – this English exceptionalism, in the matter of anti-Semitism – are among the trials of the Diaspora." It does not seem to me to summarise the content of the book at all, but is perhaps part of the fashion to

have a subtle title, followed by a more descriptive sub-title (in this case "A History of Anti-Semitism in England"). Even then, not all of the history of anti-Semitism in the book relates purely to England, and much of the later chapters are not historical fact but more carefully considered opinion. I did feel that there was a certain amount of repetition and a little judicious (if I may use the term of a lawyer) editing might not have gone amiss.

One sad fact is that it is very unlikely that any minds will be changed by reading the book – it will merely confirm existing beliefs and prejudices.

# Obituaries

## Isabella Baum (Cowan) Nee Killen

1st March 1908 - 27th February 2010



Isabella Baum with her son Malcolm Cowan

### Malcolm Cowan

Mum was born in Leeds to Isaac and Lillian Killen, whose families came from Poland and Russia in the last years of the 19th Century. Her mother's family were particularly religious and were part of the founding of the Yeshiva in Gateshead.

She was the youngest of 3 brothers and 3 sisters with a large gap between the 3 eldest children and the 3 youngest following the return of her father to Poland in 1900 to deal with the death of his father whereupon he was conscripted and served 5 years in the Army.

Mum had a traditional Jewish upbringing, including working in her father's clothing factory in Leeds, but in the late 1920's she was sent to Edinburgh to look after her eldest sister who was suffering with ill health. It was here that she met my father, Sammy Cowan (Cohen) and in 1931 they were married and settled in Leeds where my eldest brother Jack was born in 1933.

They returned to Edinburgh in the late 1930's and established a

bakery and grocers shop in the Pleasance and I was born in 1942 and my younger brother Tony in 1948. In 1954 my father died in an industrial accident leaving Mum to bring us up as a single parent. With typical fortitude she battled hard to ensure we all had all the opportunities an education could bring and was extremely proud of all our achievements.

As well as an outgoing and happy nature she had an adventurous streak and loved to travel and as a young girl in the 1920's she journeyed to Belgium and France to visit family with whom she remained in touch until her death.

Mum married for the second time in 1968 to Bert Baum who was the widower of her sister Sophie. He died in 1976.

Mum was also a strong, intelligent woman with a highly developed sense of humour and fun who loved to entertain and to make people laugh. She had a wide circle of friends with whom she loved to play cards, be it Kalookie, Solo or Bridge, which she did until she became partially sighted some 10 years ago.

In the early 1980's her sense of adventure led her to emigrate to Perth, Australia with Tony and his family and she lived a further 29 happy years which she attributed to the lovely weather.

Her last 10 years were spent in the Morris Zeffert Home in Perth where I saw at firsthand how much she enjoyed the wonderful care of staff, volunteers and residents.

Mum leaves behind her 3 sons and their families, 5 of her 6 Grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Mum was a wonderful mother and is remembered with love and affection and as we mourn her passing we also celebrate the long life of a remarkable woman who was buried on her 102nd birthday.

## Sam Latter

4th January 1904

– 12th June 2010

Edward Green



'One in a million' is a saying often heard. Sam Latter was indeed one as he achieved the astounding record of being the oldest Jew in the United Kingdom for just a few weeks. Before that, he had been the oldest Jewish man.

He had already been feted as the oldest man in Scotland, been interviewed on the BBC television news, and written up in all the major newspapers. His appearance in all these belied his years and he put his longevity down to good luck and just being an 'ordinary man'.

However, Sam was no ordinary man and there were times that his life was quite extraordinary. He was one of the first Jewish professional footballers, playing for a number of seasons with Third Lanark in Glasgow where he came from. Family opposition did not deter him and there exist wonderful pictures from the late twenties/early thirties showing him in the team; a short wiry man with a look of determination clearly seen.

He met and married in 1930 an Edinburgh girl, Flora Strachan; they enjoyed a very happy marriage for nearly sixty years until Flora's death in 1990. Living in the same house in Liberton

Gardens for all their married life, they were to open ladies dress shops on North Bridge, have a sweetie shop for over twenty years by the now defunct Caledonian Goods Yard and before his retirement he operated a tyre and battery business in Lauriston Place.

Active in his retirement and remaining fit, Sam enjoyed golf and bridge, delivered 'meals on wheels' into his nineties and became a stalwart of the wonderful Luncheon Club in the Community Centre. A bad fall in 1996 that laid him low necessitated a move to a care home, Strachan House, but he was soon to bounce back to become once again the exuberant and affable character that he was.

Always charitable with others, happy with both visitors and his own company, Sam remained active mentally till the last and would enjoy listening to and recounting stories from the past and remembering those gone before him with a great and infectious sense of humour. A touch of sun would find him in the garden enjoying the warmth, book or sports papers in hand, and he looked towards the summer months all year.

Dignified and courteous, Sam was not a difficult man to love. He will be remembered for his fierce independence and resilience, his devotion to and love of Flora, for his concern and love for his extended family and friends, his charm and self-effacement, and for just being the lovely unpretentious man he was.

Sam Latter died on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, the 12th June 2010 just after noon. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and it seemed appropriate that in Shul, Adon Olom, the closing hymn, was being sung.

## Guess Whose Wedding?



# Mazel Tov to...

Joyce & Jonny Sperber and Eva & Harry Pommert on the marriage of Avigal to Mikael on Sunday 8th August 2010.



If you would like someone to be congratulated, possibly with a picture, contact [judyemmi.gilbert@gmail.com](mailto:judyemmi.gilbert@gmail.com)

## Condolences...

to **Sandra Caplan** for the recent loss of her mother.

"I would like to thank the Edinburgh Community for their kindness and support at the sad passing of my dear mother Minnie Oilberg." Sandra Caplan

## Forthcoming Events

### October

1 Friday	Simchat Torah	
3 Sunday	Quiz Night	7.30pm
11 Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00pm
25 Monday	Anne Frank Exhibition	(until 5 November)

### November

15 Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00pm
28 Sunday	Literary Society	7.30pm

### December

4 Saturday	Chanukah Social	7.30pm
20 Sunday	Lodge Solomon	7.00pm

### January

17 Monday	Lodge Solomon	6.30pm
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### February

21 Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00pm
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The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday (meat) and Thursday (fish) at 12.30pm. New volunteers and/or helpers always welcome.

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

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