

Pick a side – Any side ...

Glasgow University recently hosted the launch of the first UK branch of OneVoice, which is also the first university-based branch in Europe. This initiative was given added impetus by the recent Interfaith Pilgrimage which SCoJeC was instrumental in organising (see Four Corners 19), as it is led by two of the students who participated – Anthony Silkoff, who is President of the university's Jewish Society, and Hala Ousta, whose Palestinian father is the Chief Executive of Bemis, the ethnic minority umbrella body which works closely with SCoJeC. Anthony says, "As students in the UK we have a choice: we can take sides and be part of the problem, or we can work together and contribute to the solution."



ABOVE L-R: HALA OUSTA, ANTHONY SILKOFF, VICE PRINCIPAL JOHN COGGINS, CHARLES KENNEDY MP IN GLASGOW UNIVERSITY CHAPEL

More than 250 people attended the meeting in the University Chapel, which was addressed by the University's Rector, former Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy. Ana Lipnik and Abeer Natsheh, Israeli and Palestinian youth leaders, just two of the 1800 OneVoice representatives worldwide, talked about the realities of living with the conflict, and how "absolutist agendas outside the Middle East are counter to what the majority of Israelis and Palestinians actually want".

Since then, Anthony and Hala have gone on to scoop top prizes at a Young Scotland event for which they were sponsored by Bemis. This is an excerpt from his winning talk:

Pick a side. Any side, so long as it's black and white. Farcical, perhaps, but this is the true extent of polarisation to be found in Britain today. When it comes to the Middle East, the 'Middle Way' is largely shunned in favour of anger, antagonism and hot-blooded hatred. ...

Both sides wage their own little war on campus. By lending encouragement to absolutist agendas in the Middle East, they're happy, from the comfort of student halls, to sacrifice the lives of Israelis and Palestinians. ...

Thankfully, vast numbers of young people in the Middle East give us much more to be optimistic about... Since 2002 OneVoice has enlisted more than 600,000 Israelis and Palestinians in its movement – members who differ in history, religion and politics, but who share a commitment to creating a new political future. They demand of those amongst them, and of those who represent them, that they recognise the right of both peoples to independence, sovereignty, freedom, justice, dignity, respect, national security, personal safety, and economic viability.

Those in the Middle East are faced with a choice – working to find a way out of the conflict or leaving their children to inherit it. As onlookers in Scotland, we have a choice too – to contribute to the solution or to be part of the problem. Pick a side.

Anthony's complete talk is at

<http://www.scottishreview.net/YSPWinner053.html>



Welcome!

This issue of Four Corners celebrates the liveliness of our small and scattered community, with reports of a wide range of activities around all our corners. And to stop us feeling too lonely, we look the census, and just how reliable it is – not very!

Still, when we reflect on the recent tragic events in Mumbai, the official figure of 6000, with almost 90% in one city, is eerily familiar. As the Chief Rabbi said at a memorial service in London, the story of the rescue of 2-year-old Moshe Holtzberg from the carnage echoes the discovery of a single tiny jar of pure oil in the Temple defiled by the Greek occupiers more than two millennia ago. This atrocity is a reminder that we still have enemies who go out of their way to single us out for our religion or ethnicity, but the message of the Chanukah miracle is that however little is left still burns with a clear, bright light. We are all part of that miracle of survival as we celebrate Chanukah wherever we are.

Chag sameach!

ISSUE 20

CHANUKAH 5769

DECEMBER 2008



The Corners of Scotland

GLASGOW SHERYL: 0141-577 8200

EDINBURGH JACKIE: 07734-291 836

DUNDEE PAUL: 07906-219 262

ABERDEEN EHUD: 01224-485 601

ARGYLL & HIGHLANDS

FRANK: 01445-712 151

STUDENTS NICOLA: 07801-286 881

Please send your comments and contributions to Four Corners

SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES

SCoJeC IS A SCOTTISH CHARITY, NO. SC029438

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE,
222 FENWICK ROAD, GIFFNOCK, GLASGOW G46 6UE
TEL: 0141-638 6411 FAX: 0141-577 8202

E-MAIL: SCOJEC@SCOJEC.ORG

CONTACT: LEAH GRANAT 07887 488 100

FOUR CORNERS IS PRODUCED BY SCoJeC, THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS, NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF SCoJeC.

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“A New Life in Scotland”

“... truly bringing to life the rich and varied history of our Jewish community”

Communities Minister
Stewart Maxwell

A New Life in Scotland is the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre's new permanent exhibition. “Its aim,” says Archives Director, Harvey Kaplan, “is to document and illustrate the Jewish experience in Scotland in all its spheres, and show how Jews have integrated well and provided a positive contribution to Scotland.” The new exhibition area, in the Synagogue's Jacobs Room, was funded by significant grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Glasgow Jewish Community Trust, East Renfrewshire Council, the Ferrar, Bloch, and Esterson Trusts, as well as by donations from dozens of friends of the Archives.

The exhibition contains themed object displays, works of art by Benno Schotz, Hannah Frank, Hilda Goldwag, and others, a giant graphic map of the world, featuring 24 individual stories of Jewish immigration to Scotland, and a timeline showing 200 years of the history of Scotland's Jews. It is hoped that the hands-on exhibition will attract a wide range of users, including community groups, tourists, researchers, and students. The Jewish Archives Centre has built up a well deserved reputation over the years for its support for visiting scholars who study its accessible, well-documented and catalogued materials.

The exhibition was formally opened in June by Communities Minister Stewart Maxwell, who described it as an “interesting and important resource that illustrates the active input of Jews into Scottish life, the contributions and sacrifices they have made, and their achievements in fields such as medicine, dentistry, law, politics, education, and welfare.”



ABOVE:
VISITORS IN THE NEWLY
REFURBISHED JACOBS
ROOM

RIGHT:
THE TIMELINE OF JEWISH
HISTORY IN SCOTLAND IN
THE ENTRANCE TO THE
ARCHIVES CENTRE



Moray Equality Forum

DEBBY TAYLOR DEBBY.TAYLOR@MAC.COM

Moray Council Community Planning Partnership (which includes the Council, Moray College, HIE Moray, Grampian Police, NHS Grampian, the Voluntary Sector, Fire & Rescue and Communities Scotland) is currently in the process of setting up an Equalities Forum to find out what local communities think about policies and activities, and I was invited to represent the Jewish Community in Grampian Region.

Public services can't operate unless they know what users think of their service, but, in the past, many agencies haven't been good at talking to the public. Community Planning is about organisations working together to provide better public services, and, crucially, to make sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in public service decisions that affect them. Legislation also means that agencies must consider the views of all citizens, and ensure that the views of groups often left out of these discussions are included.

An initial meeting in May was attended by representatives from a diverse range of communities, and we had an in-depth discussion on how the forum can communicate effectively with local people, face-to-face, electronically, or using a variety of other methods.

If you live within Grampian, Moray, or Highland regions, and would like to get involved with the forum or would like more information about it, then please email me at the address above.

If you live elsewhere, why not find out whether there's an equalities forum in your area, and think about getting involved?

Remembrance Day

ARNOLD MANN

On a cold, wet, and blustery morning more than 80 people, including members of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen (AJEX), led by the pipes and drums of the JLGB, marched to Mearns Cross war memorial in Glasgow where wreaths were laid in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant of the County, the Provost of Eastwood, and Ken Macintosh MSP. The parade then continued to Newton Mearns Synagogue where a service of remembrance was held, and names of the fallen from the Scottish Jewish community during the two World Wars were read out by youth leaders. Special tribute was paid to the oldest veteran present, Julia Slater MBE, who had been an ARP Warden.

For information about AJEX, which is open to all ex-servicemen and women, members of the auxiliary services, and all national servicemen and women, contact Tony Faber (0141-586 6605).

For details about the Veterans' Badge issued by the Ministry of Defence, phone 0800 169 2277.

A list of those who gave their lives is on SCoJc's website: http://www.j-scot.org.uk/Four_Corners/Files/AJEX.pdf

GARNETHILL

GERALD LEVIN

Garnethill Synagogue has actively participated in the annual Doors Open Day for the past seven years. This year it was open from 10am to 4pm, and our guides and helpers were kept busy showing some 400 members of the public around our beautiful building in groups of 20-30, and giving short talks about Judaism and the significance of the various religious artefacts.

This was not, however, a one-off event – we held a similar event in September as part of Jewish Culture and Heritage Day, when 150 people trudged up the hill to visit us, and to listen to a concert by the Glasgow Jewish Singers, conducted by Eddie Binnie.

This time we had the added attraction of the new Scottish Jewish Archives Museum, which had mounted a special display about the Jews who lived and worked in the Gorbals.

As an 'A' listed building and also one of the few to open on a Sunday, we feel this memorable day performed the important function of introducing the local community to their Jewish neighbours.



ABERDEEN

DEBBY TAYLOR

We had planned to run guided tours of the Synagogue building on the hour, every hour, from 10 till 2. However, when we arrived at 9.45, there was already a queue waiting to get in for the first tour, and we ditched this idea fairly quickly as people kept arriving.

There was a constant flow of people for 6 hours, all greedy for knowledge and information. So we ran two groups continuously from the Synagogue itself and from the communal building, swapping over at half-time. There was standing room only in the synagogue for most of the day, and the communal room was packed like a tin of sardines.

People wanted information ranging from leaflets on Judaism to recipes (something to be remembered for next year!). Questions were broad and varied (and almost never ending), ranging from Kashrut to Heaven and Hell; from Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews to the Hassidic and Lubavitch communities. A nurse couldn't understand why she had been told she could care for a Jewish person who was alive, but not when they were dead. We discovered a lady in Aberdeen who has done extensive research into the Jews of Vilnius. A few people mentioned they had visited Israel but generally Israel as a topic wasn't raised.

At least 500 people, a truly international group, crossed our threshold, and several donated to our restoration fund without our asking.

By the end of the day we were tired, hungry, and thirsty, not having had a break. Do we need more help on the day? Yes. Do we need more planning? Yes. Would we do it again? Yes!

GIFFNOCK

ARNOLD STERN

Over six hours, more than 250 people visited Giffnock and Newlands Synagogue on Open Doors Day. This was the third year running that we had taken part, and the event was also tied into the Heritage Lottery Fund visitors' day.

Several members of the Synagogue Council helped show the visitors around, and explained our customs and traditions. The central theme of the day was the stained glass windows by the artist John K Clark, although people were equally inquisitive about the Shul in general and the activities that are part of our religion.

Visitors ranged from school teachers and local religious lay leaders to local residents and members of the general public - and we even had a university class working on a project that including filming certain aspects of the Synagogue.



ABOVE RIGHT, ROSH CHODESH WINDOW, © JOHN K CLARK (SEE WWW.GLASSPAINTER.COM)

DUNDEE

MARY BALLANTYNE

This year is the first time Dundee Shul has participated in Open Doors Day, and it was a wonderful experience for us, and, we hope, for the more than 70 people who came to visit us. Paul Spicker led discussions, some of us showed our visitors round the shul and the display lent to us by SCoJeC, and others made refreshments, and tidied up between groups.

We were asked many questions – for example, whether we went out recruiting people to become Jewish, and how often we fast – and we were challenged about giving our children wine. We had very good feedback, with people saying that Dundee Shul is “lovely, and homely”, recognising that “Jews are not pushy about their religion and don't recruit people”, and commenting that “Resting on Shabbat sounds lovely as the world is running about mad”.

Open Doors Day was fabulous though nerve-wracking. We had worried whether we could do a good job of representing our beliefs and practices as Jews, but we came to realise that among us all there is much to celebrate in the knowledge we share.

We all left the shul that evening tired but very happy to have had the opportunity to share our thoughts, understanding, and aspirations about being Jewish with so many interested people. We felt very proud of our small congregation and shul, and had a real sense of belonging and of having grown closer together.

It was a wonderful experience; we will definitely host Open Doors day again, and hope to welcome other interested groups to the shul during the coming year.



Some Chanukah Thoughts

KENNETH COLLINS

This year as we approach Chanukah, the recent horrific events in Mumbai are still fresh in everyone's minds. The random senseless murder and terror, and the death of so many innocents – perhaps more than 200 – brings the realisation that the ultimate victory over evil that the Chanukah lights represent has not yet been won.

For Jews the tragedy is compounded by the selection of a Jewish centre as one of the key targets of the terrorists. The cold blooded murder of Rabbi Gavriel and Rivkah Holtzberg, a young couple who left behind the comforts of life in the West to go and create not just a synagogue but a place of hospitality and refuge, with rooms for guests to stay, dining rooms to feed the multitude of visitors each week, a place to connect with other Jews, pray, and have a warm, home-cooked meal. Many of us who travel round the world have seen what a Chabad House represents in a dozen different countries.

The house in Mumbai is always packed with Jews from around the world: tourists looking to meet the local Indian Bnei Israel Jewish community, textile traders, or young Israelis looking for a chance to relax after army service. Rabbi Holtzberg was a mohel and shochet. Together with his wife they ran a synagogue, taught Torah classes, counseled drug addicts, and fought the poverty they saw all around.

And that has to be the message for us today: Continue to build. Do not give up. Do not let hate or a desire for vengeance blind us to the positive impact that all of us can have. As in the Chanukah story, our enemies seek to turn our world to darkness. The Holtzbergs were on the front lines of dispelling that darkness, putting the beauty of Judaism against loneliness and despair.

As we light our Chanukah lights this year, we should remember Mumbai, and our task to create a little extra light in the world, a little more each day. The first Chanukah represented the light of purity when defilement was all around. The Holtzbergs were struck down in the line of duty. So in their memory, we should learn about the beautiful Jewish heritage they sought to spread. And share it with others.

REVIEW OF Women in the Jewish Community

Fifteen years after the Chief Rabbi's *Review of Women in the Jewish Community*, a new survey is being conducted to assess its impact.

The survey, *Jewish Women: Looking Backwards – Looking Forwards*, is aimed at giving women and men of all ages the chance to give their views on areas such as women's educational, family, and welfare facilities. It also addresses the topics of women's Jewish identity, and access to equal opportunities in lay aspects of the community.

When the findings of the initial Review were published, they included many major recommendations. These include:

- * **Education:** *learning and teaching Hebrew should be promoted; there should be more qualified Jewish educators; Jewish schools should cater more for special needs pupils.*
- * **Synagogue and Prayer:** *Singles should be fully integrated into communal life; a women's prayer book should be written; women should be given equal rights to serve in shul management and spiritual life, within the boundaries of halachah (Jewish law).*
- * **Social Issues:** *Single women of all ages should be encouraged to be involved in communal activities; a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of Jewish marriage and family life should be provided; arrangements should be strengthened for visiting the sick and elderly; groups of men and women should be formed in synagogues to provide support to bereaved congregants.*
- * **Children:** *More communal facilities should be available for after-school and holiday care; there should be help and counselling for special needs children, with lay and professional members receiving training; funds should be set aside for older women to be trained and employed as 'Jewish grannies'.*

Even if you weren't able to attend one of the discussion groups organised by SCoJeC in Dundee, Edinburgh, or Glasgow, you can still take part by completing the online questionnaire at www.bod.org.uk (If you prefer to complete it on paper, hard copies of the questionnaire can be obtained from SCoJeC). Questions about the review should be sent to women@bod.org.uk or Women's Review, Community Research Unit, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 6 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1AA 2LP.

The final date for completion of the surveys is 5th January, 2009.

Chanukah diary: 25th Kislev – 2nd Tevet

This year Chanukah begins with the lighting of the first candle on the evening of Sunday 21st December, and continues, adding an extra candle every evening, until Sunday 28th December when all 8 candles are lit.

SCoJeC is holding Chanukah Parties:

**Dundee synagogue
Sunday 21st December**

**Lochgilphead (ARMS Centre)
Sunday 28th December**

For more info please contact
SCoJeC Outreach Worker, Sharon Mail,
on 0141-638 6411 or sharon@scojec.org



Have Lulav, Will Travel

ELKAN D LEVY, DIRECTOR OF THE UJIA OFFICE FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES

As I was in Scotland for Succot this year, a visit to Dundee was suggested. Having been there twice already I knew what a warm and welcoming community it is, and so my wife and I found ourselves on the banks of the Tay on 17th October.

Scotland at that time of the year can be both sunny and VERY wet and cold, and this year seemed no exception. The walk to Shul from our hotel took almost an hour (allowing for a couple of diversions due to getting lost) but was extremely worthwhile. Dundee is a unique synagogue within the UK – the only one with two Arks – but being small, it lends itself to communal warmth. Once we had worked out the seating and everyone gathered round, I was delighted to run an interactive service, with due regard to both Shabbat and the Chag. Themes, songs, prayers – all reflect the beautiful festival of Booths, although quite clearly it was intended for celebration in warmer climes. But there are really unusual features in Dundee – where else can one get an authoritative demonstration of whisky drinking on a Shabbat morning?

After the service we adjourned for an extended Kiddush/lunch and discussion which ran until after 2.30 pm – wide-ranging, challenging, and informed – what else from a Scottish Kehillah? A casual mention that I had a Lulav and Etrog with me, and would anyone like to meet me on Sunday morning to fulfil the traditional mitzvah of saying the blessing and waving the four species, led to a warm Succot party of Dundonians and students at the chaplaincy in St Andrews the next afternoon, complete with refreshments, portable Succah, and all the trimmings.

There are plans to hold a monthly joint Shabbaton in St Andrews – I can't wait to come back!



Succot in St Andrews

PAUL SPICKER

On the day after the well-attended, hugely enjoyable and surprisingly tuneful service at Dundee shul that Elkan Levy has written about, students from St Andrews university hosted a Succot celebration with the participation of members of Dundee shul and support from SCoJeC. For the occasion, the students had obtained a commercially-produced Succah that went up easily, bent easily into the shape of a banana, fell down even more easily, and was eventually secured with enough skilled labour power to revive the Clyde shipyards.

Elkan arrived with a lulav and etrog, neither of which is commonly found in Fife, and several participants fulfilled the mitzvah (and not, as the photographs might suggest, a class in Basic Camouflage). The Dundee and St Andrews groups are hopeful that combining forces – the large number of students with the smaller permanent community – will lay foundations for a wide range of new activities.

Israel Embassy Visits Aberdeen

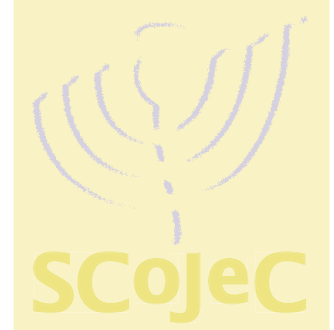
The Jewish community of Aberdeen extended a traditionally warm welcome to Jason Caplin, from the Public Affairs department at the Israeli Embassy. Jason visited the synagogue as part of the Embassy's national outreach programme following an invitation from Dr Ehud Reiter.

During the afternoon, Jason ran an intensive education and skills-building session with a group of Jewish Society members from Aberdeen University, discussing Israel's current affairs, and brainstorming a number of ways to deal with antisemitism and anti-Zionism on campus. In the early evening he co-chaired a discussion on the twin threats of terrorism and the credit crunch with David Capitanchik.

Jason hopes to lead the charge back to Scotland very soon, and hastens to impress upon all Scottish communities that the Embassy is keen to expand its core network far further than the M25.

Contact SCoJeC to find out how to arrange for us to visit.

How many of us are there really?



EPHRAIM BOROWSKI

The 2001 census was the first to ask about religion, but the figure of 6580 who responded that they are Jewish has to be taken with several large pinches of condiment.

First, it was a voluntary question, and 5.5% of respondents ignored it. It is well known that Jews, for good historical reasons, are more likely than most to resist declaring their religion on official forms. The Jewish Policy Research Institute (JPR) reported that 11% had refused to answer the question, and a survey in Leeds put the under-reporting at 13%.

In addition the question in Scotland asked "What religion, religious body or denomination do you belong to?", whereas in England it was just "What is your religion?". That also depresses numbers because "belonging" suggests active membership. However that may have been offset by a second question, not asked in England, about religion of upbringing. According to this, 7446 people were brought up Jewish, and the total responding that they either are or were brought up as Jewish was 8365.

Higher estimates are also possible: for example, adding to this figure, the 11-13% who were found not to have responded, yields a total of between 9284 and 9452.

A much higher figure can be derived by inference from the 1991 Canadian census which found that 27.6% more people described themselves as Jewish by either religion or ethnicity than by religion alone (405955 rather than 318070). Applying this finding to Scotland gives an upper estimate for those who might under any circumstances associate themselves with the Jewish Community, or make calls on its resources of 10673.

Another extrapolation is that of the JPR whose upper estimate was based on the assumption that Jews should be no less likely to refuse to declare their religion than the whole population. Using the UK proportion of 28% who reported no religion gives a Scottish figure of 10791, not significantly different from the estimate based on the Canadian census. However, in Scotland the number reporting no religion was higher, at 33%, putting the Jewish population of Scotland as high as 12718.

It is worth adding two caveats. First, the reliability of these figures can be gauged from the fact that according to the published data 55 people were born Jewish and are now Sikh, while 31 have made the opposite journey; not one of these is known to either community!

Secondly, to paraphrase the JPR report, the answer to the question 'How many Jews are there?' depends on who is asking the question and for what reason. If, for example, it is in order to provide kosher food services, a conservative estimate may suffice, but if it is in order to protect the community from the threat of antisemitism, then the widest possible estimate is appropriate.

It was David Ben Gurion who once observed that, 'for every two Jews there are three opinions'. Perhaps this should be amended to, 'for every Jewish population there are at least three estimates'.

Scottish Inter-Faith Week

SHARON SCHLESINGER

The opening event of the sixth Scottish Inter-Faith Week was hosted by East Renfrewshire Council assisted by the East Renfrewshire Faith Forum. It was attended by representatives of many faiths who heard a talk from Professor Bart McGettrick, Dean of Education at Liverpool Hope University, and previously of Glasgow University, on the subject of Values in Education, which was the theme of the week. There was also a presentation from secondary school pupils who talked about how their school encourages respect between members of different faith communities and speakers of different languages.

In pride of place stood a beautiful carved tree on which were hung books created by different women's groups and school students across Scotland, as part of an arts project called 'The Work of Many Hands'. Participants discussed shared values and then created books of words from faith traditions decorated with recycled paper and material.



ABOVE: PARTICIPANTS AT THE LAUNCH OF INTER-FAITH WEEK IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE IN FRONT OF THE INTER-FAITH MESSAGES TREE

BELOW LEFT: THE CLOSING EVENT IN ST ANDREWS



The culmination of the week was an event at St Andrews University which began with a performance of popular songs played by Fife Constabulary Pipe Band. The theme of this event was 'valuing each other', and this was emphasised by the joint presentations given during the day. One very interesting and thoughtful contribution was from two Glasgow University students who talked about their participation in the recent Interfaith Pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine – an example of one of the many excellent projects being undertaken to break down the barriers and bridge the gaps between different faiths.

For more information about the Interfaith Pilgrimage see Four Corners 19 http://www.scojec.org/four_corners/newsletters/08ix_4C_19.pdf