

**Welcome** to our Chanukah edition – and a very special welcome to the dozens of new readers whom we met during our spectacularly successful “Kosher Ceilidh” tour.

When we think of what Chanukah commemorates – not the miracle of the oil, but the survival of a minority religion and culture in the face of the unrestrained efforts of the dominant imperial power to eradicate it – the support that successive Scottish Governments have given minority communities is a remarkable, perhaps miraculous, contrast! The grant funding for our outreach projects is just one example, and we report below on our recent meeting with the First Minister, at which he put on record his abhorrence at the rise of antisemitism and expressed support for our educational and community-building projects.

Unfortunately, as the Chanukah song *Maoz Tzur* reminds us, Jewish history has had to survive not just the Greeks, but the Inquisition, the Pogroms, the Nazis, and many other attempts to eradicate us. We should not forget that, as we celebrate being welcomed as a thread in Scotland's tartan.



## Meeting with the **FIRST MINISTER**

**Our recent private meeting with the First Minister was the first time SCOJeC has visited Bute House, his official residence in Edinburgh.**

SCOJeC originally asked for the meeting to discuss the large increase in antisemitic activity during the past year, including graffiti at a Jewish cemetery that mentioned the SNP. Mr Salmond was appalled to hear this, and described it as “deranged”. He was also very perturbed by the increase in the number and range of antisemitic incidents, and pledged his support for strategies of both prevention through education and deterrence through prosecution.

We discussed the fact that antisemitic activity tends to increase whenever there is any instability in the Middle East, and agreed that even if Israel is involved, that is not in any sense the responsibility of the Jewish Community in Scotland. SCOJeC Chair Walter Sneader drew attention to the disproportionate interest in Israel and Palestine in the media and Parliament, as contrasted with other conflicts, and the First Minister suggested that this may be in part the historical legacy of the British Mandate which led to the establishment of Israel.

Turning to other matters, Mr Salmond recalled that his Government had supported our initiative to send a copy of *Scotland's Jews* to every school and public library in Scotland, and that he had contributed a preface. He was very interested to hear of the proposal to produce a Scottish version of the *Jewish Way of Life* CD which the Pears Foundation had supported in England and Wales, and proposed a further meeting to discuss this and other educational initiatives.

We told Mr Salmond about the success of our *Kosher Ceilidh* tour of rural areas, and explained that this would not have been possible under proposals to discontinue central funding in favour of block grants to local authorities. The First Minister accepted our concern that this would impact disproportionately on minority communities and in particular on isolated



L TO R: EPHRAIM BOROWSKI, LEAH GRANAT,  
FIRST MINISTER ALEX SALMOND, WALTER SNEADER

individuals in rural areas, and asked his officials to explore how exceptions could be made to enable such initiatives to continue.

Finally, we discussed the use of MRI scans in place of surgical post mortems. We explained the importance of this to many faith communities, and also that families are unable to begin the grieving process until after the funeral. The Lord Advocate and the parliamentary Justice Committee have already expressed their support, and the First Minister undertook to look into how this could best be achieved.

The meeting, which had been scheduled for half an hour, lasted for more than 90 minutes and was extremely congenial. SCOJeC Chair Walter Sneader commented: “The atmosphere was most friendly, and the First Minister clearly demonstrated that he wanted to respond actively to our concerns.”

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### Please send your comments and contributions to Four Corners

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Mitzvah Day, on 15 November, is a UK-wide day of action to reduce hardship and poverty, and help the environment through volunteering – not by fund raising.

For more information see <http://www.mitzvahday.org.uk/>

### Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Mitzvah Day was a beautiful, sunny, mild day in Edinburgh, a perfect day for members of Sukkat Shalom to roll up their sleeves and do some ground work in Holyrood Park. Today's mission: clear gorse! Although gorse is a lovely blooming bush (and, in the spring, smells like coconut), it tends to crowd out other plants. It's also highly flammable, and an overgrown stand was posing a fire hazard to some young trees, as well as choking them out. Our goal was to build a firebreak between the gorse and the trees. Seven of our members, guided by Historic Scotland Rangers Adam and Stuart, learned to cut down gorse with saws and 'lopers', while avoiding – for the most part – the sharp thorns. By the end of the day, we'd cleared a substantial firebreak and liberated at least 10 young trees that had been hidden in the overgrown gorse. Adults and young people all agreed that it was fun and satisfying – so much so that we are already making plans to go back in three months.



### Students

Edinburgh students, together with chaplain Garry Wayland, tidied Newington Cemetery, which had been become very untidy and was strewn with rubbish, whilst students in St Andrews collected clothes, books and other saleable items to donate to charity shops.



L TO R: ST ANDREWS STUDENTS; DANNY PINCHASOFF, EDINBURGH J-SOC CHAIR IN NEWINGTON CEMETERY; GORSE CUTTERS IN HOLYROOD PARK; THE SUKKAT SHALOM TEAM AT DUNSAPIE LOCH



### Edinburgh Synagogue

Members of Edinburgh Synagogue collected bed linen for the Bethany Trust, which works to prevent homelessness. They also collected t-shirts for the Blue Peter Operation Smile Appeal. These are used as hospital gowns for children in developing countries who need operations on cleft palates, and every gown donated saves £3 which can be spent on operations instead.

### Glasgow

Around 45 young people took part in many different activities arranged by UJIA, Giffnock Synagogue and Maccabi. These included helping to maintain Jewish Cemeteries, collecting food for the homeless, helping at Jewish Care and Cosgrove Care, and entertaining residents at Newark Care.

## Israeli The Cyclists Highway Code

Ellis and Susan Simpson from Glasgow made aliyah four months ago. They are both keen cyclists, and, after careful observation, would like to share their conclusions.

- 1 Check your bike before you start your journey. Make sure your saddle is set at the correct height. The correct height is whatever you think makes you look cool.
- 2 Under no circumstances wear a safety helmet. If you are too young, and your parents insist on you wearing a helmet, there are two approved techniques. First, leave the strap undone. Second, do the strap up as loosely as you can, so that the helmet bobs up and down while you ride.
- 3 Never signal. Except to give travel advice.



- 4 Never use your mobile phone while riding your bike, except in three situations. First, you may take incoming calls from anybody in your address book. Second, you may take incoming calls from anybody not in your address book. Third, you may only make outgoing calls while navigating traffic lights, a roundabout, or other junction.
- 5 If you do ride on the road,

remember to ride on the right side. The right side is the side you are most comfortable on.

- 6 If you are wearing tzitzit, don't worry about them getting caught in your wheels so long as you have said your morning prayers.
- 7 If you are carrying shopping, make sure it's unevenly balanced on the handlebars.
- 8 Under no circumstances use any lights.
- 9 Always wear dark clothing at nights.
- 10 Always give way to motor bikes because one day you'll have an engine too, and be able to do many more death defying stunts. If you live that long.



# Capturing the Voices – ORAL TESTIMONY PROJECT

ANGELA SHAPIRO

Until now, very little has been recorded about the lives of Jewish refugees and immigrants in Scotland. Now in a new initiative, Glasgow Caledonian University and the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre are bringing their expertise together to record oral testimony from Holocaust survivors and other Jewish refugees and immigrants, about their contributions to Scottish life, especially in the areas of political engagement, business and economics, culture, and the arts and citizenship.

The Archives Centre is already widely used by professional and amateur researchers, and the additional testimonies will expand its already considerable resources which are all freely available to universities, museums, and other organisations and individuals. Glasgow Caledonian University has already contributed both financially and by assisting in completing a literature review of existing oral and written material in Scotland, and is collaborating with the Archives Centre to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication.

The next stage of the project is to gather testimonies, and the organisers would greatly appreciate it if readers would contact them in order to record their accounts of their life when they were newcomers to Scotland.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ANGELA SHAPIRO: A.SHAPIRO@GCAL.AC.UK / 0141 272 1253**

## WORKING AT Alyn Hospital

SHARON LEVY

Spending a year working in Alyn Hospital, a unique rehabilitation centre for children and young adults in Jerusalem, was a most rewarding and enriching experience, and also afforded me firsthand experience of nursing in a conflict zone.

Alyn Hospital was founded in 1932. Most of its patients are either Orthodox Jews or Christian or Muslim Arabs. As a leading national rehabilitation centre, children are admitted from all over Israel and also from the West Bank and Gaza. The Hospital provides a 'demilitarised zone' where the focus is on healing. It is common to see an ultra-orthodox Jew, in his traditional black clothes, standing near a nun wearing her habit, or a uniformed soldier, maybe a Jew, a Druze, or a Bedouin, smoking with a Palestinian man wearing his traditional kaffiyeh.

The shared hardship of caring for sick and disabled children acted as a bridge for carers – sometimes overcoming barriers of language and ethnicity. Often a multi-lingual parent would offer to translate for other patients or relatives. Very often we had to remind ourselves that patients have the right to privacy and access to confidential information must be guarded. However, after visiting hours in the common areas, the Hebrew/Arabic divide was clear to see, as was the gender segregation between the mothers and the very few fathers who stayed. Meaningful interactions between Jewish and Arab parents were not common, except when celebrating a birthday or an imminent discharge. Then, an emotional feast would take place, with cakes and sweets offered to parents – all parents – and staff. I quickly learned that not accepting an offer of a sweet was seen, quite literally, as an insult, and learned to accept any token of gratitude from families.



SHARON AND A COLLEAGUE AT ALYN HOSPITAL

Interestingly, racism was not a problem, although there was tension during the war in Gaza. Viewing TV images from the war in the ward was difficult. On both sides the media showed images of wounded children, some of whom were admitted to Alyn. Being disabled and coming to terms with your injuries, as well as being a TV 'celebrity' is not an

easy situation for a child to cope with. Whilst the rehabilitation of these children was monitored by millions of TV viewers, as staff we could not give any preferential treatment to any of our 'stars'.

As well as ethnic divisions, there were secular-religious issues to be dealt with. Being aware of religious issues meant being aware of my gender. As Muslim and married orthodox Jewish women cover their hair, I had to alert them to my presence before I entered their rooms, so that they could put on their wig or scarf back on. This posed a dilemma for me since, by letting the mother know I was about to enter, I might wake the convalescing child.

The wonderful period I spent in Alyn gave me an opportunity to experience and explore a wide range of practice issues, moral dilemmas, and professional conduct themes that enriched me as an individual.

**SEE MORE ABOUT ALYN HOSPITAL AT [WWW.ALYN.ORG.IL](http://WWW.ALYN.ORG.IL)**



## FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

### Chanukah

**begins Shabbat 12th December 2009**

*first candle Friday evening before Shabbat*

**ends Shabbat 19th December 2009**

*eight candles Friday evening before Shabbat*

### Tu B'Shvat

*New Year for Trees*

**Shabbat 30th January 2010**

## ABOVE & BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY!

At SCoJeC, we always do our best to help when people contact us with requests. Last year Frank House, then SCoJeC Vice-Chair, and representative from the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands, received a phonecall shortly before Chanukah, from someone wanting to know where they could get a chanukiah. Frank got out his woodworking tools, and, instead of the name and address of a shop, the caller received a beautiful handmade beechwood model!



## Miracles

DITZA GRANAT

Two weeks ago, I was helping pack my grandparents' flat in readiness for them to move to Glasgow. My Zeide, who had a serious operation at the beginning of the year, helped us by reminding us to pack this and not to forget that. He would walk into the room, often forgetting his zimmer frame, and then get stuck because he realised he hadn't brought it!

The best part was coming across things like photos that recalled special memories for them, an invitation to my grandparents' wedding, and my Zeide's refugee papers. As I stared in wonder at this yellowed old book that, once upon a time, was my Zeide's lifeline, *Miracle of Miracles*, a song from *Fiddler on the Roof*, played in the background.

The Chanukah story is one with many miracles. The Macabees went to war with the mighty Greeks, who had outlawed Judaism and set up their idols in the Temple in Jerusalem. If I were a betting girl, I would have put my money on the ones with the huge army, and elephants too. But miraculously, the rag-tag band of Macabees won. After their victory, they went to the desecrated Temple, to celebrate by rededicating it. They intended to relight the Menorah, which had burned continuously since the days of King Solomon until extinguished by the Greeks, but they only found one small jug of oil that had been sealed by the High Priest and was still usable. It was only enough for one day, and a new batch could not be pressed and brought to Jerusalem for at least eight days. Despite that, they demonstrated their faith and lit the Menorah, and, again miraculously, it lasted eight days until the new oil arrived.

Now we remember these miracles by celebrating the eight days of Chanukah. But not all miracles that G-d does for us are as apparent as those that happened almost 2000 years ago. Small *nissim*, miracles, occur all the time. We should learn to realise their wonder, celebrate them, and thank G-d for them, just as we do on Chanukah.

***Enjoy your doughnuts & latkes!***

## a Syrian in Scotland



A Greek Orthodox Jewish Muslim might sound like a little bit of a contradiction! But Melhem Mansour, who spent part of this year at Glasgow University on a Foreign Office funded Chevening Fellowship, is a Syrian of mixed Muslim and Jewish background, who works for the Greek Orthodox Church. Some of you may remember him from a Purim event run by SCoJeC, which he attended during a placement in Dundee.

With his rich and diverse heritage he works with NGOs, helping them to come together and improve their capacity to fundraise, communicate, and evaluate their work. He also works with the youth NGO support unit of the European Commission, and is involved in helping them to report their concerns in Arab countries.

His aim in Scotland was to make contacts, improve his knowledge, and look for the support he needs to help train government and civil organisations in Syria to change. He greatly enjoyed his time in Scotland and hopes to return to study in Glasgow.

One of his current projects is the complete renovation of the Maghen Avraham Synagogue in Beirut, Lebanon, including a new roof and vital infrastructure repairs, while retaining the building's basic structural and architectural integrity. Lack of funding means that this is likely to take some time, but work has already begun, thanks to the Lebanon Jewish Community Council and Lebanese Jewish businessmen, whose aim is to "reaffirm Lebanon's rich tradition of cultural pluralism and religious diversity, a nation of minorities, a nation of multiplicity, and in the universal principle of coexistence".





ABOVE:  
TOMMY BERMAN  
WITH HIS PERMIT TO  
ENTER BRITAIN



LEFT:  
IN FRONT OF SIR  
NICHOLAS WINTON  
AT THE REUNION

# The Scottish Kind

In June 1938, Thomas Berman, aged five, boarded a train in Prague with a label round his neck, and waved goodbye to parents he would never see again. Unlike the other children who were met by foster parents from London at Liverpool Street Station, he then faced another day travelling, alone and with no English. Fostered by Fanny and Sol Miller in Crosshill, Glasgow, he refused to come out from under a table for days, but he went on to take his Highers early, and then, living on a kibbutz in the Galilee, to acquire an international reputation as an agricultural scientist.

This September, Prof Tommy Berman was one of 170 people who boarded a vintage steam train to re-enact that life-saving journey. They travelled from Prague across Czechoslovakia, through Germany and Holland, by ferry to Harwich, and then into Liverpool Street Station, to be greeted by 100-year-old Sir Nicholas Winton.

Winton had organised nine Kindertransport trains from Prague to London in 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. He had been alarmed by the number of refugees fleeing from the Sudetenland, and was afraid that the Nazis would invade Czechoslovakia. Then aged only 30, he persuaded Britain to accept as many refugee children as could be found foster homes. The majority were Jewish, and most never saw their families again. Only one attempt failed – the Nazis invaded Poland on the day the train was meant to leave, and war broke out. Only one of the 250 children meant to be rescued that day survived.

Winton's efforts saved 669 children, but his role was never made public until 1988, when his wife discovered some pre-war correspondence and persuaded him to let his story be told. The 'British Schindler' was knighted this year, and a statue was unveiled in Prague Central Station before the train left for the re-enactment.

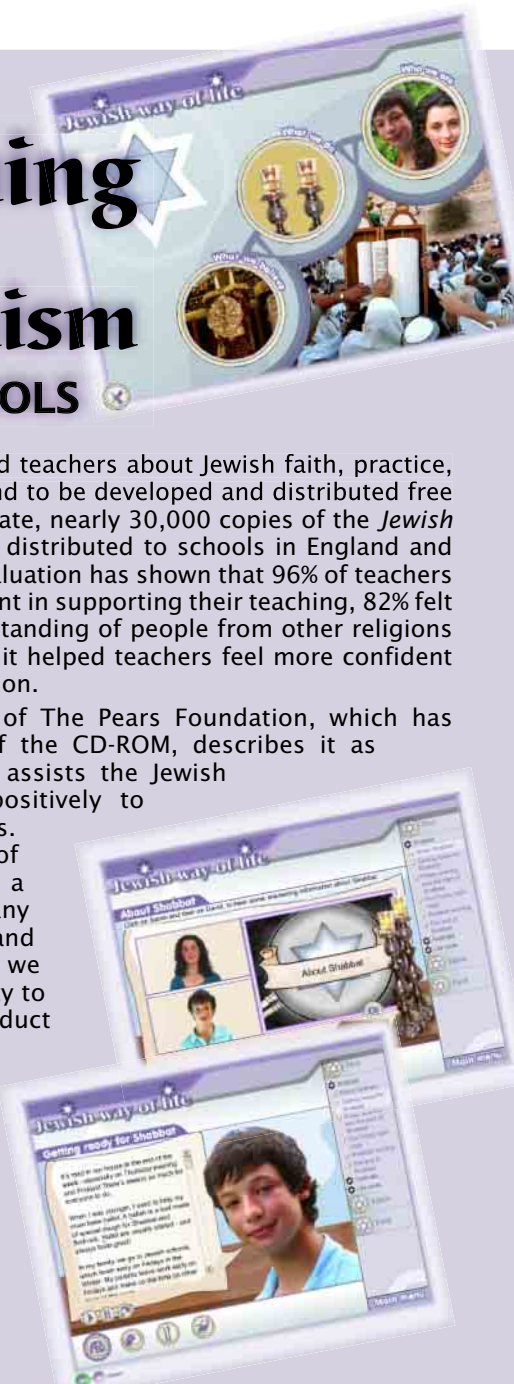
22 of 'Nicky's children' were on board the train with members of their families. Thomas Berman, the only one of the Kinder known to have been fostered in Scotland, was joined by his daughter and two granddaughters on his second journey from Prague to Britain. Showing an old crumpled slip of paper declaring that he needed no visa to enter Britain, he commented, "Had it not been for Nicholas Winton, none of us would be here today, and neither would our families and their families." It is estimated that the children Winton rescued now have around 5000 descendants.

## Teaching ABOUT Judaism IN SCHOOLS

A new resource for students and teachers about Jewish faith, practice, and religion is the first of its kind to be developed and distributed free of charge by a faith group. To date, nearly 30,000 copies of the *Jewish Way of Life* CD-ROM have been distributed to schools in England and Wales. A recent independent evaluation has shown that 96% of teachers found the resource highly relevant in supporting their teaching, 82% felt that it promoted greater understanding of people from other religions and cultures, and 73% believed it helped teachers feel more confident about teaching religious education.

Trevor Pears, Executive Chair of The Pears Foundation, which has supported the development of the CD-ROM, describes it as an "educational resource that assists the Jewish community to define itself positively to both young people and teachers. It builds on the growing body of work being done to promote a better understanding of the many and diverse communities and cultures of modern Britain, and we now look to the local community to help bring this successful product to Scotland."

The proposal to develop a version of the resource for use in Scottish schools has received an enthusiastic welcome from Ministers and from Learning and Teaching Scotland, and SCoJeC is now working closely with the Pears Foundation to make a Scottish version a reality.





THE

# Kosher Ceilidh

TOUR

Everywhere they went,  
SCoJeC's *Kosher Ceilidh* tour of Scotland  
inspired people to jump up and start dancing!

The tour featured musicians David and Danny from the Israeli outreach organisation Soul Train. It visited Maybole, Lochgilphead, Skye, St Andrews, and Aberdeen, as well as Edinburgh and Glasgow, where it included events at Calderwood Lodge School, Jewish Care, Cosgrove Care, and the Giffnock Friendship Club, Edinburgh cheder, and Jewish student societies, as well as for the general community.

The *Kosher Ceilidh* tour has had a remarkable effect on people throughout Scotland. At Calderwood Lodge the whole school, including the dinner lady, joined in. The audience in Lochgilphead joined in the singing and recalled the Yiddish songs their parents sang to them, and several expressed a desire to take part in more communal events in Scotland.

At Portree in Skye, where 25 people enjoyed David and Danny's music, many discovered for the first time that they were not, as they had thought, the only Jewish person living on the island, and, even as the musicians were packing up after the event, local people were making arrangements to meet up for other events in future.

"We all enjoyed it tremendously" said Edinburgh cheder teacher, Merav Gardi Kisilevitz; "I am sure this is the sort of fun, exciting, educational activity that the children – and adults – will remember for a long time!"

Their enthusiasm was matched by non-Jewish people who also attended some of the events, such as the Christian pastor who takes people from his church on a trip to Israel each year, the couple who spent time working on a kibbutz 45 years ago, and a woman who treated the audience to a rendition of a Gaelic folk song that she had recently sung at the Tel Aviv folk music club.

SCoJeC Public Affairs Officer, Leah Granat, who accompanied the musicians throughout the tour, said, "We are delighted that our outreach project has brought the *Kosher Ceilidh* to such a wide cross-section of the Scottish Jewish community. It really was wonderful to see how David, Danny, and Sara succeeded in connecting with everyone, from the people on Skye to the students in Aberdeen, and the toddlers in Glasgow and Edinburgh to the care organisations and Friendship Club in Giffnock."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
GIFFNOCK FRIENDSHIP CLUB,  
OBAN, COSGROVE CARE,  
KOSHER CEILIDH MINIBUS WITH ROADIES,  
GIFFNOCK FRIENDSHIP CLUB,  
COSGROVE CARE, CALDERWOOD LODGE,  
EDINBURGH, EDINBURGH, PORTREE,  
LOCHGILPHEAD, LOCHGILPHEAD

See more: [www.scojec.org/events/2009/09xi\\_soul\\_train/soul\\_train.html](http://www.scojec.org/events/2009/09xi_soul_train/soul_train.html)