



JIM MURPHY MEETS FAITH LEADERS AT ST MUNGO MUSEUM OF RELIGIOUS ART. PHOTO BY PAUL MCSHERRY

Interfaith Lunch with the Secretary of State for Scotland

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski and Rabbi Moshe Rubin, the senior Rabbi in Scotland, were among faith leaders and community representatives invited to lunch by the Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy MP. Others present included Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Archbishop Mario Conti, and the Moderators of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church.

Over lunch they discussed how members of faith communities can help those affected by the recession. Rabbi Rubin described recent initiatives such as Mitzvah Day, when groups of Jewish students, teenagers, and others undertook a number of projects such as collecting food for the homeless and helping clear litter from cemeteries, as well as the assistance given by synagogue members in a Salvation Army centre for the homeless on Christmas Day.

Welcome!

As the picture alongside reminds us, Pesach is almost upon us, with its truckloads of matzah and wine, and its care-full observance of both ritual and family tradition.

It's amazing how the set menu of the Seder can vary so remarkably from year to year, never mind from family to family or community to community! So Pesach is a time that reminds us both of what we have in common and of what makes of us different; it both unites us with our common heritage, and encourages us to do our own thing - to tell our own story within the shape of the Haggadah.

So here's our charoset - the usual mix of communal events, political developments, personal reflections, and so on - the mortar that holds the Jews of Scotland together.

Enjoy the mixture, and have a happy Pesach.



SIGN IN RAV KOOK ST, CENTRAL JERUSALEM

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Purim around Scotland



Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and Edinburgh Liberal Community

joined forces for a Megillah reading and party that was enjoyed by all.

At Aberdeen Synagogue Rabbi Rose read from a Megillah in the University's Special Archive Collection.

About 40 people attended, including a dozen pre-school and primary age children, who got well into the spirit of things. My 9-year old daughter was marching around with the others, shouting "two ... four ... six ... eight, who do we really hate - Haman!". Afterwards the adults chatted and ate, while the children continued running around.

EHUD REITER



Glasgow Reform Synagogue held a party and fancy dress competition after the megillah reading

Dundee Synagogue and St Andrews students

Around 40 students and members of the Dundee community attended a Megillah reading in St Andrews by student chaplain Rabbi Garry Wayland. This was followed by a festive meal and party.



Giffnock and Clarkston Synagogues held a joint Megillah reading for about 100 adults and 40 children, after which the children enjoyed a drum workshop from the Macumba band.



Newton Mearns Synagogue had a Megillah reading with a powerpoint presentation that enabled everyone to both follow the story and gain meaningful insights into Purim, and this was followed by a party and magic show.



Glasgow student Jewish Society

held a very successful 'Sub-Crawl' for Purim; a night out in the spirit of Purim around the Glasgow subway network's nightlife.



Scotland JUST LOVED Limmud



In February Limmud ran a whole weekend of activities in Glasgow including a Friday night dinner, drashot in synagogues, and the opening of the UK Jewish Film Festival, as well as the 5th Scotland Day Limmud conference. Over 400 people took part including a substantial group from Edinburgh, as well as people from further afield in Scotland, and elsewhere in the UK, Israel, and the USA.

In total, 57 presenters offered 61 sessions in the form of talks, panels, films and seminars with titles as diverse as “Midrash and the Lockerbie Bomber”, “The Israeli Economic Miracle”, “After Darwin: Survival of the Frummet?” and “Of heart, soul, conscience and the struggle to be human”. There were workshops too, where participants could try their hand at activities as diverse as calligraphy, creative writing, meditation, voice production, singing, Israeli dancing, Yiddish, and Krav Maga!

The social buzz was enhanced by a lively shuk, two all-day cafes and an extended lunch break. To quote some satisfied customers: “My highlight was the now-expected conviviality” and “I just wanted to congratulate you on holding a superb day of learning. It was my first Limmud event and I was delighted at the variety of options. Two sessions ranked alongside the most interesting presentations I have ever attended.”

Such positive feedback is a very satisfying reward for the team of volunteers who worked for over a year to plan this very special weekend.

BY FIONA BRODIE, CHAIR, LIMMUD SCOTLAND



Yiddish at Limmud

Although this photo makes me look as if I were sucking a soor ploom or seeing the ghost of Sholem Aleichem in the doorway, I actually had tremendous fun running my beginners’ workshop on Yiddish language and culture. I had half expected to have three or four people and was absolutely delighted when over twenty turned up, their ages ranging from early teens to - I guess - eighties. Everyone was happy to participate in interactive activities, even when it meant wandering round the room mooing like a cow or quacking like a duck! Here we are chatting about family relationships in Yiddish, one of two popular Jewish topics we focussed on - the other being food!

Yiddish culture is indeed gaining popularity in Scotland, with a weekly reading group in Glasgow, a lively class in Edinburgh, and several groups singing Yiddish songs and playing klezmer music.

The only disadvantage to being a Limmud presenter is that you can’t go to so many of the other fascinating talks; this year I felt the range of sessions and the congenial atmosphere were even better than before - Limmud Scotland is really going from strength to strength.

BY HEATHER VALENCIA, TOP.

The Induction of RABBI DANNY BERGSON

On Sunday 7th March, Newton Mearns Synagogue was honoured by the Chief Rabbi’s presence for the Induction of Rabbi Danny Bergson. Over 300 people attended, including Archbishop Conti, the former Moderator Rev John Miller, Jim Murphy MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, Ken Macintosh MSP, and the Provost of East Renfrewshire, as well as Rabbonim, communal leaders, and members of the local Jewish community.

The Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Bergson, and the Chairman entered the shul to the sound of the Glasgow Jewish Singers. The ceremony included the Minchah service and some beautiful singing by Rabbi Danny Bergson, followed by the Chief Rabbi’s address and Induction Prayer for Rabbi Danny Bergson.

In his keynote address, the Chief Rabbi praised the work of Rabbi Danny, in particular his work focusing on the youth and children, and recognising that the best way forward is to involve the younger members in the Services and synagogue activities. He also paid tribute to Rabbi Danny’s beautiful singing, and gave warm praise to Rebbetzin Anna’s support for the rabbi, and her involvement with synagogue activities.

Rabbi Danny thanked the Chief Rabbi for his warm words, saying that his appointment some 14 months ago had been “life changing”, and that he felt fully integrated into the Newton Mearns congregation and family. He pledged to continue developing new programmes and initiatives to further strengthen the congregation.

The afternoon was rounded off by an address by the Chairman Paul Shafar, before all the guests were treated to a delightful afternoon tea.

BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT:
RABBI DANNY BERGSON, Yael BERGSON (HIS ELDEST DAUGHTER),
PAUL SHAFAR (CHAIR), CHIEF RABBI, ALAN MATTOCK (HON SEC),
HOWARD BEACH (IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR).



BY PAUL SHAFAR, CHAIR, NEWTON MEARNS SYNAGOGUE

A NIGHT OF Questions

RABBI GARRY WAYLAND

The Talmud tells us that the primary focus of Seder night is for a father to teach his children about the miracles of the Exodus, and how we went from slavery and servitude to liberty and freedom. The Mah Nishtanah ("Why is this night different?") poem that opens the Seder is intended to provide the framework of a conversation between one generation and the next, forging and renewing the chains of our traditions. Traditionally, the youngest stands (in my family always on a chair, to the children's delight and my mother's horror!) and asks the reasons behind the pertinent details of the Seder: why do we eat matzah? Why do we recline? and so forth. The rest of the evening is the father's response, recalling, re-enacting, and reliving the experience of the Exodus, to evoke feelings of appreciation, and crystallise our thoughts into deeds.

If there are no children at the Seder, an adult asks the Mah Nishtanah. If someone is celebrating the Seder alone, the Shulchan Aruch's ruling is surprising: one asks oneself! The entire service is designed to stimulate an inquisitive attitude, and to inspire questions. For example, the Sages of the Talmud instituted the custom of 'karpas', eating a potato, leek, or other vegetable as something deliberately unusual (for why would you eat such a thing before the start of the meal?), to get the children to ask.

Pesach is the festival of Freedom. Of course, we celebrate living free from oppression: having civil and religious liberties, opportunities to live as we please, and the potential to make what we want of our lives. Especially in the West today, we live in lands of unparalleled kindness, and are accepted as full, valued members of society.

But freedom goes much deeper than that. Whether slowly assimilated from society, or as the result of becoming accustomed to living according to the choices we have made and standards we have set ourselves, we tend to get trapped. Perhaps we resign ourselves to living with a self-defined limitation, or feeling of alienation, or it could be that we feel a lack of real control - that we live in the flow of life rather than being an active player.

The message of the Seder is to step outside of the box - literally! To try to look at life from a completely different angle, even that means having a conversation with yourself! Questions are of infinite value in Judaism, because a good question gets you to think, and thinking is the most precious commodity we have. By not taking anything for granted, making no assumptions and re-evaluating life, we can free ourselves of those things that stop us being truly free.

That's why the new month is really an excellent opportunity to do the Seder - it's a perfect time to take a fresh look at the world, so much so that without a specific scriptural source one could easily be forgiven for thinking this idea takes precedence over the actual date we left!

Have a truly liberating Pesach!

PESACH Calendar

MARCH-APRIL 2010

Bedikat Chametz (searching for chametz): evening Sun 28 March

Biur Chametz (burning the chametz): morning Mon 29 March

First Seder night: Mon 29 March

Yom Tov: evening Mon 29 March till night Wed 31 March

Chol HaMoed (middle days) continue till

Yom Tov: evening Sun 4 April till night Tues 6 April

There is a curious line in the Hagadah, the traditional text we read as part of the Seder service on the first two nights of Pesach. It's after the kids have sung Mah Nishtanah, and as the tummies are still grumbling, so it may have escaped your attention. It suggests that we could hold the Seder on Rosh Chodesh - the first day of the month of Nissan, two weeks before the actual date of Pesach.

This is incredible - the Jewish people left Egypt on the night of the 15th of Nissan; two weeks earlier they were still enslaved. The suggestion is quickly rejected by a verse that tells us the Seder must take place on the 15th, but why does the Hagadah seriously entertain this possibility even for a moment? After all, we wouldn't make Shabbat on a Thursday, or hold a Bar Mitzvah when a child is 11!

Annual
LaG B'Omer

BBQ

SUNDAY 2 MAY

for details visit <http://www.scojec.org/new.html>

VENUE TO BE
CONFIRMED



Ellis Simpson from Glasgow made aliyah seven months ago. He writes:

Recently I managed a sneak return to Glasgow to play games do a bit of work and catch up with friends and family. This was the first time I was back in the city and it no longer felt like home. I may occasionally let slip the word 'home' when talking about Glasgow (and times

past), but the reality is that it is no longer true. Sad, but there it is. Enough of that sentimental minefield; time to move on.

On my way there, I took this picture in the Departures area of Tel Aviv airport. It's an advert from Discount Bank of Israel featuring a well known local media personality. The headline is 'Scotland?' and the text translates as 'Continue after London Mini Store until you stop hearing English'.

It seems there is a shop in London called 'Mini-Store' that is well known in Israel for the fact that the staff speak Hebrew. Apparently if you travel north from there, you come to a place where they no longer speak English.

Funny, eh?! - Am I allowed to answer in the negative?



STUDENTS WITH CHAPLAIN
GARRY WAYLAND (RIGHT)
IN THEIR SUCCAH



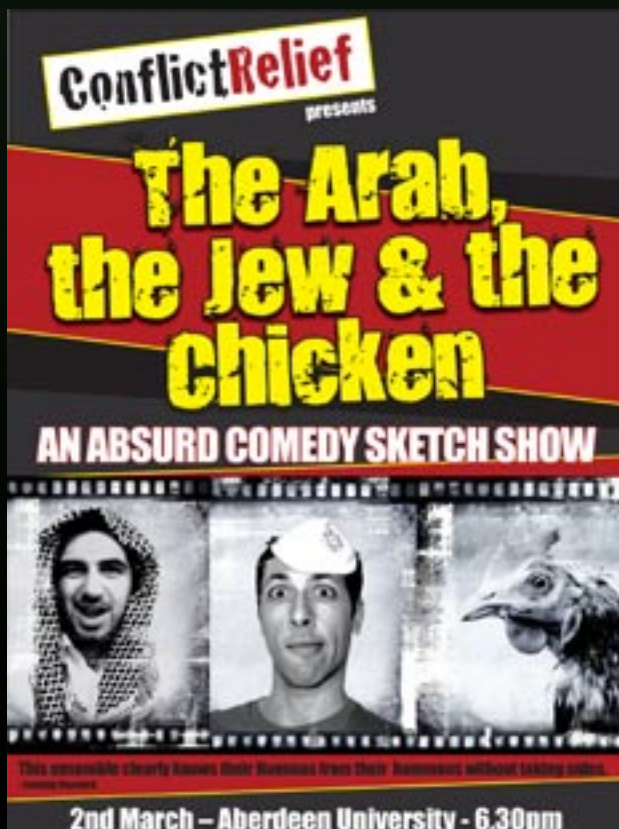
Aberdeen Students JEWISH SOCIETY

REUBEN SAGAR

The Aberdeen Jewish Society is going from strength to strength, and 2010 has already seen a wonderful range of events.

This includes our annual Holocaust Memorial Day event, which was well attended by Jews and non-Jews alike. This year, with the help of the Jewish Chaplaincy, we were able to invite Gerta Vrba to visit Aberdeen to lecture on her experiences in Slovakia during the Second World War. Her talk was attended by around 40 people including students, lecturers, and members of St. Andrews Jewish society.

The Society has also worked hard at fostering links with other faith societies, especially the Muslim society. Following last year's conflict in Gaza, the President of the Jewish Society, Reuben Sagar, and the president of the Muslim Society, Fariyah Tariq, initiated a programme of interfaith events, culminating in a performance of *The Arab, The Jew, and The Chicken* by the theatre group 'Conflict Relief'. The event, attended by over 150 people from all walks of life, can only be described as an incredible success, and is being used as a benchmark for future interfaith events at the university, with the chaplaincy taking a special interest in how different faith groups can create forums for positive communication.



BY TRACY MCDONALD,
TEACHER OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION AT ST MARY'S SECURE UNIT.

ABOVE, THE GUESTS OF HONOUR, INGRID AND HENRY WUGA

Throughout January, we studied the Holocaust and the short life of Anne Frank. The project, which was a great success, included collaborative work with neighbouring Turnbull R.C. High School and featured an exhibition provided by the Anne Frank Trust.

By replacing assumptions and stereotypes with informed discussion, we aimed to challenge prejudice and ignorance.

The students were presented with facts and were given many opportunities to listen to voices and experiences from the Holocaust and Nazi persecution. They were encouraged to reflect on the lost lives and the brutal persecution of millions of innocent people. We also explored how each of us has a responsibility to challenge prejudice, exclusion, and hatred, and how our attitudes, behaviour, and choices can affect our future.

On 28th January, we commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day by hosting a ceremony with around 60 people in attendance. Mr and Mrs Henry and Ingrid Wuga, survivors of the Holocaust through the Kindertransport, were guests of honour.

Following prayers, poems and speeches by young people and teachers, we lit six candles in memory of the six million Jews who were murdered. Mr and Mrs Wuga shared their experiences of the war and Nazi persecution before taking questions from the various members of the group. It was a moving and dignified service and we look forward to welcoming Mr and Mrs Wuga back to St Mary's next year.

The month-long project also acted as a springboard for discussion on contemporary issues such as genocide, racism, and sectarianism, and the students were able to make connections between past and present during workshops delivered in partnership with the Anne Frank Trust.

The young people of St Mary's joined together to become part of the Legacy of Hope for 2010. They opened their minds to new concepts, and to a subject of which they had very limited prior knowledge. Through their journey, there was a distinct change in attitude, and an understanding that we should respect our differences and celebrate diversity.

Anne Frank wrote, "I keep my ideas because, in spite of everything, I still believe that people are good at heart." It is this sentiment that was at the centre of this project, and at the heart of the collaboration between St Mary's Kenmure, Turnbull High School, and the Anne Frank Trust. It is my hope that this partnership will continue to develop and flourish in the years to come.

Antisemitism IN BRITAIN TODAY



MARK GARDNER
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
CST

Last month, the CST (Community Security Trust) released figures that showed that the number of antisemitic racist attacks recorded in Britain during 2009 had reached a record high. Much of this was because of the extreme reaction in some quarters to Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza in January, and it continued the pattern whereby events in the Middle East can trigger outbreaks of antisemitism against Jews here in Britain. In addition to the increasing numbers of actual antisemitic incidents, Britain is also facing up to the threat of actual pro-Al Qaeda terrorism. This targets all of our society but we should be in no doubt that it includes a murderously anti-Jewish streak. The election of two British National Party members to the European Parliament, and the proposed academic boycott of Israel add to communal unease. So it is no wonder that some people are anxiously asking what the future may hold for British Jews.

As the stakes increase, however, it becomes even more important to keep these problems in proportion. Consider the vast range of opportunities that exist for British Jews to express themselves, be it in a religious, cultural, political, or charitable manner, and you will see that antisemitism does not, and should not, dominate our thoughts and actions, or define the British – or Scottish – Jewish experience. This is a diverse open society, with all the freedoms that implies, and the Jewish community is generally well integrated. Indeed, in many parts of British society antisemitism has a minimal presence.

Nevertheless, the situation faced by Jews in Scotland is in some ways more uncertain than that south of the border. In absolute terms, the 30 antisemitic incidents recorded in Scotland last year may not sound particularly remarkable: but it is considerably higher than any previous figures. Furthermore, fear of crime can be every bit as damaging as crime itself, and this is especially the case with hate crime, which can impact across an entire community. So, the bare statistics do not reflect the greater vulnerability that some Jewish people in Scotland may feel, especially those living outwith the established communities.

However, there are people who are very keen to help. SCoJeC and their partners at CST have experience of dealing with antisemitism and interacting with local police and politicians, many of whom have been extremely supportive on such issues. It may not be possible to defeat antisemitism entirely, but at the very least, those who are unfortunate enough to experience it should know that they have the support of others to help them continue to lead their Jewish lives as they choose.



Jean's GENES

JEAN MCGAVIN AND HER 'YIDDISHE GRANNY'
ELIZABETH FLOYD, NEE MUSGROVE

During SCoJeC's "Kosher Ceilidh" in Lochgilphead, Jean recounted some of her family history:

My genes come from different nationalities and from different countries, but there is one that stands out and crops up at unexpected occasions.

My parents met in Canada after the First World War, Mother from a Cornish background, and Father from a Welsh one. Father taught me to sing

Welsh songs, but I regarded myself as a Canadian, and proudly sang "Oh Canada" in English and French at morning assembly. Mother's parents had left Cornwall when the tin mines gave out, and went to Lancashire to sink coal mine shafts. My Grandfather met Granny in Manchester and brought her home to Burnley but the family were none too pleased about it, as it turned out that she was Jewish. Oh dear!

I was still a child when my parents brought my brother and me to England to meet the family. It was bad timing, 1939, so we had to stay much longer than planned! I became very fond of my 'Yiddishe Granny' and spent a lot of time with her. She was a quiet, unassuming lady, and I missed her when she died.

After that I travelled widely and met lots Jewish people with whom I felt an affinity, and especially loved their music. Eventually I came to Scotland to train as a nurse, and met a Scotsman. Having lived here now for over 50 years with the same Scotsman, I feel quite Scottish! During the war years, when the horrors of the Nazi treatment of Jewish people came to light, I felt quite personally affected. Granny must have had relations involved.

I met Jacqueline Speyer (now Friedman), through an advert in the local paper for Jewish people interested taking part in occasional activities, and have enjoyed SCoJeC events in Lochgilphead. My Jewish genes have been stirred, and Danny and David's evocative music at the "Kosher Ceilidh" confirmed it. I can see that little old lady smiling.

Shalom Granny. Your genes won!

