

## A person wearing a grey elephant costume with large orange wings and a blue mask, holding a small elephant puppet.

CENTRE GROUP CLOCKWISE  
FROM UPPER LEFT: GIFFNOCK;  
EDINBURGH (3); INVERNESS (2);  
STUDENTS.



## A "Scattered and Remote" Purim

The Megillah – the Book of Esther – says Purim should be a day of happiness and partying”  
Jews, who live in remote areas, that SCoJeC organised this event for them in Inverness.

The Megillah was read and explained in Ayr and Dundee by Ephraim and Margalit Borowski, and this was followed by traditional SCOJeC bagel buffets, and mask-making workshops led by our Israeli community artists Tom and Roi. The striking paintings by Alexander Gaudie illustrating Robert Burn's drunken tale of Tam o' Shanter provided a particularly appropriate back-drop at the Maclaurin Gallery in Ayr!

SCoJc's Voluntary Ambassador Linda Martin spoke about Purim to senior citizens in Inverness, many of whom had no previous contact with Jewish people, and then hosted a fancy-dress party and hamantaschen-making demonstration in the Chinese Multicultural Centre. There was also a Kosher Ceilidh in Dumfries featuring a puppet show of the story of Esther, punctuated by a chorus of "Belong to Glasgow" as well as much booing and cheering!

THANKS TO THE NETHERLEE AND CLARKSTON CHARITABLE TRUST FOR SUPPORTING THESE EVENTS.



**The  
Scottish Council  
of Jewish  
Communities**

**www.scojec.org**

THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION  
OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND

SCOTTISH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION NO SC029438



# Joe's Boxes GO TO Alloa



More than 50 students squeezed into a single classroom to learn about Jewish people in Scotland through the Jewish Objects for Education in Scotland (JOES Boxes) programme when Prof Joe Goldblatt, one of SCoJeC's Volunteer Education Ambassadors, visited Alloa Academy to introduce pupils to Judaism and the Jewish community.

Joe carefully described each of the Jewish items in his box, and invited the students to light the Shabbat and Chanukah candles, to wear the kippah and the tallit, and to spin the dreidel. The students enthusiastically joined in the activities, which concluded with role playing a Jewish wedding under a chuppah, and was followed by dancing the hora. The students were at first shy about asking questions, but they soon began to express their curiosity about the customs and traditions of Jewish people in Scotland. At the end of the programme, one young student who had been very reserved and quiet during the programme said, "Thank you so much for coming to Alloa. I learned a lot and I really appreciate this." That's what makes it all worthwhile!

*JOES Boxes are resource kits containing a range of objects that can all be used to stimulate interest about Judaism and understanding of the Jewish way of life. Every Scottish local authority now holds a box which can be booked out by schools to support the delivery of education about Judaism. For more information see [www.scojec.org/joesboxes.html](http://www.scojec.org/joesboxes.html)*

*Our new Education and Outreach Assistant, Joanne Gabbay, has been working to keep track of the boxes and promote their use by both primary and secondary schools. She will also be working to ensure SCoJeC's new volunteer ambassadors are trained and accredited to deliver new sessions using the kits. For more information on how to access the JOES Boxes resource please contact Joanne on [education@scojec.org](mailto:education@scojec.org)*

## Taking Judaism TO Sanquhar

MARGALIT BOROWSKI

As the sun was rising on 25th January, I drove south from Glasgow to Sanquhar, a small market town famous for having established the world's first Post Office and having hosted our National Bard, Robert Burns, during his many journeys in the area as farmer and excise-man. Given the date, and having just recently given the reply to the Toast to the Lassies at our Shul's Burns Night, it is no wonder that my mind was still in Burns mode – but more of that later.

It was an early start. I wanted to be at Sanquhar Academy before the beginning of the school day in order to orient myself and be prepared with my table of artefacts for the first class whose timetable had been set aside for the day in order to experience their first encounter with Jews and Judaism.

The three other young and enthusiastic speakers and I were given the opportunity to cover topics ranging from Shabbat and Festivals, to Torah and Tefillah (prayer), as well as the Holocaust, speaking and interacting in turn with six groups of about 25 pupils – so no pressure there!

There was a memorable moment when I asked for examples of kosher animals. Several interesting answers later, a young man volunteered 'moose'. Still in Burns mode, I answered that I had not lately come across a moose with hooves. "Naw, Miss", he replied, "a moose – wan o' they American deer hings" (sic). A kosher answer, right enough!

The day ended with a question and answer session in the hall with all the pupils, when we were able to address only some of the very many questions that had been prepared beforehand. Scope for a return visit perhaps!

BRITTANY RITELL

Since I average two school visits a week in my role as UJIA youth worker, I figured I knew what to expect when heading to Sanquhar Academy with three others to give the students a bite-sized taste of Judaism. However I was still surprised – perhaps 5 of the nearly 100 students we met had any prior knowledge of Judaism, far less met a Jewish person before.

Each of us ran a session about Judaism on topics including Shabbat and Kashrut, Jewish life cycle events, and Torah, but the most interesting part of the day was the Q&A session at the end.

We fielded questions such as "Do Jews pray in a certain position?", "When did you become Jewish?" and "Do you have a special name for G-d?". These questions highlighted just how varied their existing knowledge of Judaism was, and gave us a hint as to what other religions they may have studied already. I enjoyed seeing how they drew comparisons and made connections, particularly between the Abrahamic faiths.

In my session, I showed them a wine cup and talked about the importance of wine in Jewish ritual. Several students stopped me and asked, "Oh right! Doesn't wine represent Jesus's blood?" It surprises me that it's not common knowledge that Jews don't regard Jesus as a sacred figure and that communion is a Christian ritual, not a Jewish one. One of the commonest questions was, "Do Jews celebrate Christmas and Easter too?" I got a laugh by replying that that's like me asking them if they celebrate the Fourth of July!

All in all, it was an interesting visit, and the students' questions really highlighted how important it was. It's daunting to think that our one day intro may be their only interaction with Judaism, but I think we did it justice. As one of the other volunteers pointed out, the students don't have much knowledge about religion at all, and their picture of Judaism is likely to be only what we taught them. That was a scary and awesome responsibility.







## Israelis in Scotland

DANIELLE BETT

Around 30 Israelis from across Scotland – some new to the community, some longer standing – got together in Edinburgh in January. The event was purely cultural – an opportunity for Israelis to eat familiar (and delicious) foods, converse in Hebrew, meet new people, and chat about their experiences living here.

Israelis of all ages and backgrounds from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Alloa, Stirling, and elsewhere made the journey, and we all brought Israeli home cooking such as pitta, falafel, salads, and of course, hummus.

We were glad to welcome some new Israelis who have recently moved to Scotland to the group, and there were also people who are not new to the UK but were unaware that there is an Israeli community here. One man had lived in Scotland for several years but didn't know there is an Israeli community until I saw him on a train reading a book in Hebrew and started speaking to him. He was excited to meet people who shared his cultural background for the first time in many years.

The verdict – a successful, casual, evening with great company and great food. New friends, new recipes! We'll be holding another in the not too distant future for certain.

**Danielle is the new representative of Israelis in Scotland on SCoJeC's Council. She introduces herself:**

*I have lived in Scotland for 13 years now, having moved here at the age of 14. I didn't have any involvement in the Jewish community until I went to university in St Andrews where I joined the Jewish society, having been drawn in by a bagel event. This was a brilliant introduction to the Jewish community in the UK and I made amazing friends.*

*Although I have now lived in Scotland for most of my life, I still experience occasional culture shock in the differences between Israel and Scotland. I grew up in the city of Ramat Gan and most of my family and friends are either there or in Tel Aviv, so I'm always amused when people assume I grew up in a desert surrounded by camels! Whilst I'm not averse to a good trek through the Negev, I'm far more used to the skyscrapers, traffic, multiculturalism, and amazing night life of Tel Aviv. It would be wonderful also to see people associate Israel with it's wonderful culture, not only it's political problems.*

*I love Scotland too, though it has taken me a while to get used to it, and I have made some truly wonderful friendships. I could do without this weather, though!*

*I very much look forward to representing Israelis in Scotland and working with SCoJeC, and I hope that people feel comfortable approaching me. I will do my absolute best to help people with whatever they feel they need.*



## Contrast and Diversity at Every Turn

KIRSTEN OSWALD MP

At the end of last year, I was fortunate to spend a week travelling around Israel and Palestine with colleagues Angus Robertson MP and Paul Monaghan MP.

This was the first ever SNP delegation to the area, and we had an incredible week of visits, meetings, experiences and discussions, adding hugely to our understanding of life in the area, and the issues facing those who live there. It is a huge privilege to have had the opportunity to go.

We travelled the length and breadth of Israel, striving to see and do as much as humanly possible in our week. I was struck by contrast and diversity at every turn. The variety of people, belief systems, and outlooks was unexpected and fascinating. Visiting Jerusalem was extraordinary – almost like standing in several centuries at once. It was a complete contrast to trendy Tel Aviv, and the hi-tech heartland around Nazareth.

I am pleased I was able to visit refugees at school and hear about their aspirations. But I am sorry that these seem almost impossible to realise without a solution to the current impasse. It was a delight to hear about the outstanding and world-leading work undertaken by Israeli Further Education Colleges, especially from the students themselves. But it was sobering to see young boys being tried without proper translation services. From conversations I had in the region, I know there are voices on both sides highlighting the importance of peace and progress.

The depth of the work of 'Start-up Nation' was fascinating, and I was inspired by speaking to a doctor working in Galilee Medical Centre. He delivered hope and understanding along with medical care. Meeting people doing my own job in the Knesset, I took away a fresh understanding of an important commitment to gender equality that echoes that of Scotland's Parliament.

It is difficult to pick out the most memorable thing about our visit, but the meeting with young Scottish Israelis is certainly near the top of the list. These young people, comfortable in defining their own place in the world, were engaged, intelligent, and full of energy and hope. Their commitment to people, wherever they are in the world, and fostering dialogue and understanding, was extraordinary. Even better, every one of them had a family connection to my area of East Renfrewshire – possibly the farthest flung constituency surgery I'll ever do.





## SPRING CALENDAR

### PESACH:

Search for chametz: Sun 9 April after dark  
Burning the chametz: Mon morning 10 April  
First Seder: Mon night 10 April  
Second Seder: Tue night 11 April  
Yom Tov: Evening Mon 10 to  
night of Wed 12 April  
Chol HaMoed (middle days) continue until  
Yom Tov: evening Sun 16 to  
night of Tue 18 April

YOM HASHOAH: Mon 24 April

YOM HAZIKARON: Mon 1 May

YOM HAATZMA'UT: Tue 2 May

LAG B'OMER: Sun 14 May

SHAVUOT: Evening Tue 30 May to  
night of Thurs 1 June

# No-one is Worthless

RABBI MOSHE RUBIN, GIFFNOCK SYNAGOGUE

The book of Genesis is a book of stories – the story of creation, the story of Noah and the flood, the story of Avraham, and so on. These are not just nice historical events; each story plays a key role in the history of the world and of the Jewish people.

One particular story that resonates in today's divided and fractured world is that of Jacob's ruse in taking away the blessings from his brother Esau. Many of us struggle with how Jacob could commit such trickery, and gallons of ink have been used to explain the justification of Jacob's action.

One key moment is when Jacob enters his father's study with the food he requested from his other son. To make the ruse work, Rebecca conceals Jacob's identity by covering his arms with smelly goat-skin. Isaac is confused as the voice is that of Jacob but the hands feel like Esau's, so he asks Jacob to come closer. The verse writes: "So he, Jacob, drew close and kissed him, and he, Isaac, smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him, and said, 'See, the fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field that G-d blessed'".

Let's pause for a moment. The fragrance of his garment? Is this an advert for the detergent Jacob used to clean his clothes? Imagine the slogan, "give your clothes the smell of the field blessed by G-d"! Can you imagine the controversy, with different religious groups debating which garden, and which smell, and the atheist shouting that G-d was not a gardener!

However, the Torah is written without vowels, and although we have a traditional way of reading, the Sages often derive lessons by playing on different ways of reading the words. Here, the word for garment is "bgdv" without vowels, read "begadav"; but the same letters can also be read as "bogdav", meaning "its traitors", and from this small change the Sages teach us a profound message.

As Isaac was about to bless his son Jacob, not just with any blessing, but the blessing that will indicate who will carry the responsibility of Avraham's teachings and the message of the Jew, he smells something nasty, the smell of traitors and rebels. In that tense spiritual moment, he feels the presence not only of those who go along with the message and are faithful to traditions, but also those who rebel, and those who struggle with the message. He feels that even those who for whatever reason don't get the buzz of Godliness have at the core of their being, the beautiful smell of the Garden of Eden, and in that highly charged moment they stood shoulder to shoulder with the righteous, a moment of equality. So Isaac found the beauty of each and every human being, despite their rebellion and drift from the centre, and "vayevarachehu" – he blessed them all.

When we sit down at the Seder, and discuss the four sons – the clever, the wicked, the simple, and the one who doesn't know how to ask – we are acting out the same message of inclusiveness: we all have a role to play, and no one should ever feel their contribution is worth less next person's.

## Holocaust Memorial Day

Why am I giving these talks?

Because the 20th Century seemed to have learnt nothing from the Holocaust which was the worst Genocide in history.  
Approximately 18,000,000 lost their lives.



This year's Scottish National Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration was held in Bishopbriggs Academy in East Dunbartonshire. Deputy First Minister John Swinney represented the Scottish Government, and the main speakers were Saskia Tepe, the daughter of a survivor, and Umetesi Stewart, who described her own harrowing experiences in the Rwandan genocide. Rabbi Rubin (left) ended the event with a moving Yiddish song. There were also commemorative events in many schools, including Firrhill High School, where pupils made lanterns dedicated to the memories of those who perished, and the guest speaker was Harry Bibring (above), a 91-year old Kindertransport survivor.



## Scottish Experience IN TEL AVIV

The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre's new publication, *The Jewish Experience in Scotland*, had its third launch in the Beit haTfutsot Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv, following events in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Former Glasgow Jewish Representative Council President Stephen Kliner chaired the event at short notice after fellow-Glaswegian Neville Lamdan, chair of the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy, was taken ill. The main speaker was the author, former SCOJeC Chair, Kenneth Collins, and the vote of thanks was given by SCOJeC Director Ephraim Borowski.





# Rabbi Burns Supper

KENNETH GERBER

The annual Rabbi Burns Supper took place in January at Giffnock Shul, and it was a great evening all round. The banqueting hall was transformed into a truly Scottish venue, with Saltires and other Scottish symbols, as well as a good number of Israeli flags, reminding us all that we can be comfortable with all the different aspects of our identity.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was the star attraction, and she sat at the top table with the other speakers. The tables were decorated with a tartan runner, flowers including thistles, and the sumptuous food including of course our traditional kosher haggis. The only thing not on the table that evening was a second referendum, as Nicola steered well clear of politics – a wise move, given the likely views of many of those present! Her speech was entertaining and humorous, and she was a very gracious guest – she even told the Shul chairman that he looked good in his kilt; he responded by complimenting her excellent speech, whilst remaining silent on anything sartorial!

We made Hamotsi and benched grace after meals, and so English and Hebrew were spoken on the evening. Mark Cohen delivered the address to the haggis in pure old Scots, which many of us mistook for an archaic dialect of Aramaic. Mark's passionate rendition of the ode to a sheep's cooked heart, liver, and lungs was fascinating, authentic and highly entertaining.

It was a great evening all round, and arrangements are already being made for the 2018 Burns Supper.

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: THE FIRST MINISTER PRESENTING RABBI MOSHE RUBIN WITH A BOOK OF BURNS POETRY WHILE VISITING GIFFNOCK SYNAGOGUE BEFORE THE EVENT; JEWISH STUDENT CHAPLAIN RABBI YOSHI BODENHEIM WITH SON GABI, ALREADY WEARING A KILT AT 10 DAYS OLD; MARK COHEN SHOWING HIS APPRECIATION OF THE "GREAT CHIEFTAIN O' THE PUDDIN' RACE" WHEN ADDRESSING THE "WARM-REEKIN" HAGGIS, WATCHED BY PIPER RICKY ZINGER AND CHEF GARY DUNCAN; REBBETZIN RUBIN, THE FIRST MINISTER, AND HER HUSBAND PETER MORRELL, SNP CHIEF EXECUTIVE ENJOYING A JOKE; JEREMY FREEDMAN ADDRESSES HIS MOUSE; THE ASSEMBLED MULTITUDE.

BELOW: KIRSTEN OSWALD MP, LISA COHEN, THE FIRST MINISTER, MARGALIT BOROWSKI, WHO REPLIED TO THE TOAST TO THE LASSIES, AND REBBETZIN RUBIN.



## Edinburgh's Big Birthday

To mark the 200th anniversary of the foundation of a formal community in Edinburgh – the first in Scotland – the Lord Provost of Edinburgh hosted a civic reception in the City Chambers in March. This was in effect the two hundredth birthday party of the Edinburgh Jewish community, and indeed of the whole Scottish Community too. Amongst those present was Alex Rubinstein, who had celebrated his own hundredth birthday the week before – which means that he can tell stories that go back over more than half the history of our Community to a world we can scarcely imagine.

As well as Lord Provost Donald Wilson (second right), the other speakers were Hannah Holtschneider, Senior Lecturer in Jewish Studies at Edinburgh University, Norman Crane, former chair of Sukkat Shalom Liberal Jewish community, and Raymond Taylor, chair of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.





# Scotland's Miracle of Lights!

One of SCoJeC's first discoveries was that wherever and whenever we arrange an event, people turn up who really think they are the only Jews in the area and are thirsting for contact. That motivated us to arrange more events in more places, and we are repeatedly surprised by how many people say they plan to come – and overjoyed when three times as many actually attend!

That was exactly what happened with our pre-  
chanukah events – in Dumfries 16 people said they were coming and 48 arrived, including the appropriately named Donald Shamash, who lit the chanukiah. In Alloa the gathering included the local Provost and his deputy, as well as an assistance dog who then wrote about it in his blog! Inverness did best – 18 signed up, and 52 turned up. Truly a new miracle of lights!

We straddled the country, with events in the north-east, south-west, and the very centre. Our popular Israeli community artists Tom and Roi led printmaking workshops in Dumfries and Alloa, and acclaimed musicians Michael Alpert and Gica Loening overcame a points failure to perform in Inverness. And of course we fulfilled the custom of eating oily foods, valiantly consuming large quantities of latkes and doughnuts.

"I feel lonely apart from these gatherings," said one Inverness participant. "This gathering was great!" Another, from the local interfaith group, told us that the event "brought a bit of light into these dark winter months." In Alloa, one of the participants said "thank you for organising a lovely evening. Very important – the food was excellent, particularly the latkes. It was also enjoyable to have a craft event especially with professional artists. I imagine it must be difficult to educate and entertain such a disparate audience." In Dumfries the organiser told us, "I was astonished at the turn out. One of the participants says a big thank you for the soup – he is a very happy soul today!"

MANY THANKS TO NETHERLEE AND CLARKSTON CHARITABLE TRUST, THE BEMIS WINTER FESTIVALS PROGRAMME (IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT), THE ST BRIDE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN DUMFRIES FOR THE USE OF RUGMANS HALL, TO THE LOCH ARTHUR CAMPBELL COMMUNITY, HIGHLAND COUNCIL, INVERNESS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, AND CENTRAL SCOTLAND REGIONAL EQUALITY COUNCIL FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR THESE EVENTS.

PICTURES: TOP GROUP, DUMFRIES; MIDDLE, INVERNESS; LOWER, ALLOA.



## Fire & Light FOR LAG B'OMER

We're very pleased to announce that we are again working with Forestry Scotland and storyteller and animator Alasdair Taylor on another Lag B'Omer Spectacular set to go ahead on Sunday 14th May – see details at [www.scojec.org/events.html](http://www.scojec.org/events.html). When we last did this, more than 180 people from all over Scotland came along for a kosher barbecue, foraging and wild cooking, a fire show, storytelling, and an archery contests. "This was a superb day, great activities, brilliantly organised, staff and woodland leaders were all delightfully friendly, and it was an all-round resounding success!" said one participant at the time. Far too few Jewish events involve the outdoors, and the "Bonfire" theme of Lag B'Omer really lends itself to this type of activity. There will be transport from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee and St Andrews! So mark the date, 14th May, and look out for more information.

We are also planning a SCoJeC trip to Shetland, where we can enjoy the beautiful countryside, meet with local Jewish people and others interested in Judaism and Jewish culture – and enjoy the festival of Shavuot in a place where it doesn't get dark! Details are still to be confirmed.

Please contact Joanne at [events@scojec.org](mailto:events@scojec.org) if you're interested in either of these events.



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READ OUR REPORT: *What's changed  
about Being Jewish in Scotland*  
AT [www.scojec.org/bjis2.html](http://www.scojec.org/bjis2.html)