



**LAG
B'OMER:**

fire and light



Around 200 people from all over Scotland converged on Callendar Wood in Falkirk on a beautiful sunny day in May for SCoJeC's celebration of the minor Jewish festival of LaG b'Omer. This is traditionally marked with bonfires and bows and arrows, and thanks to Forestry Commission Scotland, we also had lots of other woodland activities, as well as a kosher barbecue.

Lea Bálint, one of SCoJeC's part-time staff, who helped organise the event, wrote: *"It's the first time that I have spent this holiday with so many people from all around Scotland. I've been looking forward to getting outside after the exam season, and I wasn't disappointed; I had a wonderful day, which started with trying to set up a gazebo without any instructions. It was not a successful enterprise, but a great teambuilding experience!"*

"I was a steward, and accompanied the group that went on a forest walk, where I learned that you can make maple syrup out of the bark of a sycamore tree. For the next round of activities, I decided to help out at the archery station, along with four other stewards (it was a popular activity!). I don't mean to brag, but I turned out to be a very good archer! The event closed with a jaw-dropping fire-juggling show, and a short explanation by Rabbi Wolfson of Newton Mearns shul of the significance of the festival, before we made our way back home to all the corners of Scotland."

"It really was a celebration of unity: all the different age groups came together, and everybody seemed to be excited and happy to be there. It must have been quite a spectacle as our bus dropped us off, a big group of people with huge bows in our hands and huge smiles on our faces, in Glasgow's West End!"

People came from Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee, and a large contingent from Edinburgh, and there were twenty under-5s and thirty school-age children – and five well-behaved dogs! The weather was a bonus, and it was a great day out. The queue for the barbecue was kept entertained by a story-teller and provided with snacks and drinks to sustain them as the crew valiantly tried to keep up with demand – something we need to work on for next time.

Many thanks to Forestry Commission Scotland, Netherlee and Clarkston Charitable Trust, Newton Mearns Hebrew Congregation, and the Jewish Youth Fund (Glasgow) for their support for this event.

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**The
Scottish Council
of Jewish
Communities**
www.scojec.org
THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION
OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND

Several people who attended have offered to help at future events – would you like to join them? Let us know by emailing events@scojec.org

We are planning another forestry activity in Forres, between Inverness and Elgin, in October, so watch out for more information at www.scojec.org/events.html

● the location was just magical.

● the most delicious schnitzel and falafel.

● great fun playing games, story telling and woodland walks.

● well planned entertainment.

● very helpful Forestry and SCoJeC staff.

● a relaxed welcoming atmosphere.

● a very nice day out for the kids, with a bit of tradition behind it.

● It was nice to see other families, and hear Hebrew spoken.

● the crafts were great, loved the fire making session.



Embracing Peace, Working for Justice?

The Church of Scotland General Assembly in May, approved a report entitled *Embracing Peace and Working for Justice*, which had been produced jointly by its Church and Society, and World Mission Councils. This took as its starting point the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, and stated *"As we reflect on the Balfour Centenary, and the human stories that lie behind this historic anniversary, the Church of Scotland recognises the need for us to ensure that our presence in the land is doing everything possible to contribute towards a just peace."*

The Church allowed SCoJeC to see a late draft of the report, and did make some revisions in response to our comments. We welcome the report's acknowledgement that Israel matters to Jewish people in Scotland, the vast majority of whom see Israel as forming part of their identity as Jews; and its recognition that Scottish responses to events in the Middle East frequently result in a rise in antisemitism in Scotland, and that the Church has an obligation to counter that antisemitism, and engage in dialogue.

However, we still have considerable reservations about the published report, and in particular the Deliverance (resolution) that condemns Israeli settlements, but not Palestinian terrorism or the institutionalised antisemitism of Hamas, and asserts *"that Christian theology should not be used to justify or perpetuate a situation of injustice"*, while making no mention of the supersessionist theology that is implicit in the Kairos Palestine document that it commends. We were also disappointed at the tone of some of the speeches in the debate whose hostility was so great that it reduced some church members to tears on the pavement outside the Assembly.

It is clear that much work remains to be done to reach a better understanding between the Church of Scotland and the Jewish Community, but there is definitely a will on both sides to continue our dialogue, and SCoJeC Chair Micheline Brannan, accompanied by Board of Deputies President Jonathan Arkush, subsequently held a meeting with the new Principal Clerk, the Rev Dr George Whyte, on his first day in office.

Reflecting on the meeting, Micheline said:

"We made it clear that there is a significant gulf between the Church of Scotland's perceptions and those of the Jewish Community regarding both the State of Israel and its history. For example, we explained that Zionism is simply asserting the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in their own land, and that denying this right, and applying double standards to Israel, amounts to antisemitism. At the same time, we reiterated our support for the two state solution, which the Church of Scotland also shares. With regard to the proposed Dialogue between the Church of Scotland and the Jewish Community, we expressed the hope that this will assist in developing a better understanding of where we differ and where we can agree."

SCoJeC CHAIR BARRED

FROM PARLIAMENT MEETING

SCoJeC Chair Micheline Brannan has been told that she would not be allowed to attend the June meeting of the Cross Party Group on Palestine in the Scottish Parliament. This follows an attempt to eject her and two colleagues from the April meeting of the Group, when the Treasurer, Philip Chetwynd, who had been due to lead a discussion about the definition of antisemitism, refused to do so in the presence of the three observers, whom he described as 'ideological terrorists'.

Micheline commented:

"My colleagues and I had not said a word during the meeting. We were only there to listen and to learn. I consider that SCoJeC has a legitimate interest in any discussion on antisemitism in Scotland, and was astonished at this attempt to exclude us. I was distressed by Mr Chetwynd's attack."

MSPs present at the meeting opposed their exclusion, but when SCoJeC wrote to the Presiding Officer to ask whether the attempt was compatible with the Parliament's principles of openness and transparency, he responded that there had not been any breach of parliamentary rules since "attendance and participation by non-MSPs who are not registered members of the Group is at the discretion of the Group."

Subsequently, Micheline was informed by Sandra White MSP's office that she could not attend meetings of the Group unless she had previously signed-up to the Group's objectives. Micheline commented that these objectives are "not controversial", and added:

"SCoJeC might have been willing to consider registration. However, I fear that the group does not actually pursue its stated objectives, as it is unclear what a discussion on the definition of antisemitism in Scotland – the topic from which its members sought to exclude me – has to do with supporting the rights of the Palestinians. In fact the internationally accepted definition, recently adopted by the Scottish Government, expressly states that it does not apply to legitimate criticism of Israel, but it seems that the Cross Party Group sees this as a way at hitting out at anyone that in its opinion might support Israel in Scotland – i.e. all mainstream Jewish organisations. It is unacceptable for them to exclude deliberately from their discussion about antisemitism representatives of the community who are directly affected."

NETBALL: Team Israel IN ABERDEEN

The Israel International Netball team visited Aberdeen in May for the European Open Championship, and played four games against Gibraltar, Bermuda (twice), and Ireland. Because the team does not play on Shabbat, their schedule was very tight, with three of the games within a 24 hour period.



PHOTOS:
ABERDEEN
FRIENDS OF
ISRAEL

Antisemitic Hate Crime Rises

According to the statistics released by the Scottish Government and Crown Office for religiously aggravated hate crime in Scotland in the year 2016-17, although there was a reduction overall, there has been a significant increase in charges with a religious element, from 631 to 744, including an increase of 28% in the number of charges for antisemitic conduct. However, the number of charges for anti-Muslim hate crime fell by 15%. This contrasts with last year, when the number of charges relating to Islam almost doubled and there was a reduction of 28% in the number of antisemitic hate crimes reported.

	NUMBER OF CHARGES 2016-17	NUMBER OF CHARGES 2015-16	SIZE OF COMMUNITY (2011 CENSUS)	CHARGES PER 10,000 MEMBERS (2016-17)	CHARGES PER 10,000 MEMBERS (2015-16)	% CHANGE
TOTAL	744	631	5,295,403	1.40	1.19	+17.9 %
PROTESTANT/C of SCOTLAND	179	141	1,717,871	1.04	0.82	+26.9 %
ROMAN CATHOLIC	428	328	841,053	5.09	3.90	+30.5 %
ISLAM	114	134	76,737	14.86	17.46	-14.9 %
JUDAISM	23	18	5,887	39.07	30.58	+27.8 %

"It is obviously a matter of concern," said SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski, "that the number of charges for antisemitic hate crime has returned to almost the peak that rang warning bells for the Scottish Government in 2014. It may be that this in part reflects better reporting, but that cannot explain the fact that Jewish people are nearly 30 times more likely than others to be targeted for their religion. We therefore welcome the Government's adoption of the recognised international definition of antisemitism, and their commitment to consider how this can be used to achieve their own objective of a Scotland free of such hatred. We look forward to progressing this work with them."

The Lord Advocate commented, "Crime motivated by hatred is not only a wrong against the individual, who should be entitled to live free from violence and intimidation, but is an affront to our collective values as a community, and is particularly liable to create division and fear."

The Communities and Equalities Secretary, Angela Constance, later confirmed that the Scottish Government would implement the recommendations of the Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, including a commitment to

"adopt the international definition of antisemitism, and engage with stakeholders on how this translates into improved practice on the ground."

In response to a parliamentary question from Adam Tomkins MSP, which quoted the findings of SCoJeC's study of *What's Changed about Being Jewish in Scotland*, and asked: "Figures that were released last week show that, since that 2015 report, both offensive conduct towards Jews and offensive communication about Jews have increased in Scotland. What, specifically, is the Scottish Government doing to address the on-going rise of antisemitism in Scotland?", the Minister responded:

"I received a copy of the report that SCoJeC prepared in 2015 and I am very familiar with its content; indeed, I am very familiar with SCoJeC, which is an organisation that I have met on more than a few occasions across various portfolios. Charges for hate crime against Jews or Judaism are indeed up by 28 per cent. ... The figures remain very low; nonetheless, I accept that we must not be complacent and that there may well be underreporting."

RESPONSE TO Terrorist Incidents

The recent series of horrific terrorist incidents has left many people feeling vulnerable but, as SCoJeC said in a statement after the attack outside the Houses of Parliament, *"We have to remind ourselves that the aim of terrorism is to disrupt ordinary life, so that the best way to demonstrate that they have failed is for normal life to carry on."*

The Chief Constable and the CST have stated that there is no specific information indicating that an attack against the Jewish community is being planned, and we endorse their advice that the community should remain alert but not alarmed.

Our statement continued,

"By their choice of targets, the terrorists have demonstrated their complete disregard for human life. The way communities throughout the country have come together to express their abhorrence of these crimes and their support for a diverse but cohesive society is heartening, and we once again reiterate our solidarity with other minority communities, especially those who may unfortunately suffer a backlash from this incident. No community should be defined by its extremists, and we will continue to work with other faith and ethnic communities in Scotland, with the Scottish Government, and with Police Scotland, to ensure that Scotland remains a safe and welcoming place for all the threads that make up its engaging tartan."



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Empowering, Engaging, and Connecting Communities

SCoJeC is delighted to have been awarded a further grant for 2017-18 from the Scottish Government's 'Promoting Equality and Cohesion' fund to continue our work within and on behalf of the Jewish Community and other minority communities in Scotland. The four principal strands of this work are:

- ▶ **Representing the Community** to the Scottish Parliament and Government and other public bodies;
- ▶ **Advancing Public Understanding** about Judaism and the Jewish Community
- ▶ **Community Development**, supporting vulnerable people and holding events in all parts of Scotland
- ▶ **Community Empowerment**, publishing MEMO and other materials to assist our own and other minority communities to engage with policy matters.

Although this funding is only committed for one year, the Government is "minded" to continue it for the two subsequent years too.

Dreams and Disasters

EPHRAIM BOROWSKI

We think in decades and centuries, so this year's centenary of the Balfour Declaration has focused the attention of both supporters and detractors on the history of Zionism – the First Zionist Congress in 1897, the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the UN Partition resolution in 1947 that created Israel – and would have created a state of Palestine if the Arabs had accepted it – and the Six-Day War leading to the re-unification of Jerusalem in 1967. And as history and politics conspire, all this coincides with disputes about the nature of antisemitism and its relationship with anti-Zionism.

But those were scarcely the first stirrings of Zionism. The name "Zion" (*Tziyon*) occurs 109 times in the Hebrew Bible as a name for Jerusalem or one of its hills. The name "Jerusalem" itself is mentioned 660 times in the Bible, so there can be no doubt as to its significance in purely religious as opposed to political terms. Even the name "Zion" itself means "significant", and in modern Hebrew "*metzuyan*" means "excellent".

According to tradition, it's been significant since it was the site of the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac right at the very start of Jewish history, when the patriarch Abraham, the founder of Jewish monotheism, was told to spare his son Isaac. But it became the very focal point (another meaning of "Zion") of Jewish worship when King Solomon built the Temple there, on a site identified by his father, King David.

So it remained till it was overrun and destroyed by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, on the 9th of Av in the Jewish year 3339 (though others put it later). The Second Temple was built under Persian patronage three generations later, after the Jews saw off genocide as the story of Purim relates, and that survived until the Romans destroyed it on the same date in the year 70, an undisputedly historical event depicted on Titus's Arch in Rome.

These were life-changing disasters for Judaism, which had lost its lynchpin. The synagogue was devised to replace the Temple, prayer replaced sacrifice as the form of worship with Jerusalem as its direction (yet another meaning of "Zion"), and a longing for restoration and return became a central theme of those prayers. Every year on Tisha b'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, we mourn the loss of the Temples with rituals barely distinguishable from personal mourning for a parent or relative. In that way Zion the Temple, and Zion the city, have remained central to Judaism for two millennia.

The echoes of new in old are eerie. That phrase itself is all but the title of Theodor Herzl's 1902 novel, *Altneuland* ("Old-New Land"), which was translated into Hebrew with the inspired title *Tel Aviv*, before the city existed – *Tel*, an archaeological site, for the old, and *Aviv*, spring, for the new. "If you will it, it is no dream", the subtitle of this novel of aspiration, is an echo of one of the most familiar Psalms which was sung by the Levites on the Temple steps: "When the Lord restores the exile of Zion, we will have been like dreamers", which provided the name, *Shivat Zion*, of the movement to return to build the Second Temple. Even that is ambiguous, as the line puns on the words for exile and return!

That Psalm is an enigma – the words are clear but the phrases are cryptic; even the tenses are ambiguous. Perhaps there's a message in that too – as we mourn the past, we hope for the future. As Herzl concluded his epilogue, "All deeds were once only dreams, but can become legendary", or as the Psalm continues, "those who sow in tears shall reap in gladness".

A Tale of Four Rabbis

DEBBY TAYLOR

Just like buses, you wait ages for one and then four come along together! It has been Aberdeen Jewish Community's great pleasure to welcome Rabbis Bodenheim, Rose, Ash, and Mirvis to various recent events. Aberdeen Jewish Students Society organised a Shabbaton at Aberdeen Shul and invited the community to join them for the services, which were led by Rabbi Bodenheim. He, with his wife and children, also treated us to a delicious cholent lunch. Congratulations to the Aberdeen Students for having been recognised by the Union of Jewish Students as 'Developing J-Soc of the Year'!

At Purim, Rabbi Rose read the Megillah in the University Chaplaincy. As ever, the event was well attended, and was supported by Aberdeen University who annually lend the community an historic copy of the Megillah from the University Library.

Rabbi Ash visited us on his way north to Inverness, taking Friday night and Saturday morning services, and leading an interesting and lively communal discussion about the laws of Kashrut and prohibited foodstuffs.

Chief Rabbi and Mrs Mirvis completed the month of Rabbis with great style and aplomb. Rabbi Mirvis gave a short speech, and then he and Mrs Mirvis set about meeting every member of the Community individually. They were particularly interested in how Aberdeen maintains an active Jewish community so far from larger centres of Judaism, and concerned to hear about how anti-Israel BDS ('Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions') demonstrations affect our members. The Chief Rabbi was interested to hear about progress towards becoming a SCIO as he is, uniquely, *ex officio* a Trustee of the Synagogue building. A way forward was agreed, and we are hopeful that this will enable our assets to be transferred to the new body, Aberdeen Synagogue and Jewish Community Centre.

The Community presented the Chief Rabbi and Mrs Mirvis with a copy of *Scots Jews* by Judah Passow, signed by everyone who attended the event.

And then onto Pesach. The Communal Seder was smaller, and therefore more manageable, than last year, as there was a bit more room at the table for everyone! As Mrs Mirvis observed, our Communal Room is very homely and the Seder felt very much like an extended family celebration.

CHIEF RABBI AND MRS MIRVIS WITH MEMBERS OF THE ABERDEEN COMMUNITY.

SUMMER CALENDAR

Fast of Tammuz:

Dawn till nightfall Tuesday 11 July

The "Three Weeks" between the Fasts of Tammuz and Av are a time of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem by the Assyrians in 586 BCE and by the Romans in 70 CE.

Fast of Av (Tisha b'Av):

Dusk on Monday 31 July
Till nightfall Tuesday 1 Aug

Rosh HaShanah:

Dusk on Wed 20 till
Shabbat on Fri 22 Sept





Revisiting SCOTLAND'S SMALL COMMUNITIES

To celebrate the bicentenary of the Scottish Jewish Community, and as part of Refugee Festival Scotland, SCoJeC invited Michael Tobias, an award-winning genealogist who has spent many years exploring the history of the Community, to present talks in Dunfermline, Falkirk, and Ayr, all of which once had small Jewish communities.

Michael discussed various source materials including registers of refugees arriving at British ports. Although there was no official register of marriages in Scotland before 1841, the date and place of the parents' marriage was included on birth certificates, which show that while most Jewish people came to Scotland from Lithuania and Poland, others arrived from Odessa, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Georgia and elsewhere. There is no record of antisemitism against these early immigrants.

Replying to a question from a retired genealogist in Dunfermline, Michael explained that Jewish people did not have surnames before the 1820s and then often took their father's first name as a family name. Another questioner had heard that the Scottish people might be one of the lost tribes of Israel, but Michael had to disappoint him, since DNA tests show that Jews and Scots have no genetic connection.

One audience member in Falkirk, said, *"the talk was excellent and well illustrated, showing movement of Jews through the decades. I hadn't realised so many used Scotland as a stepping stone to the US."*

And a resident of Ayr told us: *"I loved to hear about the Ayr Jewish community and was able to add missing facts about the area, synagogue, and community as Michael spoke. It was a lovely friendly event, thank you!"*

Michael said: *"I really enjoyed visiting the three communities that I knew little about beforehand. The questions were interesting and it was particularly interesting to find family connections in all three towns."*

Joanne Gabbay, SCoJeC's Events Coordinator who chaired the events, had a hard time bringing the discussions to an end because the questions just kept coming. She commented, *"Listening to Michael has opened some lovely conversations in my family about our origins."*

SCoJeC has also arranged talks about Scotland's first Jewish Communities in Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness, and Greenock, in the autumn. For more details see www.scojec.org/events.html



Judaism FROM THE BORDERS TO THE NORTHERN ISLES

SCoJeC volunteer educational ambassador Joe Goldblatt presented a session about Judaism and the Jewish community to pupils in Stromness in Orkney. A new group of volunteers has just completed our training course – if you would like one of them to visit your school or community group, or would like to attend the next volunteer course, contact education@scojec.org



Maccabi FUN RUN

The Maccabi GB Fun Run came to Scotland in June, when people of all ages (and their dogs) took part in a sponsored 5km run (or stroll) round Rouken Glen Park in Giffnock in aid of a number of communal charities including Calderwood Lodge Primary School, Chai Cancer Care, Jewish Care Scotland, and UJIA, as well as raising funds for the Maccabiah Games in Israel this summer.



RIGHT: HOLOCAUST GARDEN AT GROVE ACADEMY.

CENTRE: FIONA BRODIE, SCoJeC VICE CHAIR, LISTENS WHILE A PUPIL OF ST THOMAS'S EXPLAINS THE EXHIBITION, CATRINA KIRKLAND, HET EDUCATOR LOOKING ON.

BELOW: JOHN SWINNEY PRESENTS THE AWARD TO ST THOMAS'S PUPILS.



Vision Schools

Vision Schools – an accreditation programme for excellence in Holocaust education – was launched on Anne Frank's birthday at St Thomas's RC Primary School in Riddrie. John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Secretary for Education and Skills, presented awards to the first three schools to gain accreditation, St Thomas's itself, Bishopbriggs Academy (which hosted this year's national Holocaust Memorial Day event), and Grove Academy in Dundee.

Speaking to an audience of teachers, pupils, and invited guests, Dr Paula Cowan, Reader in Education at the University of the West of Scotland and Director of the Vision Schools programme, described the launch as *"the culmination of over two years of collaborative work with our partners, the Holocaust Educational Trust and teachers from the pilot schools."* This was followed by a moving presentation from the St Thomas's Primary 7 pupils that included the diary of Anne Frank and the impact of other genocides.

John Swinney said: *"I am delighted to be part of the launch of the Vision Schools Programme ... We must never forget those who suffered and died during the Holocaust and more recent genocides, and those who continue to suffer. We should never be complacent regarding the dangers of prejudice, intolerance, discrimination, and hatred."*

SCoJeC AGM

SCoJeC's AGM was addressed by Deputy Chief Constable Johnny Gwynne of Police Scotland, before going on to review the incredible amount we achieve with very little resources.

DCC Gwynne, whose responsibilities include public protection and criminal justice, as well as major and organised crime and counter terrorism, described how the police responded to recent terrorist incidents, including enhanced protection for the General Election and that week's Scotland-England match. Much of the discussion focused on the importance of victims and witnesses explaining the significance of aspects of an incident that might seem innocuous to police and prosecutors, since they may not be aware of the allusions or the context.

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski said he was concerned that the unprecedented sense of alienation and vulnerability reported in our 2015 report on *What's Changed about Being Jewish in Scotland* has not subsided, and that official silence contributed to this. Because SCoJeC has to devote so much of our limited resources to dealing with this, we are less able to respond to the many other aspects of public policy that have the capacity to affect Jewish life in Scotland.

SCoJeC Chair Micheline Brannan thanked all SCoJeC's staff and volunteers for their very hard work, which had enabled us to reach ever more isolated people throughout Scotland, and the communal trusts, especially the Netherlee and Clarkston Trust, the Glasgow Jewish Community Trust, and the Pears Foundation, who had made all this possible.

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion led by Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland, about priorities for interfaith activities.



L-R: FIONA BRODIE (VICE-CHAIR), DANIELLE BETT (ISRAELIS IN SCOTLAND), MICHELINE BRANNAN (CHAIR), DCC JOHNNY GWYNNE, NICOLA LIVINGSTON (GLASGOW JEWISH REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL), EPHRAIM BOROWSKI (DIRECTOR)

The following office-bearers were elected:
Chair: Micheline Brannan
Vice-Chair: Fiona Brodie
Secretary: Simon Dover

To read the AGM reports and annual accounts see:
www.scojec.org/annual-reports.html



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Help us to help your community!

SCoJeC REALLY NEEDS YOUR GENEROUS ASSISTANCE TO CONTINUE ALL OUR WORK.
 DONATE AT <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/scojec>

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