



November – December 2019

Let us know what you think of Etrog or send us your contributions by contacting the newsletter team at newsletter@eljic.org

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**Sukkat
Shalom**
Edinburgh Liberal
Jewish Community

**Scottish Charity
Number**

SCO 35678

Diary

On your mobile: check the diary on our [web page](#) rather than here.

November 2019			
Fri 1	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St. Giles
Fri 8	7:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service	St Marks Unitarian Church
Fri 15	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St. Giles
Sat 23	11:00 am	Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon, and baby naming for Raffi Cooper, followed by kiddush and lunch. Regulars please bring something to share (no meat or seafood). Visitors, please let us know you are coming.	St Marks Unitarian Church
Sat 23	3:00 pm	Tea and Talmud continuing the Melchizedek Mystery	St Marks Unitarian Church
Sun 24	4:00 pm	Discussion Group cancelled because of Limmud	
Fri 29	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St. Giles
December 2019			
Fri 6	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St. Giles
Fri 13	7:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon.	St Marks Unitarian Church
Sat 14	1:30 pm	Tea and Talmud	St Marks Unitarian Church
Sun 15	4:00 pm	Discussion Group	St Marks Unitarian Church
Fri 20	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St. Giles
Sun 22	4:00 pm	Chanukah — first night candle lighting	Marchmont St. Giles
Sat 28	11:00 am	Shabbat service	St Marks Unitarian Church

Word from the Chair

In my last Word from the Chair, I didn't mention anything about the High Holydays. Therefore, somewhat after the event, I'm going to do so. The thing that prompted me to say something was actually an article that I read about baldness. It was written a few months ago by Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Liberal Judaism's Director of Strategy and Partnerships, and I thought at the time that there must be something in it for a future Word for the Chair I was right.



The article starts off by telling us that Korach means 'bald one', and if you remember Korach led a rebellion against Moses. It then goes on to say that there were only three occasions when the Israelites were permitted to shave their heads, and concludes by suggesting that perhaps shaving one's head is an indication of rebelliousness and standing outside of conventions. So, being bald and cutting one's hair short doesn't seem to have a great deal going for it – and given my follicle challenges that's why I was drawn to the article in the first place.

So how does this link into the High Holydays, and our period of reflection particularly over Yom Kippur? Well, while I suspect there have been times when most of us have thought things like "if only I was a bit taller", not having much hair isn't something that has particularly worried me. In this case, I've been quite happy to accept myself as I am. Realistically though, there's not much I could do about it anyway, so I think it's probably a good thing that I am OK with it. But in the period of reflection over Yom Kippur - or at least the occasional times when I do find myself "in the groove" as it were – it can be tempting to accept myself as I am but where I really know that change is possible. There are times when I read some of the prayers in the prayer book and I can start thinking that maybe they don't apply to me, when I really should know better. And I think that this relates to what is arguably one of the keys to Yom Kippur – accepting who you are on the one hand but also accepting that there are ways where you can change for the better on the other.

There's a theme I often come back to with Liberal Judaism, which is that it can be really difficult to have to decide for yourself what you believe, but not quite as difficult having to believe something that you're told to believe. In the case of Yom Kippur though, I would suggest that all strands of Judaism have the same approach. It's all about each of us looking inside ourselves and making the right choices and decisions that we know we should make.

I hope you all did have some good periods of reflection over the High Holydays. It's often not easy to "get in the groove" – as I was writing this piece late one evening it occurred to me that it's a bit like going to sleep; you never quite know when it's going to happen, and it's only afterwards that you realise it did happen. While I do think it is quite a good analogy though, I'd maybe better stop comparing praying and sleeping. Instead, having not mentioned the High

Holydays in advance last time, I'll conclude by wishing you a happy Chanukah, since my next Word from the Chair will be after we've celebrated Chanukah.

Nick Silk

A Queer Mitzvah 9 November

Becoming Electra: A Queer Mitzvah

Saturday 9 November 7.30pm at The Studio, 22 Potterrow, EH8 9BL

A one-woman drag show about a queer Jewish girl trying to find her voice. Electra struggles to reconcile conflicting elements of her identity: can she tell her queer friends she's Jewish and her Jewish friends that she's queer? You're invited to the party she's throwing to find out.

Professor Joe Goldblatt's son, Sam Goldblatt, is offering the Edinburgh Jewish community the following Jewish-themed show at a discount. It will include an exclusive talk back with the artist after the show.

Use code LOVE12 to get £12 tickets (£4 off)

Virtual JCC: Jewish Responses to Assisted Dying

Thu, 14 November, 7:30pm – 9:15pm

52 Granby Road, EH16 5PZ. Booking free but essential ([map](#))

Discussion led by Dr. Sheri Mila Gerson

Refreshments will be served. **To reserve a place, please email jansell@fastmail.fm or phone Jane on 0131 667 6687**

Jewish Book Group

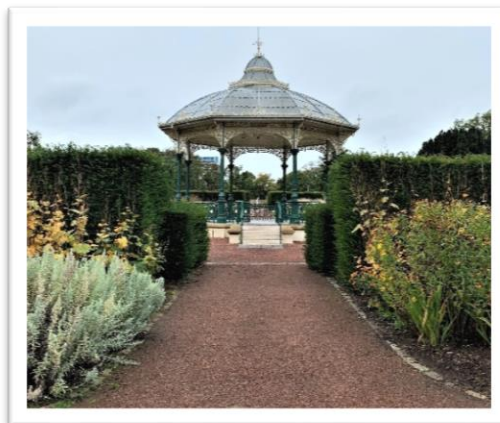
This group meets in members' houses at 8pm on the second Monday of each month. Everyone has an opportunity to select the book, usually of Jewish interest. It has been in abeyance for a few months but we will be starting up again in December. The book for 9th December will be:

Homesick by Eshkol Nevo.or anything else written by Eshkol Nevo. If you would like to join, please reply to this message or leave a voice mail on the community phone and your details will be sent to the organisers.

Green Mitzvah Day: Sunday 17 November

at Saughton Park

This is a great opportunity for us to garden at recently restored Saughton Park along with Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and Edinburgh University Jewish Society. Saughton Park, originally part of the ancient Holyrood Estate has had a fascinating history, including having been turned into onion beds during the Second World War. With Heritage Lottery funding, much of its former glory (with a modern twist) has been restored and last year it reopened to the public. With a bit of luck, the beautiful new café may be open in time for Mitzvah Day.



We'll be working under supervision on the community

garden used by various diverse groups. Come and join us there from 10 am to 1 pm.

The park address is 6 Ford's Rd, Edinburgh EH11 3HP. Ford Road is a small street round the side of the park, but the main entrance is on the corner of Balgreen Road and Gorgie Road ([see map](#)). Details of exactly where in the park we should meet will be available nearer the time.

Any questions, just contact Nick Silk, chair@eljc.org

Sukkat Shalom Interfaith Syrian Supper Club

: Tuesday 26 November 2019 7– 10pm

As they say in Syria: ***“the food will be so delicious you’ll eat your fingers by mistake”.***

Here’s your chance to come along and watch (and, if you want, help) professional Syrian chefs from Edinburgh’s refugee community prepare a wonderful meal that we can then all enjoy together. The dishes will not include meat or seafood.



To find out more and BOOK YOUR TICKET (£30 per head) follow this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sukkat-shalom-syrian-supper-club-tickets-69716187995>

The required password is **sukkatshalom**

Limmud Scotland Sunday 24 November a festival of learning

A day of celebration and Jewish learning with a dazzling array of sessions, including an all-day music strand, for people of all ages and interests. There will be a dedicated, well-equipped and relaxing child and family-friendly space and a delicious lunch.



Watch out for other related events over the weekend, including a Saturday night concert and Klezmer Ceilidh as well as communal Shabbat lunches at Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and at Sukkat Shalom.

Consult <https://limmud.org/event/limmud-scotland> for the full programme.

BOOK NOW

<https://events.limmud.org/limmud-scotland-2019/apply/>

or phone the Limmud office on 0131 1151 620

Modern Hebrew classes

Are you interested in improving your reading, understanding and speaking of modern Hebrew. Eli Atad teaches study groups on a Sunday morning, usually in the Sukkah of Salisbury Road Synagogue (it has a roof cover when it is not Sukkot). If you are interested in joining, please email Eli at .ettedgui@gmail.com.

UK Jewish Film Festival in Edinburgh and Glasgow

A fantastic opportunity to get your fill of Jewish films.

See <https://ukjewishfilm.org/scotland/>

Edinburgh at the Filmhouse

Sunday 10 November 3pm: It Must Schwing: The Blue Note Story

Tuesday 12 November 6pm: My Polish Honeymoon

Sunday 17 November 3pm: God of the Piano

You can book the films and find out more about them here:

<https://www.filmhousecinema.com>



Glasgow at the Glasgow Film Theatre and at the CCA Glasgow

Sunday 10 November 5pm: Solomon and Gaenor Glasgow Film Theatre

Wednesday 13 November 8.25pm: The Birdcatcher Glasgow Film Theatre

Sunday 17 November 2.30pm: Jewish Britain on Film 2.30pm CCA Glasgow

Tuesday 19 November 7.30pm: The Unorthodox CCA Glasgow

Wednesday 20 November 6.00pm: Leona Glasgow Film Theatre

Thursday 21 November 7.00pm: Echo CCA Glasgow

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

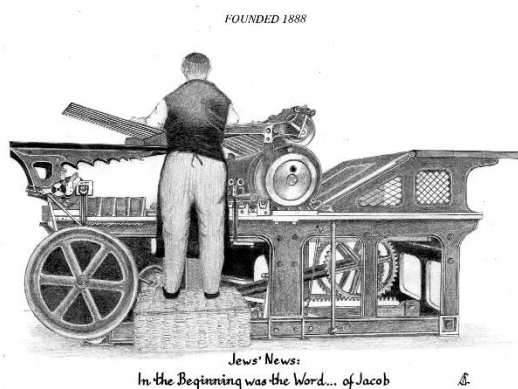
Two meetings both at Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, 4a Salisbury Rd, Edinburgh EH16 5AB, UK ([map](#))

Sunday 10th November 8pm

Geoffrey Cantor, 'The Anglo-Jewish Press of the 1840s: The Voice of Jacob and two Jewish Chronicles'

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

Much of our news about events in the Jewish world is gleaned from reading such publications as the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish Telegraph* (including their online versions). Yet the Anglo-Jewish periodical press was only established in the early 1840s with the founding of the *Voice of Jacob* (f. 1841) and two periodicals with the title *Jewish Chronicle* (f. 1841 & 1844). Why were these periodicals founded? Who produced them? Who read them? And why did two of these publications fail? In this talk Professor Geoffrey Cantor will set the early history of the Anglo-Jewish press in the context of the frenetic world of London publishing during the 1840s, which included such innovative titles as *Punch* and *The Economist*.



*The Anglo-Jewish Press of the 1840s:
The Voice of Jacob and two Jewish Chronicles*

*Geoffrey Cantor
Emeritus Professor, University of Leeds
on Sunday 10th November at 8.00pm*

www.ejls.org

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Geoffrey Cantor is Professor Emeritus of the History

of Science at the University of Leeds and an Honorary Senior Research Associate in the Department of Science & Technology Studies at UCL. His research has focused on nineteenth century British science and especially on the inter-relations between science and religion. In retirement he works part-time as a mental health mentor to university students in London.

Sunday 1st December 9pm

Edna Fernandes, 'The Last Jews of Kerala: the incredible story of India's oldest Jewish Diaspora'

Ten years after its publication, author Edna Fernandes discusses her book *The Last Jews of Kerala* and how this moving story has resonated with Jews and non-Jews alike from around the world. How does it feel to know you are the last of your community after two thousand years of history? To know there will be no more weddings, only funerals? In 70 CE, the Roman capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple scattered a wave of Jewish immigrants across the globe like the seeds of last hope. One group settled in Kerala, southern India. Feted as foreign kings by Kerala's rajahs and lavished with land, privilege and autonomy, they lived in peace for many years until division set in. By the end of the twenty first century, despite finding acceptance in this Indian paradise, despite every advantage, they found themselves on the brink of demise. This is the story of the Black and White Jews of Kerala and their centuries-long feud – a community that chose to bury itself instead of burying their differences to survive. In the end it was not persecution, pestilence or war that destroyed them, but one another. Theirs is the story of a Jewish apartheid, a civil rights

movement and finally a love story between a Black Jew and a White Jewess who smashed apart the old divide.

Edna Fernandes is a British Indian writer. Her first book *Holy Warriors* was a finalist for the UK's 2008 Index on Censorship TR Five prize and nominated for India's Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Best Book Award. Her second book, *The Last Jews of Kerala*, was a finalist for India's 2009 Vodafone Crossword Literary prize and named a UK Sunday Times Travel Book of the Year. In 2018, Edna released her third book, *The Hollow Kingdom: ISIS and the Cult of Jihad*. Aimed at the general reader wishing to understand the most dangerous terrorist group in modern history, the book deconstructs Islamic State's ideology, funding and recruitment structure.

High Holydays

This year we welcomed Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, Emeritus Rabbi of Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue and President of Liberal Judaism to lead our Rosh Hashanah services, alongside Sharon Goldstein who led our singing so supportively. Rabbi Andrew sent us the sermon he gave on his return to London, titled 'Tashlich in Edinburgh.' which we have included [here](#).

For Yom Kippur and also for Sukkot and for Simchat Torah we were very fortunate to have our Rabbi Mark Solomon to lead services. Some pictures of associated activities are below. We don't take pictures at services, so it is a shame we can't show you Mark leading the dancing on Simchat Torah. We had a big crowd, but if you missed it this year there is always 5781.

Rosh Hashanah Lunch: Before, during and after



Sukkah building in the rain



The finished item



And challot for Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot and Simchat Torah



Rabbi Andrew Goldstein's Tashlich in Edinburgh
5780

Rosh Hashanah found Sharon and me back in Edinburgh with a good congregation in the historic Unitarian Church, though Church seems a bit of a misnomer as the congregation is so Unitarian that there are no Christian symbols anywhere, nor could I find much mention of Jesus in the hymn books on the pews. It is a wonderful warm building nearly two hundred years old that feels as if it was meant to be a synagogue. The congregation of members plus visiting tourists



and students, mostly American, responded well to the service and once again Sharon led the singing all through.

And then after Kiddush and an ample lunch made by the members, the stalwarts made their way to the most picturesque Water of Leith to do Tashlich. The venue a narrow river, flowing vigorously due to the recent rain. In a steep wooded valley, right in the centre of the city, but as we stood there, it could have been a distant isolated glen in the Highlands. Next time you go to Edinburgh and have maxed out on the Fringe I do recommend a walk down the Water of Leith as a welcome escape from the frenetic activity in the theatres and pubs in the festival above.

Tashlich...I'm not sure I had ever heard of it until I got to the Leo Baeck College. No way would it have been considered in the Birmingham Liberal Synagogue of the 1950's and 60's. And I don't think that in those days the so-called Orthodox congregation of Singer's Hill wandered down to the River Rea or local canal to perform the ritual. And I note the paragraph in Rabbi John Rayner's book 'The Practices of Liberal Judaism,' written in 1957: "Several superstitious customs have accreted to the observance of High Holydays in Jewish tradition. One of them is the ceremony of Tashlich, the symbolic casting of sins into a stream of water. These customs, needless to say, have no place in Liberal Judaism." He continued, "In these and other ways Liberal Judaism has purified the observance of the High Holydays and striven to increase the spiritual impact upon the modern Jew".

I will be honest and say that two years ago when first taking Edinburgh's Rosh Hashanah services, and told that Tashlich was to be done, I felt a little uneasy. Never in my life had I carried out this archaic ritual, but if the Scots required it, who was I to balk at a new experience? Yes I did think, should I really be involved in this superstitious nonsense, is this an LJ step too far? But I went along with it. The water reminded me of thoughts and objections to the mikveh...the requirement that proselytes must immerse themselves in a ritual bath as part of the conversion procedure. The Reform Movement in the 1980's was instituting the requirement, and this only made me thank God I was a true Liberal Jew. I felt they were only playing games, pretending to be fully kosher so that the Orthodox would begin accepting them and their conversions. Of course it made no difference to the Orthodox rejection and, for a while, made it seem that any merger between Liberal and Reform was completely impossible.

This week I was asked to give lecture as part of Liberal Judaism's education hub at the Montagu Centre. My task "The rituals and customs of the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." I started with Tashlich but then described other ceremonies: Tzom Gedaliah...the Fast of Gedaliah which was on the 3rd Tishri, Kaparot and Flogging. I must say I trivialised my talk with the hoary joke about the rabbi asking a Jew if he fasted on the Tzom Gedaliah. "No", said the man, "why should I fast on Tzom Gedaliah if I've never fasted on Yom Kippur!" However I must say that, though my reading didn't lead me to, in future, trying to revive the custom of fasting on the 3rd Tishri, I did find the story, in fact the history behind its origin, fascinating. A real example of the damage done to a nation when zealots take the hard line, assassinate a leader they disagreed with, leaving the country in a worse mess than before. Look it up on Google or a more ancient source, Jeremiah chapters 40 and 41 or Second Kings chapter 25.

Of course the custom of afflicting one's soul or rather body with a good flogging before Yom Kippur, a sad custom, probably adopted from the medieval church, can find nothing to recommend it unless you are a masochist or sadist. And kapparot, the swirling of a white chicken over your head and declaring "this is my kapparot, my atonement etc" and then having the bird slaughtered and at least given to the poor. Difficult to believe but this other medieval custom seems to making a comeback in the haredi community...never I pray in the Liberal or Reform movements, who anyway are increasingly vegan, so hardly likely into swirling a hen or a rooster for spiritual renewal.

But back to the waters. Firstly the mikveh. Though, decades ago, I was vehemently opposed to its re-introduction for conversion, arguments including its connection with menstruation, baptisms, superstition coming to mind. I must say that as Chair of the Liberal and European Batei Din over the past decade I have come to understand the positive spiritual feeling the waters of the mikveh invariably have given those who immersed at that significant moment in their lives. Viewed as a physical experience at a time of great intellectual and theoretical change has had a significant effect and created a memorable moment.

But Tashlich ? As I stood by the turbulent stream on Monday, surrounded by people of all ages who, I suspect, were also inwardly questioning the rational meaning of the performance we were about to do, the moment did take on significant meaning. Maybe it was the words we spoke, the incredible beauty of the location, its isolation from the modern world above us, or maybe the just being together, relaxing after a morning of repeated prayers, whatever, it all seemed to take on a magic of its own.

And so I am converted. We are Liberal Jews but also Progressive Jews, we are not Orthodox Jews, stuck in the same moment in history. We progress by re-evaluating, exploring afresh, seeking new ways...this is surely the whole meaning and purpose of the High Holydays, after all in my youth, we had not rediscovered Havdalah, Tikkun Leyl Shavuot or Selichot; and it was John Rayner who brought them back into Liberal Judaism. May he be remembered for a blessing...a true Progressive Jew.

Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein

Hand in Hand

This year, Hand in Hand is one of our Kol Nidrei charities ([see below](#)), suggested by Rabbi Mark Solomon following his visit to a Hand in Hand school on a Council of Christians and Jews Israel-Palestine Study Tour earlier this year. Coincidentally, we were delighted to welcome the Eidelman family from Jerusalem (among the 100+ visitors with us over the High Holydays) whose three children attend the Max Rayne Hand in Hand school in Jerusalem. Hearing about and discussing their experiences made a fascinating Yom Kippur study session.



‘When we named our children, we were naming them for a world where people would speak together and understand each other in both languages; a world in which they would be able to roam the Middle East.’

This is how Yuli and Ronen introduced their children, Nur (15), Amir (7) and Ranya (3) whose names are both Arabic and Hebrew.

‘Hand in Hand: Centre for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel’ is a network of integrated, bilingual schools for Jewish and Arab children founded in 2007. There are now eight such schools, with demand exceeding supply. Hand in Hand schools exist to try to counteract the separation of Arabs and Jews in daily life and particularly in the highly segregated public education system, with separate schools for Jews and Arabs. While children may attend either type of school and have the right to study in their own language, only a few Arab children attend Jewish schools, where the primary language of instruction is Hebrew, and almost no Jewish children attend Arab schools, where the primary language of instruction is Arabic. As Yuli and Ronen observed ‘most Jewish kids will live their whole lives without knowing an Arab other than as an enemy or a ‘lower’ person’.

Hand in Hand schools are part of the Israeli public education system. They offer kindergarten to twelfth-grade education, follow a core curriculum that’s common to all schools and get core funding from the state. Like all schools, they can choose 25% of their curriculum. Until fourth or fifth grade, students share all classes, with each class taught by two teachers, one Arabic speaking, one Hebrew speaking. After this point, as well as a continued shared curriculum for some subjects, separate curricula have been developed to do justice to the history, values and culture of all students, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, and include the interestingly termed ‘bi-narrative’ history teaching.

Closing the school for everyone’s religious festivals is a challenge, but is achieved by shortening some of the longer Jewish festivals and by having parent-run camps during

festival holidays for children whose parents are at work. Nur described how Nakba Day (Day of the Catastrophe) and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Day of Independence) have come over a period of time to be commemorated together in two jointly attended services, Jewish students wearing white shirts, Arab students black and a mixed heritage student wearing grey.

In 2014, the school suffered a serious racially motivated arson attack perpetrated by Jewish youths who also defaced the building with anti-Arab slogans. But the response from the local neighbourhood and other local schools was one of shock, solidarity and practical support that in the end raised the profile of the school and strengthened it. Remarkably, in response to what had occurred, the school resisted the temptation to make the school into a fortress, instead, in accordance with its founding principles of inclusion and welcome, leaving it open to the city.

Would we be brave enough to do the same?

Sue Bard

Kol Nidrei Appeal

If you haven't yet donated, please think about doing so now, before we close the Appeal. Our Kol Nidrei Appeal is one of the ways in which we try to recognise our various responsibilities for Tikkun Olam – that is, for the wider world. Each year we choose to support a range of charities that between them represent local, international, Jewish and non-Jewish causes. We try always to support smaller charities with low administration costs where a relatively small amount of money can go a long way. Every penny contributed goes to our designated charities. Our chosen charities this year are:

PF Counselling Service <https://www.pfcounselling.org.uk/>

A local charity giving counselling and psychotherapy for people facing the difficulties of everyday life. They provide a professional service to people in need, regardless of ability to pay, with clients contributing what they can afford.

Leket Israel <https://www.leket.org/en/>

Leket Israel, the National Food Bank, is the leading food rescue organization in Israel. Unique among all other organizations that serve the poor in Israel and food banks worldwide, Leket Israel's sole focus is rescuing healthy, surplus food and delivering it to those in need through partner non-profit organizations.

Hand in Hand schools <https://handinhandk12.org/about/>

Hand in Hand is building inclusion and equality between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel through a growing network of bilingual, integrated schools and communities. We were lucky at Yom Kippur to be able to meet a family whose children go to the Hand in Hand school in Jerusalem; you can read about [in this Etrog](#).

World Jewish Relief <https://www.worldjewishrelief.org/>

The British Jewish community's international humanitarian agency. This year they are asking synagogues to support a vital project that changes the lives of the most vulnerable older Jews across Eastern Europe. Many of them are impoverished and living in dilapidated and dangerous homes without the means to pay for repairs.

You can donate in any of the following ways – please reference cheques or payments as KN Appeal

Cheque payable to 'Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh' and sent to: The Treasurer, ELJC, c/o 10, Ainslie Place, Edinburgh EH3 6AS.

Bank transfer Sukkat Shalom, sort code 30130, account 00974077

PayPal via our website <https://www.eljc.org/> to use PayPal or go to our PayPal page directly

Nisa Nashim: Muslim–Jewish Women's Group

I have been approached to find out if there would be any interest among the women in our community to assist in the establishment of a Nisa Nashim group in Edinburgh. Laura Marks, OBE, is the Co-Chair of Nisa Nashim. There is already a Glasgow Branch.

“Nisa-Nashim is bringing the Jewish and Muslim communities in Britain closer together by setting up groups of women who build personal friendships, grow as leaders and benefit wider society through our programmes and initiatives. Alongside our grassroots activities, we engage with government bodies, policymakers and others on how to promote social cohesion, and we campaign on issues that affect our members – raising awareness of Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and women’s role in society.”

“Nisa-Nashim has established 24 groups of women across the UK, each co-chaired by a Jewish and Muslim woman, 90% of whom we introduce to one another. Each group is committed to building bridges and to helping tackle the local and broader issues of today. Groups are based on location and/or special interest, with an average of 30 members.”

(extracts from the website <https://www.nisanashim.org>)

Nisa Nashim would be glad to support the establishment of an Edinburgh Group and would look to start with a Muslim woman and a Jewish woman at least.

If such a group would be of interest to any women in our community, I would be pleased to make initial contact with the Muslim women whom I know already through our own Interfaith connections. Some of you may know them yourselves if you have also been involved in Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) or the Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group (EWIG).

I am not in a position to be the main or lead person in such a group, but I am sure there must be some women in our community who would be willing to be involved in this initiative.

If there is anyone who would be interested, please make initial contact with me – <mailto:rivkah1943@gmail.com> – and I will make further enquiries.

Rebekah Gronowski

Interfaith Matters



On 19th September I was one of maybe 10 or so members of different faith communities who read short passages from our respective traditions at the **Edinburgh Interfaith Association's peace service**. The service was held at the Annandale mosque and while I had been past the mosque on peace walks, I had never been inside before. The peace service has become an annual event and it is good that we continue to participate in it.

This year's interfaith week is from 10th – 17th November. The theme for the week is "eat, share, love". At the moment much of the programme is still being confirmed, but keep an eye on the EIFA website (edinburghinterfaith.com) for details.

The next Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group meeting is part of Interfaith Week and will be on **Wednesday 13 November, 6.30pm at the Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Street EH1 2JL** This event provides an opportunity for local women to get together and promote an understanding and cooperation between diverse religious communities. There will be the opportunity to share food and recipes, cooking, storytelling and other creative endeavours. The meeting is open to women and children. There will be a delicious vegetarian finger buffet with traditional home-made Indian sweets and fruits. Tea and coffee will be provided. Please be in touch with Nila for more information. You can reach her at: 0775 451 5488

Nick Silk

Swimming for Hana – again

Last year I wrote about my participation in the Hana Greenfield Memorial Swim that took place in Kolin, in the Czech Republic ([see 'Swimming for Hana in Etrog 16 Nov, Dec 2018'](#)). The purpose of the swim was both to commemorate Hana Greenfield, one of the few Jews of Kolin to survive the Holocaust and to re-introduce the pleasures of swimming in the lovely River Labe/Elbe that flows through the town. Everyone used to swim in the river but a combination of pollution and Nazi prohibitions ended this innocent pleasure 80 years ago. The swimming event had come about through the relationship that Rabbi Andrew Goldstein and other members of Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS) instigated between their own community and Kolin, its catalyst being the Kolin Torah Scroll entrusted to NPLS in 1971.



Last year, Kolin's young and dynamic mayor announced that the swim would become an annual event. This year, he's a member of parliament and no longer mayor, but his successor has been as good as his predecessor's word. Numbers were up to 68, with participants from Kolin Swimming Club and Prague Jewish Sports Club as well as 'ordinary' Kolin swimmers, plus our group, which again included Hana's daughter, granddaughters and great

grandchildren from Israel (seen here) as well as friends from Serbia, Leipzig, London and Edinburgh.



The ex-mayor appeared on the day in his swimming trunks to take part. Also in swimming gear was the chazan (and opera singer) of one of Prague's several Progressive Communities, Hannah Maxova, who sang a beautiful shehecheyanu – a blessing for a special occasion - on the bank of the river, before stripping off her music notation printed kimono, and diving in. Hannah had also led the Kabbalat Shabbat service we'd attended in Prague two days earlier, specially organised for our group in the 16th Century Jewish Town Hall, a historic building that now houses the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, including the Jewish Community in Prague and the Czech Union of Jewish Youth. We were in the Beth Din room, gazed down on by Emperor Franz Joseph 1 of Austria, his portrait hanging there by virtue

of his granting Jews full equal rights in 1867. In appreciation, prayers and songs about him were printed in Jewish prayer books of the time.

Returning to Kolin this year was a different but equally emotional experience for me. Last year's visit was marked by novelty; this year's by a sense of growing familiarity and connection – in particular with the destroyed Jewish community of Kolin whose individual members I began to get to know by following the Kolin Stolperstein Trail. Stolpersteine (literal translation 'stumbling stones') were invented by German artist Gunter Demnig. They are concrete blocks with a brass plate on the exposed top side on which the name and dates of birth, deportation and death of victims of Nazi extermination or persecution are engraved. The Stolpersteine are then placed outside those people's former homes or work-places, deliberately set slightly proud of the surrounding surface – hence 'stumbling stones'. The very first Stolpersteine were installed in Cologne in 1992; now there are around 60,000 in 22 countries of formerly Nazi controlled Europe.



In 2008, the first Stolpersteine were made in Kolin, unusually by students, technicians and teachers from the Kolin College of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Construction Trades following a visit to their German partner college in Oranienburg. Both colleges were involved in projects on World War Two, including study of the Holocaust. Most of these original 11 Stolpersteine were installed in the town square, and seeing them there on one of their group visits, members of NPLS decided to create a Town Trail of Stolpersteine, incorporating the existing stones, to form a trail around the town centre and former ghetto area. There is now a possibly unique Stolpersteine trail of 64 memorials linking the homes and work-places of the

Jews of one town. The Trail has an accompanying very well-researched guide, with detailed information about almost every individual/family commemorated. Taking my time to read and absorb information and connect the individuals to my growing understanding of context and history, those people came to life for me, leaving for work, playing in the street, hanging out of windows, hurrying to the shops, going to the synagogue.

They came with me when I followed their footsteps on what for most of them was their last journey through Kolin, a forced march to a school near the small train station on the edge of the town for 're-registration'. Here they spent three days and nights suffering bullying and intimidation, brutal interrogations, beatings and theft of house keys, possessions and cash. And they came with me when I walked from the school building to the now overgrown and neglected train station, from which most were deported to Terezin.

The Kolin and neighbourhood deportations, 2202 people in total, took place on 4, 9 and 13 June 1942. Some of those deported on 9 June had even less chance of survival than the others. On 4 June, Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Nazi security police, Acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia and major architect of the Final Solution died of wounds sustained from an assassination attempt in Prague. This was Operation Anthropoid, whose Czech members trained in Arisaig, Scotland, where today there's a memorial to them. The immediate and massive reprisal killings of Czechs included a train carriage of people from the 9 June Kolin deportation who never reached Terezin, but were deported from Prague on transport AaH – Attentat auf Heydrich (Assassination of Heydrich), going directly to Belzec extermination camp in South East Poland. Among them was one of Hana Greenfield's close teenage friends.

It is impossible to get your head round the Holocaust. The more you know and the more you think about it the more incomprehensible and overwhelming it can become. It has helped me to be able to get to know one quite small and 'ordinary' place, to have a concept of what life was like there both before and during Nazi occupation and to have a sense of the people who suffered such an extreme fate as individual human beings rather than as undifferentiated victims. It is my privilege also to know something of what life is like there now, to see the fruits of the long term, patient and honest work that the people of Kolin, the NPLS community and others have done together to keep the memory of the vibrant Jewish community that once lived there alive in a way that is woven into the ordinary life of the town and defies the context of such tragedy to give inspiration and hope.

Sue Bard

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