

# Welwyn Garden City Hebrew Congregation 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Consecration of the Synagogue

13<sup>th</sup> November 2016    12<sup>th</sup> Cheshvan 5777



## History of the Community

### January 1939

The Community was founded when two groups of Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany arrived in Welwyn Garden City. One group was rescued from concentration camps in Germany by Wim Van Leer under the auspices of a Committee of the Society of Friends led by Captain R. L. Reiss. This group was housed at the Applecroft Hostel set up by a committee chaired by Captain Reiss following discussion between Edgar Reissner (a Jewish refugee and student at Kings College, London), Wim Van Leer and Geoffrey Edwards (a Quaker) about the need to establish a hostel for Jewish refugees. The other group was from the Sherrards Refugee Centre whose Warden was Reverend Dr. Daniel Lewin.



### April 1939

Reverend Dr. Lewin, undertook the organisation of Religious Services.

### October 1939

Welwyn Garden City was declared a "Reception Area", initiating an influx of Jewish people from London.

### November 1939

A meeting was held at Lawrence Hall when the Welwyn Garden City Jewish Community was formally established under the Chairmanship of H. Spiers.

### 1939 - 1945

Services and religion classes were held in various venues, including Handside Nursery School, Applecroft, Parkway and Sherrardswood Schools, the Free Church, St. Francis Hall and, most frequently, the Friends' Meeting House.

### 1947

Reverend Jakob Kaufmann fled Halle in 1939 with his wife Bertha and spent the war years in Shanghai before arriving in Welwyn Garden City where he became Minister of the Community.

### 1949

A Building Fund was established, administered by Mr. Simon Lichtigfeld and Dr. Kurt Richard. One of its first contributors was Mrs. L. Kleeman, in memory of her husband, Max, who for a number of years was Honorary Treasurer of the Community. The main classroom in the Synagogue is named the Max Kleeman Room in his honour.

### 1950

Despite the membership of the Community dropping from a wartime level of 100 families to only 30, negotiations for a building site were started by Dr. Alan Cohen, Werner Lash and Louis Simmonds.

### 1953

The purchase of the present site of the synagogue was completed. Initially the United Synagogue turned down the Community's request for a building loan on the grounds that it was not a viable community. Eventually, a loan was advanced.



**1954**

A local architect, Chas. W. Fox, of 22 Parkway, was appointed.

**March 1955**

Building operations commenced.

**29 May 1955**

The foundation stone was laid by Simon Lichtigfeld, the Service being conducted by Rabbi Harry Rabinowicz assisted by our Reader, Reverend Jakob Kaufmann.



**3 September 1955**

The Synagogue was opened for the first service by Harry Rosenbaum.

**11 September 1955**

The first marriage was solemnized. The groom was Leslie Lockstone and the bride Doreen Jacobs.

**17 September 1955**

Corresponding to the 1<sup>st</sup> Tishri 5716, the first High Holyday Services were celebrated by the Community in its own home.

**1 January 1956**



The Synagogue was formally opened by the Chairman of the W.G.C. Hebrew Congregation, Werner Lash, and consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, the Very Reverend Rabbi Dr. Israel Brodie, in the presence of His Excellency Colonel Jose Arturo Castellanos, Minister-Plenipotentiary and Envoy-Extraordinary of the Republic of El Salvador. Afternoon Service was recited by Reverend Jakob Kaufmann. In addition to the Chief Rabbi, speakers were Richard L. Reiss Esq.; Simon Lichtigfeld, Senior Warden of the Community; Ray Gosling Esq., Chairman of the W.G.C. Development Corporation; A. Wingate Esq., Chairman of the United Synagogue Building Committee; Barnett Janner MP, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews; and Albert E. Luddington Esq., Chairman of W.G.C. Urban District Council.

### 7 January 1956

The first Bar Mitzvah in the Synagogue took place when Michael Feldman celebrated his religious majority.

### 18 March 1956

The first marriage following the consecration of the Synagogue was solemnized. The groom was Günter Tuch and the bride Ruth Goldmark.



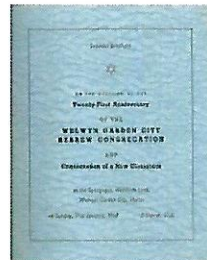
### 17 November 1957

A service of consecration for the stained glass windows in memory of the victims of Nazi persecution was conducted by Dayan Meyer Steinberg. Speakers were B. B. Lieberman, Vice President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews; Councillor Stephen R. Collingwood, Chairman of W.G.C. Urban District Council; The Rt. Hon. Lord Strabolgi; Werner Rosenstock Esq., Secretary of the Association of Jewish Refugees; Richard L. Reiss Esq.; Ray Gosling, Chairman of the W.G.C. Development Corporation; and Dr. Kurt Richard, Founder Chairman of W.G.C. Jewish Community.



### 31 January 1960

In order to maintain the standard of religious education, it became necessary to provide additional teaching space and with the encouragement and leadership of Louis Simmonds, a further classroom was added. To mark the Community's appreciation of the untiring support of one of its founder members, it was named the Louis Simmonds Room. The consecration of the classroom coincided with the 21st Anniversary of the Community, both events being celebrated on the same day.



### 18 May 1960

The first Bat Mitzvot in the Synagogue took place when Sheila Franks, Hilary Lent, Marion Lewis and Ruth Grant celebrated their religious majorities.

### 11 October 1964

The Silver Jubilee of the Community was marked by a Service held in the Synagogue. Among those present were Dayan Meyer Steinberg, Mr. Mark Kleiner of the United Synagogue and Mr. Shimon Avizemer, the Israeli Consul. Messages of congratulation were received from the Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Rabbi Dr. Israel Brodie; the Chairman of the Council, Councillor. Mr. A. E. Page; the Chairman of the Development Corporation, Mr. C. Gordon Maynard; and Sir Keith Joseph, Bart.

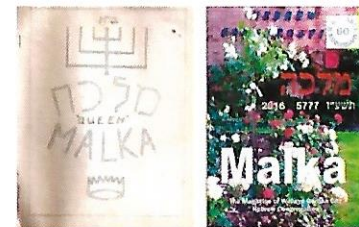


### 1968

The retirement of Reverend Jakob Kaufmann. Unable to support a Minister, the Community's services were led by Lay Readers Jack Harris and Max Lopes-Dias, assisted on occasions by Max's son Stephen.

### November 1971

Volume 1, Number 1 of the Community's magazine, Malka, was published. The "baby" of Barbara and Alan Miller, for the first twelve years it was produced monthly. Subsequent years saw it become a quarterly and then an annual publication.





### 18 May 1975

The celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the consecration of the Synagogue took place in the presence of Mrs. Helene Hayman, MP.

### 28 November 1976

Community member and artist, Mrs. Maureen Phillips, painted and presented to the Synagogue, a portrait of our Emeritus Minister, Reverend Jakob Kaufmann. The portrait was unveiled in the presence of Mrs. Phillips and Reverend Kaufmann together with members of his family and many Synagogue members both past and present. Sadly, Reverend Kaufmann passed away the following April.



### 9 November 1980

The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the consecration of the Synagogue was celebrated with a service in the presence of Chief Rabbi, Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits. The service was conducted by Mr. Jack Harris and Mr. Max Dias. The principal guests were Mr. Victor Lucas, Vice-President of the United Synagogue; Mr. Nathaniel Rubin, Secretary of the United Synagogue; Councillor Mrs. Iris Baker, Chairman of Welwyn Hatfield District Council; Mr. Christopher Murphy MP; Mr. Derek Prag MEP; and two past Chairmen of the Community, Mr. Louis Simmonds and Dr. Alan Cohen.



### 1986

Having been Headmaster of the Hebrew Classes since May 1985, Reverend Julian Klein was appointed part-time Minister of the Community and took up the post during the year following his move to Welwyn Garden City.

### July 1991

Reverend Klein resigned as part-time Minister of the Community. Services for the next seven years were conducted by Max and Stephen Lopes-Dias with assistance from a number of members and by Michael Busse who had also acted as Baal Koreh during Reverend Klein's tenure.

### May 1998

Rabbi Geoffrey Hyman was appointed part-time Minister of the Community.

### 26 February 2006

The 50th Anniversary of the consecration of the Synagogue was celebrated with the dedication of a new Sefer Torah in the presence of Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks. The service was conducted by Rabbi Hyman assisted by Reverend Alan Shaw and the augmented Choir of Hendon Synagogue under the direction of Alan Freedman.



## 2 April 2006

A day after his 76<sup>th</sup> birthday, Günter Tuch passed away. When lung cancer forced him to step down from office at the end of 2005, Günter was Chief Warden, Chairman of the Board of Management (a position he had held for over 20 years), Financial Representative and Membership Secretary.



## May 2007

Following Rabbi Hyman's departure to lead the Ilford United Synagogue in August 2006, Rabbi Hillel Gruber was appointed part-time Minister of the Community.

## 9 February 2014

The Community hosted a Sunday Morning Tefillah and Breakfast in the Synagogue with the new Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, in attendance, just five months after his installation as the 11th Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth since the office was introduced in 1704.



## 28 September 2016

Sam Ostro, our only remaining original member from 1939 and still a regular Minyan man, celebrated his 99th birthday.



## HONORARY OFFICERS & BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT

	1956	2016
Chairman:	Werner M. Lash	Timothy Cole
Wardens:	Simon Lichtigfeld	Stephen Lopes-Dias
	Harry Rosenbaum	Phil Ravitz
Hon. Treasurer:	Sydney Grossman	Leigh Sayliss
Hon. Secretary:	Achim Pollak	Hilary Rosenberg
Board of Management:	Dr. Edwin Jacobs	Alan Green
	Dr. Teviot Kletz	Pamela King
	David Feldman	Sue Lipner
	Leonhard Hamburger	Dr. Tony Lipner
	Jack Harris	Judith Lopes-Dias
	Rudi Kober	Reynold Rosenberg
	Robert Landau	
	Walter Strauss	



# Programme and Speakers

2.30 – 5.00pm

Welcome by Mr. Timothy Cole, Chair of the Synagogue

Minchah led by Rabbi Hillel Gruber

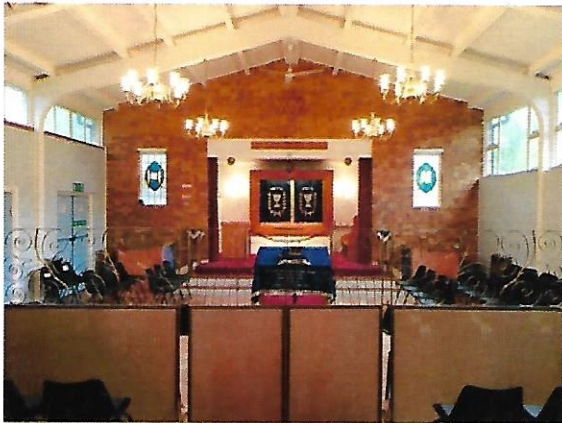
Psalm 121, music composed by the late Rev. Jakob Kaufmann and performed by his grandsons Messrs. Peter Pollak and David Pollak

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis,  
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Mr. Stephen Pack, President of the United Synagogue

Cllr Mrs. Patricia Mabbott, Mayor of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Mr. Max Lopes-Dias



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