

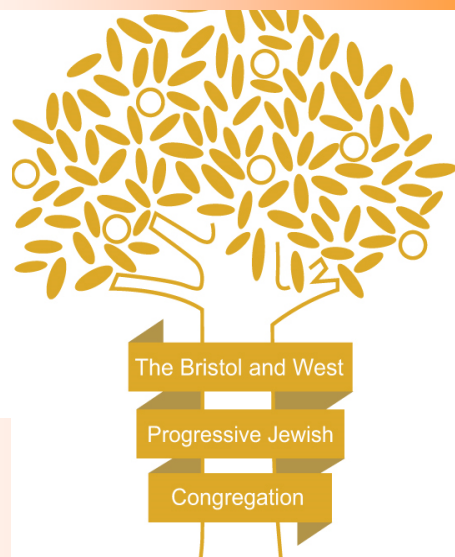


עלונים

Newsletter of Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

Sivan 5771
June 2011

liberal  judaism



Jubilee Issue



ALONIM



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Why is this issue.....?

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Why is this issue different from all other issues of Alonim?

You'll have spotted already that this issue is a book rather than a magazine but what else is different?

Firstly it has a reflective theme. It is a celebration of fifty years of the Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation, with the emphasis on the community we have built.

You will find a grey bar along the bottom containing a basic time line of events related to the life of BWPJC. It does not claim to be in any way comprehensive. We have added photos where this is possible.

We have tried on the whole to place the articles in order based on the earliest date mentioned in the article, and/or in relation to the time line.

As well as the historical angle, we have inserted various information boxes which we feel will be of interest to everyone.

Where we have listed people who have taken on roles within the community, we are aware that we may not have full information. If we have forgotten anyone, we apologise most sincerely.

Enjoy the nostalgia and get ready for the next fifty years.

The picture of Bannerman Road Synagogue on the front cover was drawn by Janet Eisenthal, just prior to the first extension to the premises in 1988. Printed by kind permission of the artist.

Meaning of jubilee

The word "jubilee" (Hebrew *yovel*) might have originally meant "ram" with reference to the blast of the horn that ushers in the holy season. The Greek translation, however, rendered *yovel* as a word meaning "release"; and it has been argued that this translation is scientifically correct. The Latin word *jubilum*, "wild shout", from which we get our word "jubilation", has no connection with *yovel*; but it has probably influenced the modern use of jubilee to designate a festive celebration, especially an important anniversary.

Plaut Chumash



A community of words



Conversations on the phone, the ping of a thousand emails, the post-Kiddush exhortations to “just write a few lines” have dominated this last couple of months, but to such an effect!

accepted by others, to show compassion and to share in life’s religious experiences. Old photographs have revealed those we’ve lost, how the youngsters have grown up, the fun we’ve had, the memorable moments.

As a community we have a proud past and an emerging future. Here’s to the next fifty years.

L’Chaim!

Sheila Brill

What shines through from this edition of Alonim is our community’s capacity to empower people to find their spirituality, to feel



For every issue of Alonim there is the hard work of editors and editorial team, but this issue has exceeded the norm. Sheila and I have burnt the midnight oil and woken at dawn until our spouses have dreaded the word ‘Alonim’. Lynn has taken over the entire production of Alonim to enable us to do it.

the experience of editing this issue is the realisation that it records the birth, childhood and development to adulthood of a community that is so full of life and energy that we know we are only at the start.

But even that is only the tip of the iceberg. Alongside the many names of contributors that you see printed in this issue are all the people who dug deep into memory and archives, old files and folders to answer our incessant questions—people from within the congregation and from many other bodies.

It is a wonderful coincidence that our anniversary falls in the month of Sivan—just in time for Shavuot. Shavuot celebrates the journey from a rag tag of slaves to a united community. This issue of Alonim celebrates the journey from a random bunch of Jews in the South West to BWPJC as we know it today..

But this is still not it. This can happen, this can be our current reality, because of the many people who have helped to grow this community . The most wonderful thing about

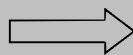
To Life, indeed!

Judy Goldsmith



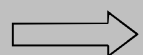
1961

Original phone call from Leonard Hart to anyone in Bristol with a potentially Jewish name, asking if they’d be interested in being part of a new Progressive Congregation.



1962

First baby blessing, held in the home of Isabel Wagen, Sarah Hyams.





A diverse community

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We are a diverse community. Some of us have been Jewish all our lives, others are new to Judaism. Some are committed Liberals, others are more traditional or simply think of ourselves as Jewish. Some have well paid jobs; others find it extremely hard to make ends meet. We are of diverse sexualities, race, households and ages. In many ways we are a microcosm of Bristol itself and of modern Britain.

We are a strong volunteer community. Sometimes we are heavily involved; at other points we step back a bit. Virtually everyone takes on some role in the shul or has done so from time to time. This is one of our great strengths.

So we know who we are but do we know where we want to go?

The Golden Jubilee is a very appropriate time for us to consider that question. In this special edition of Alonim we can look back at our history with pride. At the same time, the consultation process that we are undergoing is a marvellous opportunity to look to the future with hope.

The community survey has gone out and our discussion groups are about to start. The questionnaire asked a number of fundamental questions. It may be that a clear consensus develops but it is also possible that our responses will give rise to a number of challenges that we will have to work on together. The consultation gives everyone the

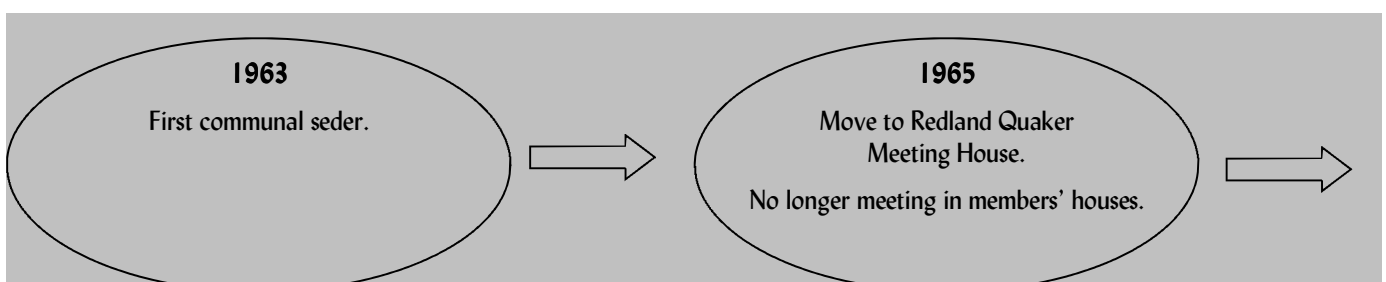
opportunity for their voices to be heard and to listen to each other; to respect our differences and to accommodate them. When we have our conversations I feel we must above all, at this 50th anniversary of our founding, look to the future and to the younger generations.

Sally and I came to Bath some eleven years ago with two small girls, Naomi and Lucie. The presence of a Jewish community in Bristol was an important part of our decision to make the move and the congregation has been an extremely important part of our lives ever since. The girls went to cheder and had their Bat Mitzvahs here. It will not be long before their generation will be running the show. Just as Mavis and Peter Hyams, Jo and Beryl Schapiro, Henry Harris and all the other original people who set up the synagogue were creating something not just for themselves but for future generations, we must do the same.

For me, it is an extremely exciting time to be chair of the community and I am aware that it is a considerable responsibility. I approach it with humility, conscious that I stand on the shoulders of past chairs, past and present council members, rabbis and all who have contributed to the community over the previous years, particularly the founding members. I thank them all.

Gary Webber

Chair of Council





When the Munich Agreement was signed on 29 September 1938, Britain and France agreed to give Hitler the German speaking border regions of Czechoslovakia. The Jews from about sixty congregations in the prosperous industrial and commercial towns in the Sudetenland had 2 or 3 days to flee to the interior. They left behind their synagogues, which were in German hands at the time of the destruction of the Pogrom of November 1938, when synagogues across the expanded Germany, were burned or vandalised and looted. In almost every case the ritual treasures of these Sudetenland synagogues were destroyed or lost.

In the remainder of Czechoslovakia, the synagogues and their swollen congregations were safe for the time being, even when the Germans invaded the rest of the country in March 1939. In 1940, the congregations were closed down, but the Jewish community administration was used by the Germans to execute their stream of decrees and instructions. In 1941 the first deportations started, continuing into January 1943. Then, all that was left in these Czech towns were the half-Jews, some Jews from mixed marriages, the empty synagogue buildings and the homes of the Jews.

These remaining Jews were then given the task of liquidating the communal and private Jewish property in the towns, including the contents of the synagogues. Their instructions were to send the contents of the synagogues to the Jewish Museum in Prague, and, with a few exceptions, the Torah Scrolls, gold and silver and ritual textiles were sent to Prague, along with thousands of books and even clocks and pianos. The remaining Jews were deported in 1943 and 1944, and quite a number survived.

The inventory of the Prague Jewish Museum expanded by fourteen times as a result, and a large number of Jews were put to work by the Germans to sort, catalogue and put into storage all the items that had come from over one hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia. It needed over forty warehouses, many of them deserted Prague synagogues, to store all these treasures. When the task was eventually completed, the Jews who had been put on to this work were themselves deported to the Terezin concentration camp and death. There were few survivors.

It was once accepted that the accumulation of this vast hoard of Judaica was intended by the Nazis to become their museum to the extinct Jewish race. There is, however, no evidence that any such museum was ever planned. The Prague Jewish Museum had been in existence since the turn of the century.

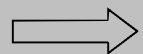
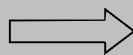
After the defeat of Germany, a free and independent Czechoslovakia emerged, but it was a country largely without Jews. Most of the surviving Jews in Prague and the rest of Bohemia and Moravia were from Slovakia and further east from Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Prague which had a Jewish population of 54,000 in 1940 was reduced to under 8,000 by 1947, and many of these were to leave.

On 27 February 1948, after less than 3 years of post war freedom, the Communists staged a coup and took over the government of Czechoslovakia. The country was back under dictatorship. The Prague Jewish Museum came under government control, and was staffed mainly by non-Jewish curators. The Torah Scrolls in the Michle Synagogue building also came under public ownership. The Jewish Museum

1965

Arrival of a Czech scroll from the newly formed Memorial Trust Fund.

Ours was from the Kutna Hora.





put on the exhibition of the collected Judaica.

The 18th century Michle Synagogue, with its thick stone walls is built into the hillside deep in the valley suburbs of Prague. In 1958 it became the damp warehouse to which were transferred the hundreds of Torah Scrolls from the large Prague Jewish community and from all the much smaller communities that were scattered across what was left of Bohemia and Moravia, after the Sudetenland had been detached. The Scrolls in the Michle Synagogue did not include Scrolls from Slovakia, which the Germans had put under a separate administration.

Eric Estorick, an American living in London, was an art dealer who paid many visits to Prague in the early 1960s and got to know many Prague artists, whose work he exhibited at his Grosvenor Gallery. Being a frequent visitor to Prague, he came to the attention of the authorities, and, on a visit in 1963 he expressed some interest in a catalogue of Hebraica in a government owned bookshop. He was approached by officials from Artia, the state corporation that had responsibility for trade in works of art, and asked if he would be interested in buying some Torah Scrolls.

Unknown to him, the Israelis had been approached previously with a similar offer, but the negotiations had come to nothing. Estorick was taken to the Michle Synagogue where he was faced with wooden racks holding anything up to 2000 Scrolls, in seriously damp conditions. Shaken, he was asked if he wanted to make an offer, and he replied that he knew certain parties in London who might be interested.

On his return to London, he contacted a fellow American, Rabbi Harold Reinhart, of the Westminster Synagogue, one of whose congregants, Ralph Yablon became the benefactor who put up the money to buy the Scrolls. First, Chimen Abramsky, who was to become Professor of Hebrew Studies at the University of London, was asked to go to Prague for twelve days in November 1963 to examine the Scrolls and to report on their authenticity and condition. On his return to London, it was decided that Estorick should go to Prague and negotiate a deal, which he did. Two lorries laden with 1564 Scrolls arrived at the Westminster Synagogue on 7 February 1964.

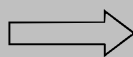
After months of sorting, examining and cataloguing each Scroll, the task of distributing them began, with the aim of getting the Scrolls back into the life of Jewish congregations across the world. The Memorial Scrolls Trust was established to carry out this task.

Each Memorial Scroll is a messenger from a community that was lost, but does not deserve to be forgotten.

Michael Heppner

Of the Memorial Scroll Trust, 01/03/11

Please all hold the following information, so we never forget again. Our scroll is number 356 and was one of the first to be lent out. The scroll is on long term loan to the community. If we cease to exist or merge with another community which already has a Czech scroll it must be returned to the Memorial Trust Fund.





One evening in the spring of 1961 my husband Jo Schapiro answered the telephone and the caller introduced himself as Leonard Hart. He said he had recently moved to Bristol and was ringing anyone from the local telephone directories with a Jewish name to see if they were interested in starting a Liberal Jewish Group. Jo immediately said he was and the first meeting was held at Leonard Hart's house in Stoke Bishop, a couple of weeks later.

We did not have a car in those days and Jo went to the first meeting on the bus. I couldn't go as our children were young then. About ten people turned up and Liberal Judaism in Bristol was born. Several were elected, including the first Chairman, and a committee was formed to pursue the formation of the group. Services were held on a Friday evening at various houses but after a time it became evident that a bigger venue needed to be found. The Friends Meeting House in Hampton Road in Redland was approached and they agreed to let us have the use of their library on a Friday evening.

Things were really taking shape then and a very basic Ark was obtained (I think it was originally a wardrobe) and a Scroll was borrowed from the Union of Liberal & Progressive Synagogues (ULPS) to enable services to be conducted regularly. ULPS also provided considerable funding to enable the Group to progress. The caretaker of the Friends Meeting House referred to the Ark as the 'Holy Cupboard'.

The attendance at the services on a Friday evening was spasmodic - some weeks there would only be one or two people and then the next week there were ten or more. Members took it in turns to take the services although occasionally a visiting Rabbi would come. I remember Julia Neuberger coming soon after she became a Rabbi to take the High Holy Day Services one year. For these services the Friends allowed the use of their large room.

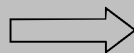
Social events for fund-raising were established on a monthly basis - there were cheese and wine parties, your favourite cheesecake parties, progressive supper parties, dinner dances and garden parties etc. to raise funds to enable the purchase of a building.

Festivals were held in various venues around Bristol as Hampton Road was not always available. I remember the first Seder which was catered for by the members - cold fried fish, salad and almond pudding. The cost was ten shillings - 10/- (50p).

Time moved on and the membership was increasing and it became clear that the purchase of a building was becoming urgent. Several places were looked at but they were either too expensive or there was no parking. Hilary Kay who worked at a clinic in Easton came across No.43 Bannerman Road - a disused potato store - which was for sale. Although this was not what everyone had in mind, it was deemed to be a possibility and was subsequently purchased at a cost of just over £3000. At the time it was rumoured that that area of Easton would be regenerated and that

1975

Purchase of the first building, a potato warehouse in Bannerman Road, located by Hilary Kay





An historic community

9

if the building was knocked down a purpose-built building would be included in the regeneration plan - however this did not happen.

The first time Jo took me to see the inside of the building I was horrified - the smell was awful and I could not envisage how it could be made habitable. There was a tiny area at the back screened off from the rest of the room with a sink in the corner, which was called "the kitchen" and next to it was the lavatory. However, plans were drawn up and the work started. Funds did not permit having workmen in to do most of the work so many weekends were spent by anyone who was willing to lay the concrete floor, re-wire and ultimately decorate the place. Curtains were made for the windows and some awful brown lino was laid on the floor (which had to be polished) and every footstep showed.

The end was in sight and to prepare for the opening everyone gave any pieces of furniture they had spare, cups, saucers, glasses and cutlery and the synagogue was taking shape. Polack House at Clifton College donated a spare Ark and the Ner Tamid which still hangs today.

The official opening took place by the then Lord Mayor of Bristol and the room was full to overflowing. The entrance in those days was at the back and when the Lord Mayor came in he missed the top step and tripped. His top hat fell off. It was very embarrassing. I remember trying to get cups of tea and cakes around to the guests. It was very difficult, but we managed.

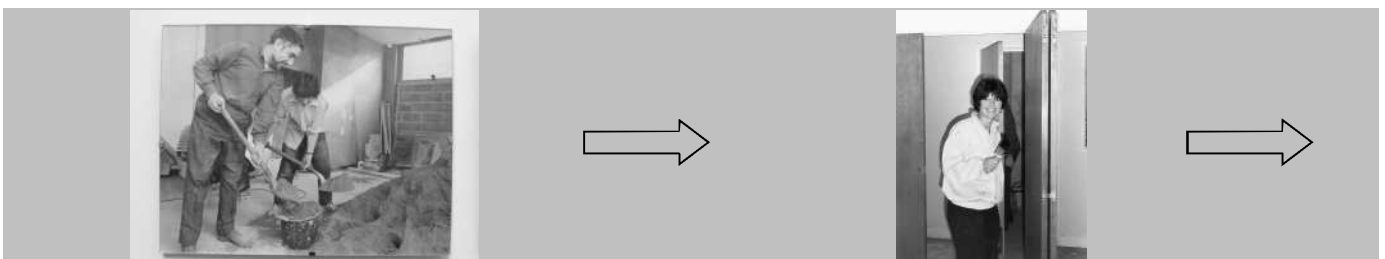
There was great excitement when the first wedding was to take place. A *chuppah* was borrowed from Park Row and it was so large it nearly filled the room leaving hardly any room for chairs.

Time moved on and then the building next door was up for sale - wouldn't it be wonderful if that could be purchased to enlarge the synagogue? Money was always the difficulty but the building was bought and alterations made and a proper kitchen installed - what joy! The upstairs was also made for the Religion School, which, by this time was growing in numbers. Then, of course, later on the next property came on the market and that was purchased and the three buildings were made into the Synagogue it is today. All the time the congregation was growing and a Cheder was well and truly established.

Jo wanted me to write what I remembered of the early days before he died, but I didn't get round to putting it on paper. I am doing it now as the 50th Anniversary approaches and I am sure he would be pleased.

Beryl Schapiro

In 2008 our library was named the Joachim Shapiro library. It was intended to be a tribute to Jo during his lifetime, in recognition of his years of work in the library as well as his other many gifts to the congregation, both time and wisdom. Sadly Jo died just a matter of days before the occasion.





I hadn't been a member of the shul for more than a couple of months when I was invited onto the council. David Burnard was the Chairman then. Some members of council I can remember were Dr Noel Newman, Dr Frank Wallace, Jo Schapiro, Betty Craven (Secretary), Mavis and Peter Hyams, Mike and Isobel Wagen and David Wolfe (Treasurer).

At my first meeting I asked why the chairman wrote the minutes and not the secretary, so was voted in as Secretary. I did this for twelve years. I expect it is the same today on council but in the 1960s we argued in a friendly fashion about most things, but usually ended up with an agreed decision. There was never a dull moment at the meetings.

For me the most memorable moment was I think in 1965 when there was a baby blessing service for Ruth with my grandmother present who was in her early 90s so we had the

youngest and oldest present at the service. Unfortunately I can't remember the exact date.

Over a period of time I acted as Editor of Alonim for three years, headmaster of the religion school for six years and ultimately Chairman of Council for four years.

Over a far greater period I looked after the social activities. This was because I had been a hotel manager and understood catering. I organised and costed out the communal *seder* for years but always had willing helpers. At the last communal *seder* I organised there were a hundred and sixteen people present. I don't quite know where they all came from. This was located in a church hall I think in Westbury-on-Trym. (Mavis will remember the name, I can't.)

Henry Harris

now Treasurer of the



Some members who have served as chair of council

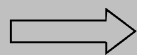
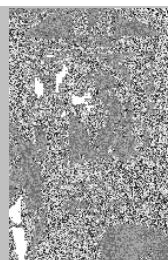
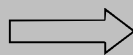
Michael Bogod
Tony Rees
David Burnard

Michael Romain
Neville Lewisohn
Henry Harris
Bernard Barnett

Robert Hurst
Keren Durant
Gary Webber

1975

The 'Holy Cupboard' in situ in the new building





A dispersed community

11

All our memories of our friends at BWPC are full of fun, joy and spirit. When we arrived in Bristol, living in Somerset, in 1969 the small group of Jewish members met at The Friends Meeting House in Redland. When we had our children, our Jewish friends became our surrogate grandparents and family. We embraced Liberal Judaism wholly and found our spiritual and religious home.

There is so much I could tell but so will others. I had my Bat Mitzvah in 1997 with Rabbi Hadassah Davis. My son Joshua had his Bar Mitzvah with Rabbi Berry when he was still a student at Leo Baeck. Our daughter Gabrielle (Gaby) had her Bat Mitzvah at home as the 'new' synagogue at Bannerman Road was undergoing improvements.

We made music, ate meals, experienced 'retreats', taught cheder with Tony Rees as our mentor, shared services and much more. Tony and I are now Jewish co-chaplains at Exeter University and our daughters are the best of

friends. We are members of The


Exeter Hebrew congregation which is small but friendly and active. We have no rabbi so share services which I only considered doing at Bannerman Road. Tony is our current President. Who knows where life will take us except, the Eternal One.

We vividly remember the HHD when student Rabbi Julia Neuberger led our services.

Young couples such as Paul and Vanessa Freedman and Clare and Yuval Keren encouraged and set an example. Jo Shapiro was our Jewish guru and inspired me intellectually and spiritually.


Kindest regards to anyone who remembers us.

Robin and Arnold Kanarek
Joshua and Gabrielle

 Some members who have taken responsibility for housekeeping

Sylvia Murray	Mavis Hyams	Clare Sandler
	Rebecca Lissak	

1975
Cheder classroom in Bannerman Road.



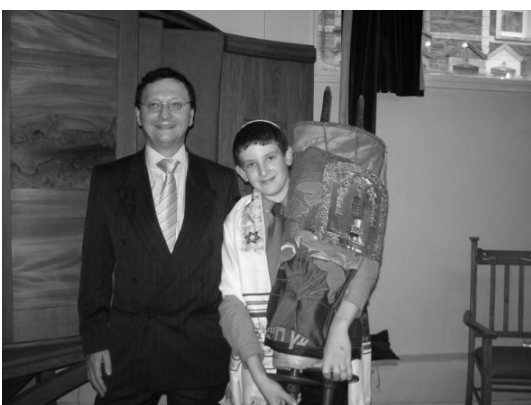
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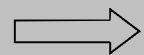
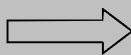
A celebrating community



A very small selection from the many *bnei mitzvot* held by the congregation down the years. These are chosen merely because they are ones I still have on file.



1975
Ner Tamid donated by Polack House,
Clifton College





From an entry in Mar-April 2006 Alonim

I hope you have noticed that since December there has been a weekly Shabbat Kiddush. So firstly can I thank the members who brought bits for the visit of Danny Rich, the Crown family, Crew family, Ron and Kathy, Trudy Veremu and Yuval Gabi, the Durant family, David Jewell, the Canzini family, the Webber family (Sally and Gary), Kate Withers and Derek Brown who have all contributed so far.

The plan is to organise a regular Shabbat Kiddush. To give a tasty end to the Shabbat morning service and an excuse to stay around and chat to old friends and new members.

I hope most members and their families will be able to help and make a Kiddush once or twice year. The food can be simple and shop bought or home cooked and I'll provide information about numbers and what to bring. It only needs to be some simple nibbles and is in no way a cooking competition!

So if you have a reason to celebrate a birthday, a wedding anniversary, passing an exam or would just like to contribute –

Sally Webber

BWPJC WEDDINGS

26 August 1979 - Frederick Howard Morgan to Barbara Susan Sinclair

(Fred is one of the four members of the congregation to become a rabbi.)

19 August 1984 - Ronald Francis Berry to Doris Kathleen Stone

(Ron became a Rabbi after this date as we all know.)

17 August 1986 - Howard Clive Cohen to Julia Karen Ward

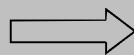
9 September 1990 - Julian Max Brown to Cherry Elaine Wolfe

22 August 1999 - Jeremy Herbert Green to Philippa Rachael Copeland

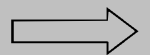
18 March 2001 - Yehudaler Adam Feldman to Melanie Ann Stone

5 April 2009 - Jonathan Marc Alloun to Hebe Louise Lucraft

17 April 2011 - Michael Bernard Levy to Rosalind Crown



1979
First wedding of the congregation—
Fred Morgan and Barbara Sinclair





We were in our early thirties when we got the phone call from Len Hart wanting to explore starting a Liberal Jewish Congregation in Bristol. I had already tried the Orthodox congregation in Park Row, and it was not for me, having come to Bristol University from my work (and residence) in a Jewish Settlement in the East End of London with a Synagogue affiliated to the Liberal Jewish Movement. Peter had lived in a Jewish boarding School in Los Angeles where he was evacuated during the war. Both our families were secular in a manner of speaking, but we were both very conscious of being brought up to be proud of our Judaism, and I had been taught the basic rules of keeping a Kosher kitchen – should I have wanted to.

Little did I realise how our lives were going to change with the phone call. I had recently had our first baby, Peter was working away most of the week, and life seemed to revolve round the community – can't call it a Shul as we didn't have a building – and our deepest friendships were within it. Henry and Denise Harris, Isobel and Mike Wagen, David and Josie Burnard, Jo and Beryl Schapiro to name but a few. Services were held in our houses, and our eldest daughter Sarah had her, and the congregation's, first baby blessing at the Wagens' house.

What I remember most of all is the massive input of Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. (ULPS). The late Rabbi Sidney Brichto, then the administrative director of ULPS was instrumental in helping us set up the

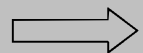
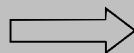
congregation, paid frequent visits and we were helped, as far as I remember, with a substantial interest-free loan. Once we had established ourselves in The Friends Meeting house we had regular visits from Liberal Rabbis, students from Leo Baeck including a young Julia Neuberger, questioned on her ability to be a Rabbi as a woman by one of our members. (see her book 'Why I am a Jew'). Without ULPS we would not have had a congregation now, and that is something we must never forget.

We lived round the corner from the Friends Meeting House in Hampton Road, as did several other very active members. This was where our Services were held after we moved on from each others' houses. This meant we were on hand for whatever was needed. Peter and I were very active and involved with one or other of us on Council, Peter more than me in the early days.

Our children grew up as part of the congregation, and it certainly has influenced them in their Jewish lives. Both Polly and Becca were founder members of congregations in their turn, and Sarah and May are pleased to be members of Rabbi Paul Freedman's congregation in Radlett. Cheder was a fraction of the size it is now and yet at least five of those youngsters have taken active parts in their later congregations. To name just two, Henry Harris's children – Ruth and Steve, both very prominent in our own. ULPSNYC the national youth group used to have occasional weekends

1980

Tree of Life illuminated plaque
commission by Pat and Neville
Lewisohn in memory of their daughter
who died in 1979





The start of the community

in Bristol as our daughter was provincial rep and is still in contact with friends made then.



ULPJS YNC visit to Bristol. Included in this picture are Polly Hyams and Jo Yoffey from Bristol.

Seder nights were started as most of us had no extended family in the area and the shul WAS our family. Memorable years when Josie and I filled our ovens with roast chickens, and other times fried mountains of fish. Henry Harris was always called on to portion it out, and make his splendid desserts, really happy times.

The regular social activities held in our homes always played a very important part in the Shul life. Quiz nights, games evenings, musical events, play readings. Good company and naturally lots of good nosh! Indeed we used to have 'Nosh and Natter' evenings when Neville Lewisohn was chairman. Our Garden Parties were a great event, held in members' gardens with lots of activities for the children, and a lovely tea.

Festivals, too, were celebrated with great zest – our Succot Services were held in member's gardens. I remember for some years it was held in the garden of Anne and Michael Bogod, our chairman at the time, and a memorable one at the Romains' when they lived in Gloucestershire.

I could reminisce for ever, about the time when we bought Bannerman Road, found for us by our dear Hilary Kay, and all the work that was done by a few members. Peter was part of that working party, he was away working most of the week, and at Bannerman Road at the weekends. I sometimes used to help feed and water the workers as it was the only opportunity to meet up with my husband. That band of workers all had full time careers and yet it was all done with such good grace and an intense pride. Our youngest daughter, Polly, remembers cheder children being given paintbrushes and set to work by Jo Schapiro and Hilary, so they would all feel part of the new building.

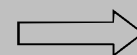
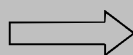
When I look round at all the children crowding into shul at the end of Shabbat morning service, I am amazed and proud that we have grown so much from our small beginnings. I can only hope that those children and their parents will carry their Judaism forward with the pride that we as Founder Members felt in our small, but active community.

Mavis Hyams

(with memory nudges from **Peter**)

1986

25th anniversary celebrations





My memories of BWPJC go back to my early childhood; in fact there is no time in my life that isn't associated with the shul. I am told (although I don't remember it) that I was the first baby in the community to be blessed, and Friday evenings were usually spent at erev Shabbat services with my parents and my sisters.

Initially we met at the Friends Meeting House with our locally made Ark which the caretaker called our "Jews' Holy Cupboard"! Years later I was reminded of this when I went to Kabbalat Shabbat and festival celebrations at my daughter, May's Jewish primary school where they had an almost identical Ark. Indeed, growing up in the Bristol Liberal Jewish community was a great foundation for my Jewish life and set the standard for much of what I do today as a mother and a member of my own community.

We were a small community in those early days in Bristol and could all fit into one room at the Friends, even for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, something I still find hard to believe now that I am a member in a huge community in Radlett where we have Yom Tov services going on in four different locations.

Members of the community regularly took services because we did not have our own rabbi, though I remember student rabbis visiting, including Julia (now Baroness) Neuberger who came to take High Holy Day services for several years.

We were a very close and friendly community, spending a lot of time together on social occasions as well as religious ones: Sukkot in the Bogod's garden, Seder nights at our house, games evenings at the Wagen's are just a few I recall.

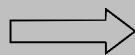
By the time I became Batmitzvah (at that time known by ULPS as a 'confirmation') in 1974 we had moved into the Bannerman Road shul, a move I can remember being made with great excitement and plenty of hard work. Almost every Sunday was spent there helping to renovate and decorate the building. I can still remember my Dad and Jo Schapiro painstakingly levelling the concrete floor and if we stood still for too long a paintbrush would be put in our hand and we would be told to paint as high as we could reach. The whole community was so proud of our new synagogue building, even if it was only one small room with an entrance at the back, and even if it was a squash when there was a large congregation.

When I come back for services now, it is lovely to see how the community has grown, with many more families and children involved, with a much expanded building, yet it still has a relaxed and friendly feel. Long may it last and grow. Here's to another 50 years!

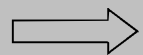
Sarah Hyams

1987

Change from a visiting student rabbi once a month, to the same qualified rabbi once a month.



Which is this?





A sharing community



Some members who have served on the editorial team

Editors

- Neville Lewisohn
- Pat Lewisohn
- Henry Harris
- Judith Samuels
- Michael Romain
- Roger Burkeman
- Eve McHugh
- Keren Durant

Emily Durant

- Malcolm Rawles
- Judy Goldsmith (Lazarus)
- Sheila Brill
- Lynn Johnston

Proof Readers

- Alix Pirani
- Jill Pomerance

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- Ruth Baker
- Sheila Wilson
- Anthony Cowles
- Yoav Ben Shlomo
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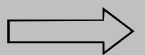
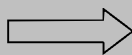


Sharing a dance 1990s, sharing food at the 25th anniversary event and sharing chollah making 2011.



1988

Purchase of the second building.





I have three particular memories of this wonderful community which Effie and I joined almost exactly 25 years ago.

It was Succoth 1986. Effie and I had just arrived in the area and we knew very few people. We joined the synagogue. Almost immediately upon arrival Effie suffered an ectopic pregnancy and was seriously ill. Members were particularly helpful and I remember distinctly going to the house of Henry and Denise Harris in Redland and everyone was very supportive.

One of my first conversations was with the then chair Neville Lewisohn. He told me that he had come to the area knowing very few people. He first attended a Friday night service with his daughters thinking (and hoping) that he could sit at the back and take little part in what was going on. He could not "sit at the back." It was made clear to him that all members had to be actively involved, so that is what he did. He was

a great role model.

I had no ambition or intention to stand as chair. I went to visit Mike Wagen when he was terminally ill in hospital. I remember very clearly him telling me that I had to take on the responsibility of being chair. That is what I did soon after his death.

We are a very small community. We come from different places and some do not stay for a long period of time. Whilst here we have to do our bit to maintain Jewish continuity.

This community has given to Effie, me and my family a huge amount and we are indebted to the founders who created it. In turn we have a responsibility to perpetuate it for future generations.

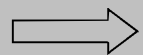
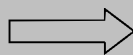
Michael Romain

Every year Effie and Michael organise the 'Matzah Ramble'.



1988

Re-dedication of the building





A laughing community

I came to Bristol in 1957 for three years as an undergraduate in the University of Bristol's Drama Department. Having grown up with family membership of Sheffield's Orthodox community, I became a member of Park Row as a somewhat intermittent attendee.

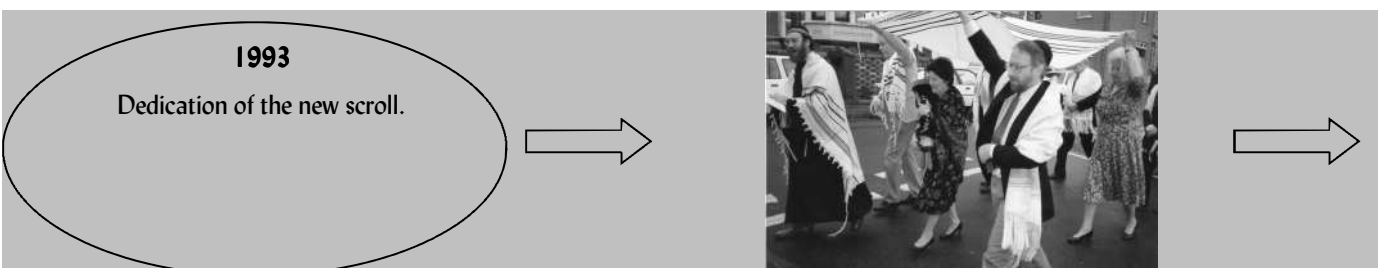
I returned to live in Bristol following my marriage in 1965 to ex fellow graduate David Hirschmann by then teaching in the University. When our present congregation was formed it originally met weekly in the Library at Friend's Meeting House in Redland.

Our daughter, Abigail was born in December 1969 and shortly after her first birthday in 1970 I went to the *chanukah* party, held in the main hall of the Meeting House. The celebrations were on the last evening of the festival with highlights of the event including a line up of our children in an orderly (because each was accompanied by a parent) crocodile, stage left, to move one by one to centre stage each helping to light one of the candles. Abi being the youngest and still a babe in arms was

the final official lighter with the privilege of igniting the last and newest candle. Holding my hand carefully and steadily over hers whilst firmly and safely holding her in the crook of my other arm, I leaned us both forward and together in what felt like a blaze of glory our mitzvah was achieved. You should know, dear reader, that it had been Abi's birthday the afternoon before and her party - eight doting adults and a peer group of small cousins - had encouraged her to be confident about blowing out her candles. Without missing a beat, as soon the *chanukah* candles were all ablaze, the assembled Liberal Progressive guests were treated to her final contribution, a gasp-creating blowing out of the five *chanukah* candles (including her own) nearest to her. Convinced that the only place for us was outside the door and how, I was deeply touched to realise instead the mirth and smiles were for us - that this warm and wonderful congregation was allowing us to stay. My sense of "belonging remains" to this day.

Jill Pomerance

The 'new' scroll, in the timeline, at it's dedication in 1993 and, below, with it's new finials in 2008.





The Western Jewish Social Club

First meeting 5 September 1990

Last meeting January 2006

From the minutes of first meeting. Rabbi Berry welcomed members. Kathy Berry and Margaret Hanstead were the starter committee and hoped by the next meeting (October) the committee would have grown with members from both Bannerman Road and Park Row being willing to extend the committee. This next meeting opened with 26 members plus 8 helpers whom Kathy introduced to the meeting and also thanked Martin Vegoda from Park Row for being instrumental in starting this joint venture.

Note from a planning meeting re forming the club **27 March 1990**

"We are embarking upon a joint venture between Bannerman Road and Park Row communities to provide the opportunity for our more elderly members to spend one afternoon a month socialising at Bannerman Road Synagogue. A list was attached of those who might be interested in coming along to this social afternoon at the Synagogue on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month with Transport available for those who may need it.

Research by **Jill Pomerance**



Rosh Chodesh Group

It has long been a tradition for Jewish women to come together once a month, when the moon is new, at Rosh Chodesh. Some of the women in our community, myself included, have been meeting regularly in each other's homes for several years now, and we have established a very strong core group that is always open to welcoming any women who wish to focus on spirituality, share a meal, support each other, and explore what it means to be Jewish and female.

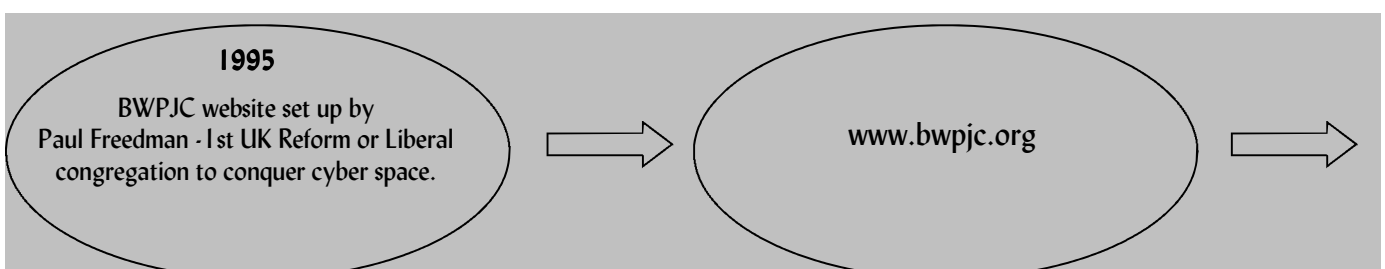
We have looked at many different topics over the years, including women in the Torah, counting the Omer, kabbalah, the music of Jewish women, the relevance of the 613 mitzvot in today's world, and the significance of the tree in Jewish tradition, to name but a few. We have also enjoyed more creative activities, such as

mask-making, and group painting.

Whatever we do, and sometimes we find ourselves simply talking and sharing, there is always a loving, relaxed, open-minded, supportive, confidential atmosphere, where we try to embrace as wide a perspective on what it means to be Jewish. There is laughter, passion, and tears of both joy and sadness. We have developed deep and sincere friendships. And of course, we eat a lot of delicious food, which we each bring to share.

Personally, I really value this group, and it has become a very important and nourishing aspect of my Jewish life.

Miriam Patrick





An active community

21

Over the years, our members have organised many different activities. Some of them have been exclusively for BWPJC members, others have included Bristol Hebrew Congregation members.

A chance to explore Hebrew Poetry

Advanced Hebrew class

Basic Judaism class/Beginners' Hebrew

Book group (with Park Row members)

Bristol Jewish Community Club (with Park Row members)

Chanukah party

Chavruta (1:1 learning)

Chavurah supper

Communal seder

Community Weekend

Games evenings

Israeli Dancing

Jigsaw exchange

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Klezmer Band

Leyning classes

Matzo rambles

Meditative services

Meditation days

Mitzvah Day Events

Nosh and Natter evenings

Play readings

A significant number have involved.... you've guessed it....food!

Here's the list. See if you can spot anything missing.

Purim parties

Purim Speils

Quiz nights

Reading group

Receptions for new members

Rosh Chodesh groups

Shavuot Schlepp

Shiurim

Singing club

Summer Family Barbecues

Summer Garden Party

Synagogue cinema

Synagogue retreats

Synagogue shop

Teddies Tea Party

Teddy Bear Shabbats

tent services

The Venturers

Tu b'Shevat Seders

Visiting speakers

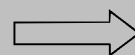
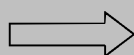
Western Jewish Singers

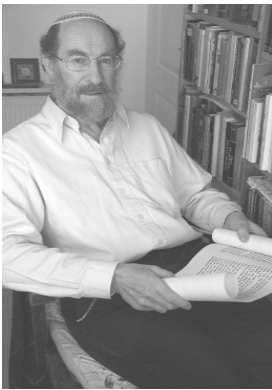
WIZO Nationwide Multi-venue Quizes

Yom Ha'atzmaut

1999

Cheder library opened.





The earliest memory I have of our Congregation is the mysterious and miraculous way in which I was led to it. There is a twin aspect to this. In the hot summer of 1976 I met Kathy at a concert of Classical Music in the Colston Hall; Pinhas

Zuckerman playing Mozart's Violin Concerto, which was wonderful, followed by the Italian Symphony. We sat next to each other and were enthralled. We enthused together afterwards about the music and were mutually attracted enough to begin our romance, which continues still.

At this time in my life I was working in the human genetics laboratory in the Pathology Department of Southmead Hospital. One day soon after I went up the road during my lunch break for a haircut at Sam the Barber's, a little shop I had seen a few days earlier. I sat down in the chair and Sam, a short slightly tubby man, began cutting my hair. After a few snips he said to me, 'You're a Yiddishe boy, aren't you?' 'Yes', I answered, surprised; 'how do you know?' 'I can tell', he said; 'you've a Yiddishe kopf'. He carried on snipping my hair for a few minutes, then he asked me; 'D'you go to shul?' 'No', I replied, 'I've been a few times, but I don't understand it, because it's all in Hebrew'. 'You should come', he said, 'try it again and you'll learn in time.' 'No, I don't think so', I

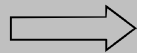
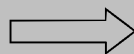
responded, 'and it wouldn't be right, anyway, because I've a non-Jewish girlfriend now.' 'That doesn't matter' said Sam, 'bring her too.' 'I don't think it would be right, I said, and anyway, neither of us would be able to understand anything'. He finished my haircut and as I got up to pay him he said; 'You could try the other synagogue, they pray in English there'. I pricked up my ears; 'Which other synagogue?' I asked, 'Where is it?' I don't know, he replied, only that I've heard there is another synagogue where they read the prayers in English.' I paid him and asked, 'Can you find out for me where it is?' 'Maybe', he said and I left to go back to work.

A few months later I went up the road for another haircut. As he was working, I asked him questions about the other synagogue but he knew very little. However he did agree to make a telephone call to someone he knew, Teddy Jacobs, who ran the Bristol branch of AJEX, the Jewish Ex Servicemen's Association. Teddy Jacobs was not a member of either synagogue. His wife, Joy, ran Bristol WIZO, the Women's International Zionist Organisation, though not herself Jewish. Teddy Jacobs gave Sam the telephone number of Tony Reese, who was at that time the Secretary of our Congregation.

A few weeks later I rang up Tony and asked if I could come to the synagogue. At that time we had a student rabbi once a month, coming to lead the Services Friday evening and Saturday morning, and teach in the Religion School on Sunday morning.

2000

Cheder moves from Sunday to Saturday.





There was only one Saturday morning Service a month and lay leaders conducted the other Friday eve services. Kathy had been asking me all sorts of questions about being Jewish, such as 'What do Jews believe?', which I'd been unable to answer, so, hoping to find some answers, we went to the synagogue one Friday eve.

We went in through the small door at the back, now a fire exit, and up the stairs into the Sanctuary. There were three men there; Tony Reese, Henry Harris and Jo Schapiro, who welcomed us in and invited Kathy to light the *shabbat* candles. She refused, saying; 'I'm not Jewish'. They pressed her, so she refused again, explaining; 'I cannot read the Hebrew'. 'That's alright', they said, 'say it in English'. Then she said; 'if you don't mind, I'd rather not.' So, with that, they continued the service. We went back the following Friday eve, and the next, until I went away to work in Reykjavik for a couple of years, from 1977 - 1979.

What's miraculous about that, you may wonder? It sounds quite prosaic. It was not until a few years later that I found out about Sam. He had been a member of the *sonderkommando* in Auschwitz, when he was a lad of fourteen or fifteen, dragging the tangled mass of dead bodies out of the gas chamber, untangling their

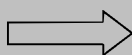
twisted arms and legs, then stacking the corpses in the crematoria to get rid of them by burning. He told me that this was why he was the head of the Bristol *hevra kaddisha* the 'Holy Group' as the Jewish Burial Society is called, so that he could always give Jews a proper burial in the future. He weighed five and a half kilograms when the Russians liberated the death camp. How he came to Bristol I don't know, but what led me, an ignorant son of an atheistic communist Jew to Sam, a survivor of Auschwitz? Sam pointed me in the direction of our synagogue so that I could reclaim my own Jewish heritage and teach it to others. Surely only God can arrange coincidences like this.

When Kathy became Jewish we married under the *chuppah* and I went to study at Leo Baeck College. Sam was proud when he came to my Ordination five years later and saw the man he had directed to the door of our Congregation as a Jewish illiterate, become ordained as a rabbi. When I first came into our Congregation we had about fifty members. Now we have grown three times larger.

Rabbi Ronald Francis Berry

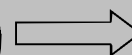
2000

Installation of a burglar alarm



2001

Bristol Jewish Book Group established



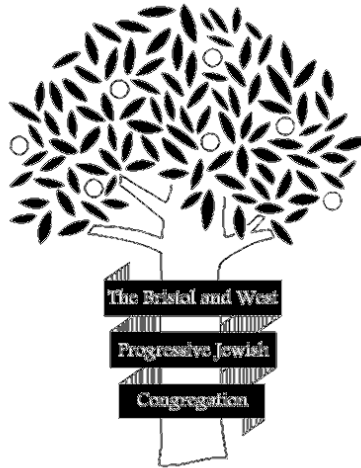


How is the tree a symbol of the congregation? Well the individual members may be likened to the leaves of the tree. Beyond that, the branches may be likened to the officers and the trunk to the council of the synagogue. Let us call all this the 'organisation' of the community, which serves the members.

What about the roots of the tree? In an actual tree the roots are that whereby the tree receives its food, primarily water. In the symbolic tree the roots are the parts whereby the community receives its physical needs, e.g. the synagogue subscription, the work of individual members and of the officers, the work of the rabbi and the teachers, and so on. Let us simply call this 'the work' of the community.

But a tree is a living thing. What is it that gives it its life? There is an energy which drives; which enlivens; which pursues a purpose. It cannot be seen other than by its results. In the natural tree, the energy, the spirit of the tree one might say, arises from the coming together, in the leaves of the tree, of two ingredients. One is the water transmitted by the roots through the trunk and the branches to the leaves. The other also involves the leaves: it is sunlight shining on them. It is water and sunlight that combine to provide the energy for the life of the tree.

How can all this be a symbol of the congregation? Well, the water symbolises the work of the community passed by the organisation to the members, the leaves. But what about the other ingredient necessary for life, which in the natural tree is the light of the sun? We can liken that to the Torah, to the teaching of our heritage, So, it is members' work and the teaching of our religion which combine to provide the energy for the life of the congregation, which is in turn the spiritual life of the members.



Some will say: where does that teaching come from? The short answer is "from heaven". But the term 'heaven' is itself a symbol; if we knew the reality behind it we wouldn't need the symbol. But that is another story, another symbology. I'll stay with the tree and let it rest there.

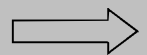
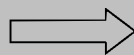
Joachim Shapiro

Written in January
2000



2000

Tree of Life logo created.
Designed by Jane Solomons





Our community logo

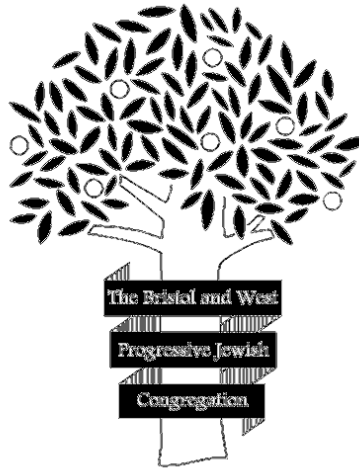
25

You were wondering how the synagogue got its logo. This is how:

Following my induction as Minister to our congregation in 1989, one of my first decisions was to give the synagogue its Hebrew name: k'hila k'dusha 'eitz hayyim, 'Holy Community of the Tree of Life'. When I suggested this to the synagogue council at the time they considered it a good idea and endorsed my choice of name. My inspiration was the illuminated stained glass memorial plaque commissioned by Pat and Neville Lewisohn in memory of their daughter, which embellishes our synagogue to this day.

At that time I was busy with outreach work; searching out Jewish people in our area and offering them the benefits of membership. One woman I contacted was a Jewish woman namedJane Solomons...who

ran her small studio, called Tangram Design.... I asked her if she would design us a logo. I explained that what I wanted was a stylised tree to illustrate the synagogue name and I also said that I wanted it to be a fruit tree to symbolise the fruitfulness of our culture. I specified seven fruits. Our logo is her design, to my specifications.



Joachim Schapiro is right in his article on the aptness of a tree as a symbol, but does not quite go far enough. He mentions the trunk, branches, leaves and roots, and interprets them all appropriately but does not mention the fruits. Our synagogue is particularly rich in fruitfulness for its size, now having its third Rabbi ripening. (Rabbi Fred Morgan, me and Paul Freedman.)

Rabbi Francis Berry

Written in February 2000

Members of BWPJC who have become rabbis

Rabbi Frederick Morgan

Rabbi Ronald Francis Berry

Rabbi Paul Freedman

Rabbi Yuval Keren

2000

From now on each service will have a leader and a warden.

2000

Start of the telephone tree, so information could be circulated quickly and easily.



Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation

ק"ק יצ תיים

תפילות היובל Jubilee Prayers

[Responsive reading, standing, before the open ark]

Holy One of Blessing, whose presence fills Creation, we understand that what is invisible to our eyes may be perceived with our hearts and minds.

'Fifty years ago the small group who convened to modernise a Jewish approach to You, here in Bristol, grasped at the invisible; a hope for a more dynamic, developing and evolving style of Jewish future.'

Holy One of Blessing, whose presence fills Creation we know that, although our ears may hear nothing, our world is full of song.

'We appreciate the opportunities you have given us to meet with challenge, to grasp the openings it presents and to grow by coming to grips with our constraints. We are inspired to sing our songs of gratitude to You for our continuing experiences of growth.'

Holy One of Blessing, whose presence fills Creation we are aware that during darkness we do not lose our capacity for vision and that though we may not actually be able to see then, light remains in existence and our universe is filled with it.

'Though aware of our limitations and our mistakes along the way, We feel pride and gratitude for what has been achieved over the past fifty years, acknowledging the inspiration and efforts of our founders, the contributions of our forerunners, the dedication of our teachers and the devotion of our Congregation.'

Holy One of Blessing, whose presence fills Creation although we may feel heavy we know that our world is full of flight.

'We look forward to the blessings of the next fifty years with eager interest and anticipation; the chance to plan with imagination and create a community with panache, building upon our achievements whilst allowing others the freedom to change what we hand on to them.'

[read together]

תק"א ״ God of Unity, may our actions always be accompanied by a spirit of gentleness and harmony so that we work together in unison to enhance the lives of those around us.



ברוך אתה יי אלהי ישראל Praised are You, God of Israel, whose dominion rules the Universe and whose majesty reigns supreme. We rededicate our Congregation in Your Holy Name on this, our Jubilee, our fiftieth anniversary. Our torah says:

תעבירו שופר בכל־ארצכם... וקדשתם את שנת החמשים שנה וקראתם דרור בארץ לכל־ישיביה יובל הוא תהיה לכם

"You shall cause the shofar to sound...You shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants; this Jubilee shall be for yourselves."

We hallow this sanctuary with our acknowledgment of Your Eternal Presence and declare our rededication to the ideals of Freedom and Justice, Peace and Compassion as taught by our Prophets and Rabbis and sought by our leaders and people, throughout all lands and ages. In gratitude and celebration we thank you for all the good we enjoy, the blessings of this day and the spirit of dedication through which You inspire us with hope and purpose for our future. Help to bring our ideals into the future, to bear fruit in acts of loving kindness, forgiveness, righteousness and peace, and let us say...amen!

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לשמוע קול שופר
Holy One of Blessing, Whose Presence fills creation, You sanctify us with Your commandments and You command us to hearken to the voice of a shofar.

[the shofar is sounded]

The great shofar is sounded; the still small voice is heard! All who dwell on earth stand arrayed before God! We recall our history and know our responsibility for our destiny.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שהחיתנו וקימנו והגינו לזמן הזה
Holy One of Blessing, Whose Presence fills creation, You have kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this special occasion!



Be Ha'alothekcha—Numbers 11:17

Rebecca writes

Towards the end of this portion Moses is in despair. He doesn't know how he can meet the needs of the people. He compares himself to a parent being asked to look after too many children, and feels unable to give them what they want. The manna that God provides them with is not enough for them, they long and weep for meat and reminisce about the fish and succulent vegetables that they ate back in Egypt, back in slavery; cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

This inability to fulfil their requests leaves Moses in a state of wretchedness about himself "Don't let me see myself get into such a terrible predicament". Moses feels that he can no longer bear the responsibility of this nation, he gives up in despair declaring that the task is just too hard for him. In a shocking gesture of exasperation he asks God to kill him. This is a man, a leader of people, at his wits end. But the people are not in crisis, not like they were at the Red Sea, they are not being pursued by an Egyptian army or even starving. It is not a real crisis, only that the people are complaining, that drives Moses over the edge. The people have manna to eat, divinely provided, there is no need for Moses to fret about getting meat for them; they don't need meat but Moses feels like he needs to provide what the people say they want and this feeling is so strong in him that he feels total despair at not being able to provide it

for them.

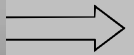
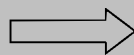
As always a close analysis throws up interesting questions for us to contemplate. Why did Moses feel that he needed to fulfil the people's wishes when God was already providing the food supply, albeit a bit monotonous? Why did such a mundane issue turn into something that drove Moses to such complete exasperation? Why did the people want meat to eat? Why were they weeping over this issue when they had faced far worse situations? Did Moses feel inadequate placed in the middle between God's fiery anger and the people's disappointment and frustrations?

Everyone in this part of the story is frustrated and upset; God is angry, the people are weeping and Moses is feeling hopeless. All parties are focused on their own concerns and feelings of being slighted. Here God, Moses and the people are not working together but pulling each other apart.

God's recommended solution is for Moses to share his task, to share that responsibility with the people. God instructs Moses to select 70 responsible people from within the community and God promises to put within them some of the spirit (rooah) of Moses. Now the model of leadership has changed significantly and positively. The leadership is now no longer Moses on his own, something of his leadership and divine inspiration has been embedded in the members of the people who are joining Moses

2001

40th Anniversary celebrations





Our Jubilee Portion

29

“They will bear the responsibility with you and you will then not have to bear the responsibility on your own, alone.”

Kate responds:

Perhaps the word used to describe the malcontents sheds some light on the situation. **Hasafsuf** contains the root of the verb **asaf**—“to gather” (alef-samech-pei). They were not just complaining; they were gathering to complain. Did Moses fear that things really were getting out of hand?

The “gathering” of the riffraff is now counterbalanced by God’s instruction to Moses: “Gather to me (**esefah-li**) seventy responsible elders from within the community”(11v16), promising to “put upon them the spirit (ruach) that is upon you”. These are gathered (**vaye-esof** 11v24) at the Tent, and then having received the ruach they are gathered back-welcomed?- (**vaye-aseif** 11v30) into the camp. This would indicate a complete change of mood among the

Israelites. Two of those left behind even (Eldad and Medad) have also received the spirit of prophecy, and Moses’ return of confidence is indicated by his “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets!”.

Kate Withers

Kate has been running a monthly shiur to study the weekly portion for many years now.

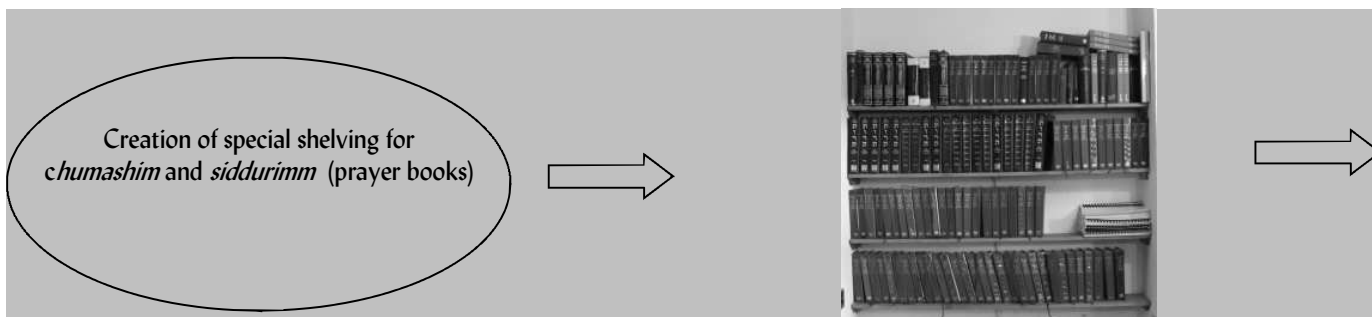


Rebecca writes continued

in taking up the responsibility of meeting the people’s needs. “They will bear the responsibility with you and you will then not have to bear the responsibility on your own, alone.”

The resolution comes from within the people themselves and thus a bridge is built between Moses and the people and a workable system of community management is born.

Rebecca Lissak





Members of BWPJC participate in a wide range of Jewish activities and events, being members variously of many different groups including WIZO, DAVAR and the Bristol Jewish Book Group.

DAVAR

The Jewish Cultural Institute in Bristol and the South West

DAVAR is an independent cultural organisation promoting events relating to Jewish heritage and culture. We are inclusive, welcoming and our events are open to all, regardless of ethnic origin or religious affiliation.

DAVAR provides a forum for advancing appreciation and understanding of Jewish life, culture and history through promoting events such as lectures, concerts, art exhibitions, debates, workshops and films.

Every season includes a series of films, talks and social events on Jewish topics and themes.

Taken from the DAVAR website.



(Women's International Zionist Organisation) was established in 1920 and now has more than 250,000

members. 40 are in Bristol.

WIZO's goal is to raise funds to fund vital social welfare work for the people of Israel. Its projects respond to the challenges that arise in Israeli society through every stage of life.

The Bristol Group was established in 1955 but forty-four years later it was floundering and it was felt that this long established Group would close. An advertisement appeared in Alonim and Melly, Sylvia and I went along and said we would do what we could to attract members from BWPJC. Thanks to your help once again we have a flourishing WIZO Group in Bristol. In 2005 we

celebrated our 50th Anniversary and two of our founder members, Kate Lever and Ruth Curwen were presented with life time achievement awards.

Since 1999 I have been delighted by the support of the members of our community for WIZO. They have supported our lunches, brunches, afternoon teas and quiz evenings as well as giving generously to JWW.

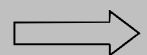
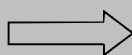
WIZO gives us another opportunity to work with our friends in Park Row as a united Jewish Community. I feel very honoured to be the Chairman of our group.



Ruth Baker

2001

Library expanded to include adult books as a result of a £5,000 bequest to purchase books





A community within a community 31

The book group, comprised of members of both BWPJC and Bristol Hebrew Congregation, has been meeting in peoples' homes for around 10 years to discuss books and drink plenty of mint tea. Books usually, though not always, have some aspect of Jewish interest, whether a Jewish subject or author. Each book is recommended and introduced by a member of the group, which has provided an opportunity for all of us to discover many new books and authors we might never have come

across otherwise. Our meetings are always enriching, with illuminating discussions often carried out in a spirit of friendly disagreement. Below is a list – as complete as my memory and the evidence from my bookshelf has allowed – of the books we have read over the years.

Keren Durant

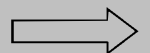
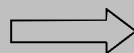
On behalf of the current members of the Bristol Jewish Book Club

The Red Tent - Anita Diamant
Five Photos of my Wife - Agnes Desarthe
Carry me across the Water - Ethan Canin
Fugitive Pieces - Anne Michaels
The Dark Room - Rachel Seiffert
My Name is Asher Lev - ChaimPotok
The Gift of Asher Lev - ChaimPotok
I, Dreyfus - Bernice Rubens
The Book of Israel - Jeremy Gavron
Austerlitz - W.G.Se bald
Job - Joseph Roth
The Radetzky March - Joseph Roth
Lost in Translation - Eva Hoffman
The Reader - Bernard Schlink
Address Unknown - Kressman Taylor
The Bookseller of Kabul - AsneSeierstad
The People on the Street - Linda Grant
Letters to Auntie Fori - Martin Gilbert
Jacob's Gift - Jonathan Freedland
Maus - Art Spiegelman
The Blue Mountain - Meir Shalev
The Ladies Auxiliary - TovaMirvis
The Song of Names - Norman Lebrecht
QBVII - Leon Uris

Suite Francaise - Irene Nemirovsky
David Golder - Irene Nemirovsky
Martha Quest - Doris Lessing
The Lemon Tree - Sandy Tolan
People of the Book - Geraldine Brooks
The Lover - A.B.Yehoshua
Gilead - Marilynne Robinson
Goodbye Columbus - Philip Roth
A Tale of Love and Darkness - Amos Oz
Last Waltz in Vienna - George Clare
Coming up for Air - Howard Jacobson
The Clothes on their Backs - Linda Grant
In my Father's Court - Isaac Bashevis Singer
The Manor - Isaac Bashevis Singer
The Reluctant Fundamentalist - Mohsin Hamid
A Thousand Splendid Suns - KhaledHosseini
The History of Love - Nicole Kraus
The Periodic Table - Primo Levi
The Believers - Zoe Heller
The Invisible Wall - Harry Bernstein
The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit - LucetteLagnado
The Leopard - Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa
The Finkler Question - Howard Jacobson

2003

Official opening of the newly extended building





I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone for my welcome into Bristol and West Progressive Synagogue. I would just like to say a few words on the question so many Jewish people have asked me: Why do you want to be Jewish? Throughout my life I have always had contact with Judaism. I have been fortunate enough to know some Jewish people whose ethical integrity has had a very great influence on my life. I feel coming to Judaism is a very natural process and I feel very at home with the way Judaism thinks about the world. What I have found is that I have been able to enter a world that is much richer than I had anticipated and I find myself continually amazed by how Judaism works on so many different levels touching so many areas of life.

My respect for the people who have built this community in Bristol and who voluntarily carry on a tradition that has been developed with sensitivity, intelligence and insight over centuries only increases the more my knowledge of Judaism increases. I have found Progressive Judaism to be very much a living religion. Thank you for having me in your community.

Lynn Johnston

First published in Alonim

High Holy Days issue 5761



How can I convey what the community at Bannerman Road means to me? I came as a nervous visitor in September 2001, not sure what I was looking for, but convinced as I walked home that afternoon that I had found it. I now understand a little better what 'it' is. I hope I can help others find it as well.

David Dwek.



I was born into a disintegrating German Reform Jewish family and ever since then I have been looking for a place to belong. I have found this sense of belonging in BWPJC and, in gratitude for all the friendship and loving support I have received, I enjoy looking after the synagogue building. I have to make clear, however, that Vicky, our cleaner, is very conscientious and the person who does all the real work. Whilst carrying out my various housekeeping duties I have the opportunity

for a lot of thinking in the peaceful ambience of the synagogue. So I am still a philosopher, but now a philosopher who knows she has come home.

Sylvia Murray

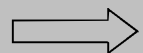
Extract from a Profile article, November 2000

Breastplate of the smaller scroll



2002

Ark and *bimah* table were both made by carpenter Selina, daughter of Jo Mitford





I was welcomed back into Judaism at South London Liberal Synagogue in 2002, but circumstances changed and I got my call to move west. Top of my priorities was to find a good synagogue, so I looked at various newsletters. The BWPJC one was filled with enticing events and loads of activities. I came to Bristol overnight to check out other things, but also to visit the synagogue. It was the middle of August and hardly anyone was there, but I remember chatting with Robert Hurst and David Jewell – of course I was sold on the spot.

A couple of months later I had moved and was sitting in shul for a Shabbat service led by Ron. The portion, unbelievably was the one in which God tells Abraham to 'go west'. That seemed to harbour well.

Joining a new community can be difficult. I'd left most of my friends in London. I didn't know anyone and a few weeks after I'd joined I was feeling sort of at sea. Everyone was completely friendly but I still felt an outsider, until the morning Ruth Baker suggested I help with the washing up. Then I knew I was a part of the community – and I even enjoyed it.

So what are my highlights? There are already so many in so few years. My own *bat mitzvah*, with inspiring mentoring from David Jewell. I still remember him being surprised that so many people had turned up for the occasion. 'They must really respect you,' he said. That was

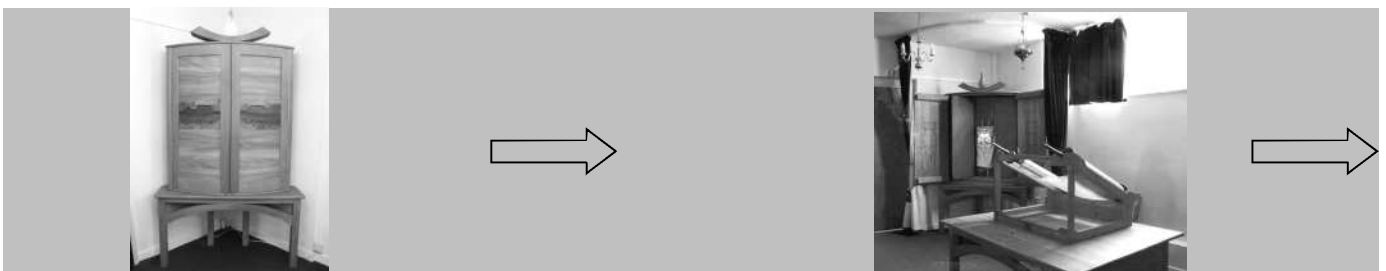
definitely one of the most special days of my life. But before that there was Robert Hurst's request that I do a small portion of his *bar mitzvah* anniversary service. That was when I realised that if you asked what makes BWPJC unique it would have to be the word 'enabling'.

There have been special times when the synagogue has been packed on High Holy Days, so wonderful to look around and realise that I know and trust so many of these people, and more recently on David Jewell's own *bar mitzvah*. The sanctuary was filled to overflowing, so back to you David with the comment, but I knew that already.

There have also been moments of awe, such as Jose Brill's *bat mitzvah* which I felt truly honoured to experience. Moments of wonder such as Isabel Wagen's funeral which was a real celebration of an incredible woman's life. Moments of spiritual sharing during Rosh Chodesh groups. Moments of joy such as *chanukah* candles burning in a room packed full of families. And moments of quiet industry, such as sharing the planning of Alonim with Malcolm Rawles, who became a good friend as we worked together. My years on Alonim have given me enormous pleasure.

So for the future, for me more of the same – sharing, loving, enabling, expanding, growing together in a spiritual, nurturing, extended family.

Judy Goldsmith





As one of the longer-lasting current members of the community (and that's quite difficult to write; the role of elder statesman is one I feel very uncomfortable with) I was asked to contribute my favourite stories for Alonim. At first there's nothing. Then, preparing from the master list of *yahrzeits* the names of those members no longer with us, some fragments of memory come back. There was Neville Lewisohn, who retained the dignified reticence he had learned as a civil servant and who chaired the committee that restored the community's integrity when it threatened to break up some years ago. There's a picture of him helping to lay the floor of the synagogue when the building was first bought, and there are the three chairs in the prayer hall given by him in memory of his wife.

I remember Tony Smyth, apologising to me one day that he wouldn't be present at my service the following week because he was going to be in the annual service for survivors of the Battle of Britain, and then adding with a twinkle how pleased he was to see that he was one the very few still able to get into his uniform.

Hilary Kay, so moved every time there was a bar or bat mitzvah that there was some hope in continuity.

There was Eve McHugh, who was so welcoming to me when I first joined and who died tragically young, a great loss to the community. And of course, Jo Schapiro. I have quoted him lots of times (most recently yesterday), and he always claimed he could

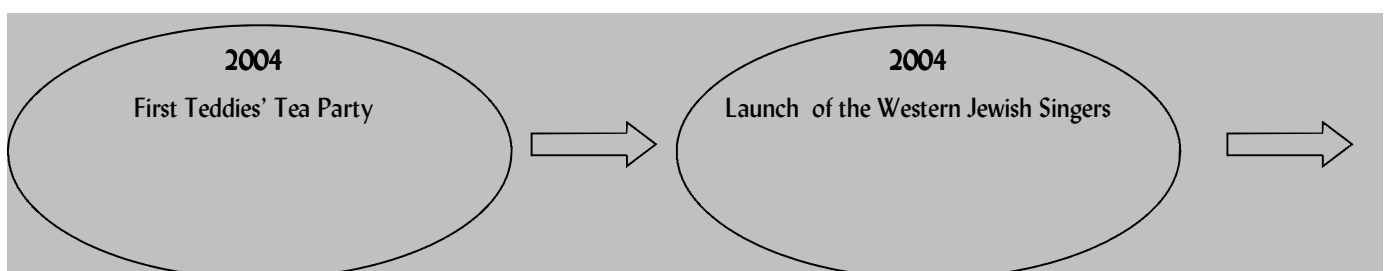
never remember having written the things that had influenced me so powerfully. On another occasion he contributed to a service that my son Sam and Andrew Sims had agreed to lead with a sweet complaint of having been 'bullied by these bar mitzvah boys'. My life has been enriched by them all - *zicharon l'vracha*.

Two other stories:

When I first joined I went to talk to our current Rabbi who asked me to tell him my story, which I did. As I finished he started 'Well, that sounds a bit like my story.' Unable to resist a joke, I immediately interrupted with 'Oh good heavens, I hope that doesn't mean I am going to become a rabbi.' Perhaps as this was the first time he had met me, he did look just a little surprised, but only for a few moments.

Here is the story that makes me happiest to be a member of this community. I arrived one Saturday, to be told not only that there was no service leader, but also that nobody knew who it was supposed to be. Without one turning up, we simply did the service: I led, Melly read the portion (from the *sefer torah*) and Jo Schapiro gave an impromptu sermon. Being able to do this between us, and without any preparation gave a wonderful sense of the strengths of the community.

David Jewell





Some years ago, during the time that Hadassah Davies was our Rabbi, there used to be an annual retreat. A group of adults of all ages, shapes and sizes, would go with Hadassah and her husband Roger Burkeman to a quiet retreat centre, where we'd spend the weekend in beautiful surroundings. There would be informal services, creative workshops, good food, and, on Saturday evening, some lighthearted fun and games and lots of chocolate!

It was a wonderful opportunity to spend some quality time together, and to get to know each other in a different context. We always did some interesting creative work, talked about all kinds of things, ate well, laughed a lot, and even occasionally cried a little. I'm sure that those members of the community who experienced these retreats have happy memories. I don't remember exactly who was there each time, but in November 1996, when I wrote this poem, I think I can recall Rabbi Hadassah, Roger Burkeman, Joe Schapiro, Jon Stein and Max Kammerling standing with me, and others in a circle...

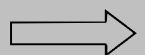
Sheila Yeger

Let us give thanks
For winter sun on copper beech,
For the last white rose of summer,
The mellow comfort of old stones,
Old trees, old faces.
For those who fiercely believe,
And those who fiercely doubt.
For those who lead,
And those who follow.
For what is spoken,
And what is left unsaid.
For cake and candlelight,
For song and laughter,
For healing harmonies,
The primitive pleasures of paint.
For the chance to grow,
And the freedom to be a child.
For the breath I breathe,
And the Breath which breathes through me.
For those few precious days,
This time, this space,
This bread, this wine, this life.
Give thanks.

PRAYER

2005

Installation of the Ark window by Linda and Robert Hurst in memory of their granddaughter, Bronnie (Bronwyn Francesca Hurst) who passed away in 2004





May 2011, Bristol: I am a ceramic box, bold and solid. My cylindrical front is emblazoned with the Hebrew letter **ש**, black against a stone-coloured frame. The **ש** is curved and boat-shaped, like a sailboat with one upright passenger, journeying forth undaunted. Above and below the **ש** I am decorated with turquoise and brown triangular stripes and symmetrically aligned gouges. I am handsome in a primitive, folky way. I am in position, fixed at a slight angle on the front doorpost, blessing all who enter this home. Finally I am where I'm meant to be. But it's taken a very long time.

July 1968, Jerusalem: I am on display in a shop selling kitsch Judaica. With me are seder plates, menorahs, Shabbat candle sticks, other mezuzah cases. My companions are embarrassingly tacky and crude. I, who radiate style and substance, am fortunate not to have to associate with them for long. An American girl, nearly 16, studying Hebrew in a Netanya ulpan, chooses me. She introduces herself as Lisa. I applaud her good taste and look forward to her return home where I expect to be enthroned on the doorpost in due course.

September 1974, Oakland: I am hanging around in a cupboard in a California commune where Lisa is living with a British entomologist, two heterosexual couples and their babies, a boat builder named Pong, a ground squirrel named Cholmondely Marchbanks, five laying hens and a pink sea worm that writhes seductively in an

aquarium in the dining room. In the cupboard with me are old birthday cards, souvenirs from a holiday in Mexico, and letters from Aunt Dorothy – all of us too precious to discard but not precious enough to take our rightful place in her home.

September 1988, North London: I am in a toy box buried under a mountain of lego pieces. Lisa is on the phone to her mother in America:

“Mom, I want Dena to go to this Jewish nursery school around the corner and they want proof of our Jewishness. They asked for a Jewish marriage contract which obviously I don't have since I'm not married but they said they'll accept yours. Can you dig out your ketubah for me?”

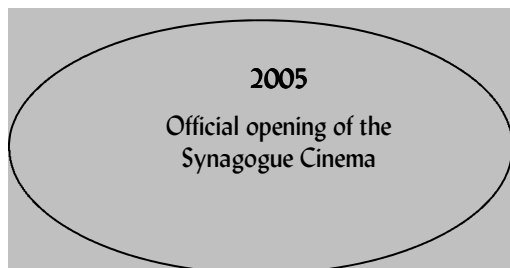
Lisa holds the phone away from her ear as her mother's voice booms into the room. “I should know what a *ketubah* is? We're Reform Jews. We've never been

into that Jewish stuff, not like you when you were thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. Thank God you got over that when you came back from Israel.” “Mom, it's a marriage contract. You had a Jewish wedding ceremony so you....”

“You wouldn't let us eat bacon. You walked two miles every Saturday to an Orthodox synagogue. You wouldn't let us eat crab or meat with milk. You just had to go the whole hog, didn't you?”

“Mo-om,” she wails, sounding like a teenager. “You just don't get it do you? Leave the hog out of it.”

“You've always been an all-or-nothing kind of person. Anyway I thought you were into Buddhism, not Judaism. I don't know. I just





A journey to community

37

can't keep up."

"You're right but since I had Dena, I've wanted something Jewish to share with her – something like a sense of belonging to a clan. I want to be part of something bigger than this single mother –single child family unit I've got. I want the comfort of familiarity, the warm glow I get from Jewish foods, humour, music and gatherings of Jewish people."

In the toy box, I allow myself to feel a warm glow of hope. I might end up on that doorpost yet.

May 1994, North London: I've been thrown into the back of a drawer. The north London religious Jewish community isn't willing to open its arms to a lesbian mother. Dena is sent to a local state school renowned for its multicultural population, its celebration of diversity and its militant secularism. Occasionally Lisa and Dena go to a Jewish Socialist Group *seder* or *chanukah* party. They even light a few Shabbat candles but I can tell that Lisa feels like a hypocrite saying the blessings and praising a God she doesn't believe in. The warm glow of hope I felt fades.

November 2005, Israeli-occupied West Bank: I am in Bristol but distance is no barrier to the divine sparks that Lisa is sending to me from her trip with the Compassionate Listening project. It is her first conscious act of *tikkun olam* and she is raising the divine sparks with the people committed to the Jewish values of justice, truth and peace. Into my core she places the divine sparks she's raised from the community of people of conscience, Jews and non-Jews, Israelis and Palestinians, who refuse silence rather than complicity with injustice.

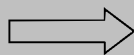
March 2006, Bristol: I'm getting closer. No longer languishing in a dark drawer, I'm now on a shelf in the living room, visible to all. Lisa has approached the progressive synagogue and Rabbi Ron has come over for a chat. Lisa is telling him about the Compassionate Listening project and is offering to lead workshops for members of the congregation. The rabbi says, "I think you would have a lot more credibility if you were a member of our congregation. Then you could run these workshops as an insider." Lisa makes a face. "But Rabbi, I'm not religious." Unfazed, Ron says simply, "Compassion is a spiritual value." Lisa nods and signs on the dotted line. I nearly fall off the shelf in surprise.

April 2011, Bristol: I am in Lisa's kitchen. Ron is rolling a tiny parchment scroll around a skewer, preparing to insert it in through the slit in my back. He has laboured with meticulous care scribing this scroll and it has been admired by the group assembled for the house consecration ceremony. As it's inserted, I am filled with the presence of the *shekhina*. I am raised for all to see and I say, "May I serve as a reminder, to those who live in this home and those who visit it, that it is a sanctuary. Let it be filled with the beauty of holiness and the warmth of love. Whenever they enter and whenever they leave, may the guest and the stranger feel a little of its holiness and its tranquillity and be enhanced." Proud and fulfilled, I praise you, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, that You have kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

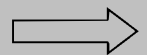
Lisa Saffron

2006

Start of Elonim. A quick email catch up of dates that missed Alonim.



E-LONIM





In 1989 we'd been in Bristol for five years before we ventured to the Progressive Synagogue in Bannerman Road, about which we knew very little, apart from occasional reference to it by members of Park Row.

We decided to make a Friday night service our first visit and duly set off from home in plenty of time. However, not being familiar with much of Bristol, we became hopelessly lost and eventually arrived about 15 minutes after the start of the service. Being regular Synagogue-goers, we felt uncomfortable about arriving so late, particularly for our first visit, and decided to head home and try again the following week. At least we now knew where it was. (Since that moment, we have always encouraged visitors to arrive in daylight for the first time as we have our own experience of getting lost!)

So, one week later we set off again and arrived in good time at the Synagogue. It was not as we know it now, but before the third house was purchased, so the layout was somewhat different. The first person to greet us was none other than Mavis Hyams who enveloped us with a hugely warm welcome. We had a mutual contact in Solihull which immediately gave us something in common.

Glancing round the sanctuary was something like 'coming home' as in the corner was the old Ark that had stood in Polack's House and was regularly used by none other than.....Robert Hurst when at Clifton College between 1955 and 1960. A significant moment.

During Robert's last term at Polack's, a regular visitor there on Shabbat sang lustily in the back row and Robert discovered that he was his Grandfather's nephew. That visitor was none other than Len Hart from York who went on to found our Synagogue the following year.

That first Friday night at Bannerman Road was rather a momentous occasion, not just for us, as we well remember another member walking in and excitedly announcing that Rabbi Ron Berry was going to become our own Rabbi. Another significant moment.

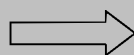
Linda and Robert Hurst

May 2011

The artwork on the facing page is a small sample of the work displayed around the synagogue building. Have you seen it? Can you identify the artists? All are or have been members of our congregation.

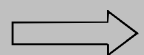
2006

Launch of The Venturers, a club for the over 50s to venture far and wide.



2006

Start of Salaam Shalom Internet Radio

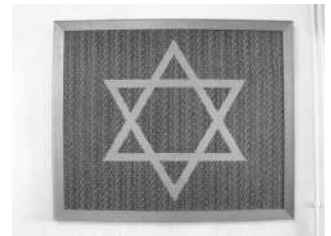
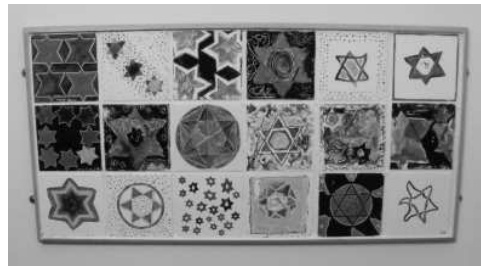




An artistic community

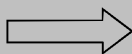


The photos here, and many others in the book, were taken by **Carol Goldsmith**.

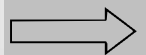


2007

First Tu b'shevat seder



A shabbat meal displayed in the synagogue.





I first want to convey my warmest greetings to the members and leaders of BWPJC on the celebration of your 50th anniversary.

The roots of my Rabbinic career go back to my childhood. My mother always appreciated tradition but never quite instilled her love of God and Judaism in her children. As I was her last one, she decided that she ought to try with me. She sent me to a Jewish religious school and made sure I attended synagogue regularly. It worked.

At the age of 11, I decided that I had to take my relationship with God a step further and I asked if I could attend a *yeshivah*. I spent a year praying three times a day, studying mostly *mishnah*, *talmud* and Jewish law and eating (sometimes). I enjoyed my first few months at the *yeshivah* but I found it increasingly difficult to ignore some big issues. We were brainwashed from dawn to dusk (and beyond) and we weren't allowed to think beyond the religious framework indoctrinated into us. Our teachers taught us to look down on secular Jews and non-Jews who were 'unfortunate and did not merit to see the light of Torah'. This did not reconcile with my belief that all people were created *b'tzelem Elohim* - in the image of God. At the time I thought my faith in God was lost forever. But, although I rejected some of the teaching there, there were many ideas and ethical teachings that I loved and cherished and I still do today. Still, I had to tuck away my relationship with God for the next 13 years, until I arrived in Bristol.

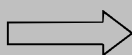
In 1991 I met, at Kibbutz Yahel, a lovely young lady named Clare. She spent a gap year in Israel with ULPSNYC (today LJY Netzer) and she was soon going to study medicine in Bristol. I decided to follow her and do my own university degree there. When we arrived in Bristol, Clare started thinking about joining a progressive community. As an Israeli, this was a new concept for me; in Israel you don't need to join a synagogue or pay membership fees. You just step into a synagogue at any time and, if you like it, you can return any time. During my first few months in the Diaspora I realised that I was no longer surrounded by Judaism and that if I didn't take active steps to preserve my Jewish identity, it would wither away.

We visited BWPJC and immediately fell in love with everything it represented. Rabbi Hadassah Davies had just started her ministry. She was welcoming and understood our needs and made sure that there were no (financial or other) obstacles on our way into the community. Well after we were captured by Hadassah's charms, she continued to take care of us and ensured we remained involved and engaged with the community. With her gentle encouragement and guidance I started attending and leading services, sat on committees, took active participation in synagogue and communal events and taught adults and children. As an Israeli, it was important for me to join a community which was sympathetic to Israel and what it represents. Hadassah and many other members were enthusiastic supporters of Israel and we were both made to feel at home.

Another couple who encouraged and inspired me were Paul and Vanessa Freedman. They were both very involved in synagogue matters and very keen on promoting Judaism both within the community

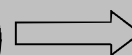
2007

Synagogue trip to Krakow



2007

Alonim awarded second prize in the category 'Best Synagogue Newsletter' by Jewish Community Media Awards





A rabbi from the community

41

and in Bristol as a whole. It was Paul who gave me the confidence and encouragement to lead my first service after a pause of 13 years. He introduced me to Progressive Jewish liturgy and to the software tools that can be used for composing Hebrew prayer books. Their gentle support and enthusiasm for all things Jewish encouraged me to increase my involvement in community affairs. It was no doubt Paul's decision to make a radical change to his life and attend the Rabbinic course at the Leo Baeck College that planted within me the seed of joining the Progressive Rabbinate. Paul is now the senior Rabbi at Radlett and Bushey Reform synagogue and we remain close friends and colleagues.

Another wonderful aspect of BWPJC is the community's willingness to accept new ideas and experiment with religion and spirituality. I recall with fondness David Jewell's all-English service, Sheila Yeger's meditational Friday nights, Paul and Vanessa's Egalitarian Masorti service and many other events. Some of the experiences were spiritual and uplifting, others perhaps less so. The willingness of the community to enable and encourage the combination of creativity and spirituality put service leaders at ease with prayer and undoubtedly contributed to my involvement with leading services at an early stage. One of the most significant contributions of BWPJC into my personal Rabbinic style is the willingness to empower and encourage the participation of congregation members of all ages and abilities in services and synagogue activities.

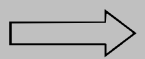
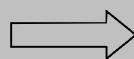
I served two years as an Honorary Treasurer of BWPJC which contributed greatly to my Rabbinic development. I have learned to be sensitive to people's needs yet remain firmly concerned about

the community's requirements as a whole. It taught me many of the human skills that a Rabbi should have when engaging with community members. It has also taught me that I am not destined for a glorious future as a Treasurer and I was happy to relinquish my financial record keeping responsibilities in favour of a more spiritual balance sheet.

After a few years in the computer industry I felt my destiny was elsewhere. It was a worrying time knowing that a change would mean financial instability for me and my family. Several people including my wife, Ruth Baker and other members of the community asked if I'd ever considered the Rabbinate. At first I dismissed the idea but as suggestions became persistent, I had to consider it. My mother's old idea of turning me into a Rabbi was again being revived. It took me time to warm up to the idea and even longer to pluck up the courage to leave a thriving industry in order to train for the Rabbinate.

Today, eight years after I left Bristol, I am serving as a Rabbi at Hendon reform Synagogue, a lovely, warm traditional and welcoming community in North West London. I absolutely believe that I made the right move for me and I love serving my community, teaching children and adults, enabling, leading and engaging with people of all ages and backgrounds. I also love Judaism and the Jewish connection between Heaven and earth, between the spiritual and physical, and between the universal and the particular.

Rabbi Yuval Keren





School Visits

Part from services I go to synagogue quite often to host school visits and so this is the time I tend to think just to myself about the building and what goes on within it's walls.

Does anybody remember the time the Western Jewish Social Club (for those of advancing years) meeting clashed with a school visit from a particularly recalcitrant bunch of 15 year olds? That was a classic.

Whenever I think of school visits I always remember one particular school. It was only a primary school but they came very well prepared. On the same day we were having a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting at synagogue and one of the committee members had

arrived early. He was happy to sit and look on. I always ask the children to stand up when I get the scroll out and this particular group jumped to their feet and were terribly excited and came up in small groups to have a closer look. Our SACRE visitor had a look too. What were those kids responding to I thought? He said 'they get fed so much twaddle that to see something like this touches something ... they will remember it'. So it was good to be able to enable that experience.

We have had happy times and moving times and plenty sad times. And the place is so modest and yet it has engendered many good things. We must try to keep it up.

Effie Romain



Reflections on Interfaith

I've served as our community's interfaith rep since taking over the role from Effie Romain in 2007.

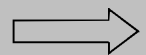
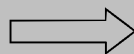
On the way, I've have the privilege to met Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Pagans, Buddhists, Baha'i's, and Christians. Each has had something to teach or share, and many have been interested to learn more about Judaism. We have found many fascinating areas of

common ground, and not a few areas of striking dissimilarity.

But I can see now that the work of interfaith dialogue is really not the exclusive preserve of designated reps or the ordained. A good many people in our community, most particularly our Rabbi and a number of members of both our community and Park Row, have given their time and energy to in many ways (attending meetings, to preparing songs or talks for the various interfaith events throughout the year and so on). We also had a splendid turnout and significant

2008

Finials for the scroll, made in memory of Robert Eisenthal 2008, designed and crafted by John Weiss





Salaam Shalom Internet Radio

In February 2007, a little bit of history was made in Bristol with the first internet broadcast from the studios of Salaam Shalom. The organisation was one of only five which used radio as the medium for stimulating Jewish and Muslim dialogue.

Why is this relevant to BWPJC? Because without the support of the synagogue Council back in 2006 when the idea of Salaam Shalom was first mooted; without the individual support and energy of volunteers including Michael Romain, Lisa Saffron, Valerie Emmott Russell and others, the project would not have survived.

To listen to an animated discussion on identity between the Aleph cheder group and watch as



Jewish *Reflections on Interfaith continued*

presence for our information stall and workshops at last November's 'Bristol Celebrates' major multifaith festival.

Looking back over this period, I've concluded that working to get to know people of other faiths and explaining our faith to others (whatever their faith or beliefs) is not just a mitzvah but an essential part of living in a multicultural city and country. We all have nearly daily opportunities for encounter with people from very different backgrounds and beliefs to our own. By looking with compassion

the community warmly welcomed Salaam Shalom's project manager, Zahir Malik, and his young son to a service, epitomised everything about Salaam Shalom.

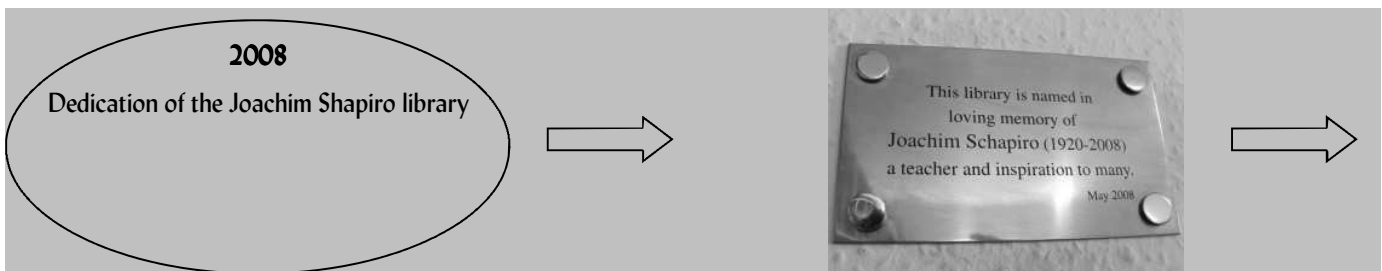
At the same time as our community looks back at its happy past and forward to a new and exciting future, so too does Salaam Shalom. With new offices and studio in central Bristol; a new project manager and a new direction in media and education, Salaam Shalom hopes to continue to workhand in hand with BWPJC to further understanding and dialogue between Bristol and the South West's Jewish, Muslim and wider cultural and faith communities.

Peter Brill

and interest at 'the other' and striving to understand the stereotyping and discrimination they may face, our social justice and community work will be deeper and go further.

In parshah Ekev, we are enjoined to love the stranger, for we were strangers once in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:19) Herein lies the abiding reason that interfaith work is an essential, outward-facing part of our community's life in society.

Valerie Russell Emmott





One of the most welcoming aspects for me and my family when we were new members was the possibility of getting involved in the community's weekend spent largely outdoors, which in summer 2001 was held at Slimbridge. What a wonderful opportunity to get to know people informally! It is so often catch as catch can following a service...

To name just a few people, Iris Segall and her husband Ismet, with a quite young Deniz, warmly guided us to the place and the activities, including the big barbeque always held on the Saturday evening. I remember bonding for the first time with Lisa Sacks over an industrial-sized sink of washing up. Many songs were accompanied on guitar and flute into the wee hours with Yoav Ben Shlomo and Gary Webber and others. For our son Jeffrey who was just three at the time, he could get to know children from the shul without it having to be via cheder and classroom time. We all learned more about Judaism, that vast fountain of wisdom and practices, from several people including Peter Walters. For my first foray into singing in this community, I offered the chant 'Mah Gadlu' as part of the Shabbat morning service.

I met some members' non-Jewish partners, which again gave me a sense of being joined in community in this aspect as well. Neil, my husband, enjoyed the quiz-orientated ramble in the woods (about Balak and Balaam, as I

recall), organised by the Walters family, and had fun with Jeffrey in the waters with the tethered canoe. Others' partners felt free to come and go throughout the weekend, which was just fine. Everyone kept an eye out for each other's children and the whole atmosphere felt like an extended proper Shabbat.

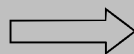
There emerged a general sense of being a relaxed, extended family enjoying time away from the city and life's normal routines with one's own partner, family, and existing shul friends and getting to know everyone else just a little bit better in the refreshing atmosphere of nature, amid relaxed art projects, around communal dining and via the dreaded rota which shares out the tasks to all.

All these are reasons why we have attended the community weekend for as many years it has been possible for us to do so, including when living out of the UK. When it is good, the community weekend is very, very good, and I would recommend it to everyone, whether you have children or not.

Valerie Emmott

2008

Creation of the stained glass windows on both front windows by the children of the congregation





Community weekends

45

Just a sample of four years, from so many years of fun.

2004



2009



How many of you have noticed the framed photos of the 2002 community weekend?



2008

Closing of the Telephone tree (for all but a very few) as most now on internet and able to receive emails



I remember the first time I ever came to the synagogue on Bannerman Road. It was about six years ago, just about halfway through my Jewish journey to date. I arrived in a taxi, far too early, extremely nervous, and terribly shy. It took all my courage just to press the bell, and my heart was pounding as I heard the faint sounds of someone approaching, and turning that lock at the top of the door which I have now turned so many times myself.

I was greeted by a quiet, gentle, smiling, but serious man, the warden for that Shabbat, Robert Eisenthal (may his memory be for a blessing.)

"Please come in and make yourself at home," he said, kindly, and with the driest of humour. "You can sit next to me, and help me with my Hebrew."

And so began my relationship with our community.

Like most relationships, it has its ups and downs, and its rough patches, its disagreements, and its stand offs. We are in a way, like a big family, and families, even when they love each other very much, are continually arguing and disputing with each other, and finding something to kvetch about.

We come from just about every background imaginable, from several different countries, and have extremely diverse approaches to and experiences of just what it means to be Jewish. Even amongst ourselves we do not seem to be able to agree on that issue.

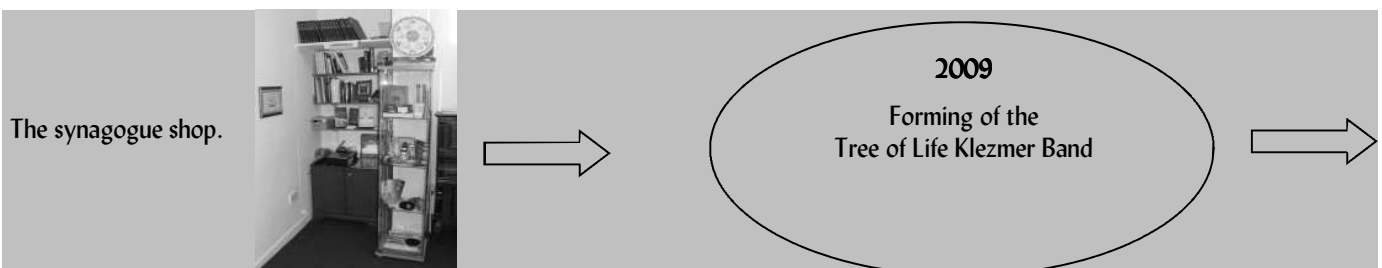
And yet, somehow we rub along. We stay

together. Together we keep our synagogue functioning as a place to meet, socialise, celebrate, commiserate, learn, and tune into the spiritual. When we're in a good mood, we might even say that we like each other. Perhaps, if we are really soaring, like in our Jubilee year, when we are looking back over fifty years of such togetherness, we might be able to finally admit, without feeling embarrassed about coming over all sentimental and fluffy, that we actually love each other!

I'm a relative newcomer to the community, but this occasion inspires me to express my love and gratitude to all its members for taking me in with such generosity of spirit, kindness, acceptance and support. Without each and every one of you, I would not have a Jewish life. Community is indeed everything, and all of you help to keep me sane and spiritually grounded. Included. Appreciated. Embraced. In short, you make me feel loved.

These six years I have spent in your company have been rich, nourishing and happy. The good friendships I have made here are deep and enduring. I have learned and experienced so many profound and wonderful things with you. With your help, I have grown and matured, and begun to discover what it really means to be Jewish. I hope we will be together for many good years to come. I just wanted to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU. From the bottom of my heart and with all my soul.

Miriam Patrick





Community festivals

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Purim



Pesach

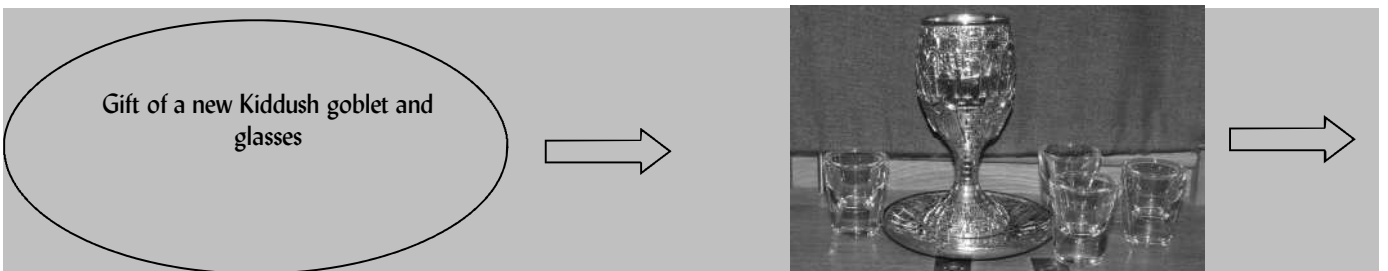
Sukkoth



Chanukah



Yom Ha'Atzmat





Six years down the road and the memories are as potent as ever. Six years ago, because Kathy Berry thought it would be a good idea, we had a *bat mitzvah* for our daughter Josephine. In the scheme of life-affirming events, there really are no words which can truly express our feelings then and now.

Josephine is profoundly disabled. She couldn't walk over to the Bimah, she couldn't say, let alone sing, her portion. She couldn't see the tears of pleasure and pride on our face or her little brother Asher proudly carrying a flag with her name on it as he paraded around the shul following the Torah scroll. But she could hear Rabbi Ron sing and read Hebrew words of prayer, she could hear her father Peter sing her portion, she could hear me faltering as I sang the prayer for the *Haftarah*. She could feel the gentle wind as Rabbi Ron lifted his tallit over her head.

Afterwards, reclining on a beanbag in our garage converted into a palatial suite for the event, she

greeted her guests with an occasional murmur and raise of her right hand in recognition of a familiar voice. She responded beautifully to touch massage offered to her by a trusted friend and she listened with great attention to the Hebrew spoken and sung in our beautiful marquee glistening with stars for our very own young star.

Good friends and family spoke lovingly about our Jose, recognising the impact she has on others. I watched Jose visibly relax as she listened to Peter's acappella group sing.

I can't remember whether Jose gave any of her legendary roars that day; but I do know that the day meant everything to me and made me realise that this was more than just acceptance of my daughter into the community; it was a celebration of who she really is. And it was a rite of passage for us as a family.

Sheila Brill

Some members who have been head of cheder

Henry Harris

Yuval Keren

Iris Segal

Phillip Carmen

Keren Durant

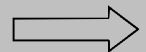
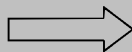
Hanan Moller

Sally Webber

David Dwek

2009

Creation of the clay alphabet





A community cheder



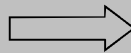
Cheder teachers in 2010 and here and on the following page a few examples of the heart and soul of our community—our children.

We now have members of our community who, as children, attended our cheder and are now bringing their own children to cheder. That's something to celebrate.



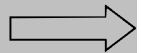
2010

Elonim moves to monthly. Alonim moves to quarterly



2010

Establishment of a post *bnei mitzvah* group for young people





At the 50th anniversary of the Synagogue, we are doubtless going to be lovingly remembering the wonderful memories that have come out of the community over the last half-century, and no doubt everyone will be looking forward to many more decades to come.

So with all of the older members of the congregation feeling all nostalgic, it's fantastic to have an outlet for the younger generation. Over the last couple of months, the synagogue youth group – FUJ – has grown to around 15 members.

I should probably explain the reasons for the name FUJ; it's short and snappy, loosely based around the acronym 'Fun Jews', and on the central idea that almost everyone likes fudge. So with the addition of the group leader Sam Cohen, a student at Bristol University and future LJY movement worker, it was always going to be a success.

The members of FUJ are mostly 13-18 year olds, and it is a great opportunity to join in with activities and games, and meet other Jews who aren't twice or three times our own age for once. We've been meeting around once a month, on a Saturday afternoon, and in the last few meetings we've done everything from discussing our own Jewish identity to cooking

vegetarian fajitas, and from competitions to name all the horcruxes in Harry Potter to rap battles! In future we're hoping to organise a sleepover or a group trip, particularly for some very Jewish paintballing!

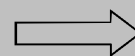
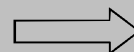
One of my favourite things about the group is that it's accessible for teenagers, whilst still including a Jewish element. We're at an age where we all have busy lives and big exams approaching, some of us are preparing to go to university or college, and it's easy to forget about your religion in the middle of all this rush, especially when compared with a nice lie in, the service is not always the most attractive option. So having an easy, relaxed social group set in the synagogue is the perfect way to keep in touch (particularly since it's in the afternoon).

We're open to any new teenagers who want to come along; we always have a laugh, have fun, and most importantly for any Jew, have some food!

Hopefully the group will continue to go from strength to strength, and maybe in another 50 years time it'll be us that are being all nostalgic about the time we're spending now!

Dan Squire

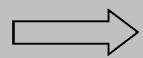
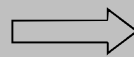
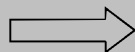
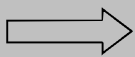
This space has been left blank in preparation for the next chapter in the life of Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation







The community's future

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Editorial and Production Team	<i>Sheila Brill - editor-in-chief</i> <i>Judy Goldsmith - assistant editor</i> <i>Judy Goldsmith and Sheila Brill—lay out</i> <i>Lynn Johnston - Alonim editor</i> <i>Sheila Brill & Miranda Harris— proof-readers</i> <i>Lisa Saffron and Sheila Brill - E-lonim and email Alonim distributors</i> <i>Ted Truett & Rebecca Eastley - Alonim postal distributors</i>
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 **ALONIM** Newsletter of The Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation

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