

Bristol Hebrew Congregation

Charity Number 1139964

Bank Accounts - movement for the year ending 31st July 2015

Esther White ACA
Chartered Accountants
236 Henleaze Road, Henleaze, Bristol BS9 4NG
Tel: 0117 962 5708 Email: esther@estherwhite.com



	2014/15	2013/14
Income		
Members Contributions	7,106	6,653
Women's Guild	138	200
Chevra Kadisha	188	372
Board of Deputies	193	200
Donations and Offerings	7,224	13,400
Investment Income	4,024	4,091
Rental Income - Net after expenses	23,405	18,689
Syngenta - sale of shares	1,448	
Justgiving	314	
	44,040	43,605

	2014/15	2013/14
Expenditure		
Ministerial Assistance	5,400	10,522
Women's Guild	0	288
Gas	716	1,138
Electricity	318	259
Rates (Water & General)	309	182
Telephone	200	192
Insurance	4,520	5,475
Subscriptions & Donations	216	2,649
Repairs, Maintenance & Cleaning	24,520	15,953
Recorder	224	437
Wine and provisions	649	1,752
Rental Expenses	3,910	
Legal Expenses	4,982	0
School visits	40	470
Sundries	0	832
	46,004	40,150

Movement for the period	-£1,964	£3,455
Bank Balance Brought Forward	£16,793	£14,931
	£14,829	£18,386

Bank Balance Carried Forward	£14,829	£16,793
Trade Debtors @ 31st July 2015	£0	£1,593
	£14,829	£18,386

Approved by



Esther White ACA
DATE 13th January 2016

Investment Schedule

EEA Fund Management		Value @ *	01-Jul-15	£24,757.41
Smith & Williamson - Investments		Value @	31-Jul-15	£160,552.00
594 Imperial Tobacco Shares	2588 per share	Value @	31-Jul-15	£19,988.00 Per AG Notes
281 Astra Zeneca Shares	4366 per share	Value @	31-Jul-15	£12,225.00 Per AG Notes
				£217,522.41

* nearest information available to the date

BRISTOL HEBREW CONGREGATION
Charity number 1139964

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 24th JANUARY 2016

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT for August 2014- July 2015

Although this report should officially conclude at the 31st July 2015, there have been a number of important matters that should be reported to the community at this time; so I have decided to unofficially extend this report to the first weeks of 2016.

Last year I reported that there had been difficult occasions during the year. I could repeat and underline that statement for the year now under review. Some of the difficulties I have found to be challenging, but none were depressing, as all were indicative of a community that is thinking about its future. For the first time in decades we have more people joining than leaving or departing this world. At the time of writing three membership applications are under consideration.

Congregation & Personal

The year under review has been dramatic if not historic! A special EGM was called by ten members of the community to consider whether Bristol Hebrew Congregation should actively negotiate with Masorti UK with a view to realigning itself to that denomination. That meeting took place directly after the last AGM on the 12th of December. Discussion was deep and often heated. Finally, after a secret ballot it was clear that the vote in favour of change had not achieved the required 75% of the votes cast. At that point, and but for wiser judgements, the community could have torn itself apart. As it transpired, matters were put on hold and at least some of the difficulties that had been experienced by some members of the community were addressed during two visits by the Chief Rabbi in March.

On matters of synagogue procedures he advised the community to consider its wider purpose and to be inclusive. He urged us to facilitate women who wish to say *kaddish*, similarly to enable women to give sermons and recite the prayer for the Royal Family and the State of Israel and to sit in an allocated area of the ground floor of the synagogue. All of these recommendations were accepted by the community at the community meeting on the 3rd August 2015.

As you will all know Rabbi Mark Daniels has been providing the community with services on a part time basis since the High Holy Days in 2014. He took a six month lease on a house in January 2015 and regularly took synagogue services from that time. He also began a series of evening lectures, proposed a course of Hebrew reading classes and most importantly, he began to visit congregants with an intention to engage them into the community. He also began to explore the possibility of setting up a conversion course to meet the needs of a number of would be converts who have become closely associated with this community. Mark Daniels was appointed as rabbi to the community on a consultancy basis on the 18th May 2015, and this was subsequently ratified at the community meeting on the 3rd August.

In 2015, Bristol acquired the presence two more rabbis. Avi Rosten became Student Chaplain to the ever growing number of Jewish students at the local universities. The Bristol J-Soc now has more than 150 members and it is estimated that the total number of Jewish students in the city probably exceeds 400. The year also saw the arrival of Chabad Rabbi Mendy Singer.

Both Avi and Mendy have been regular attendees at services, and have often assisted. At this point I would like to thank all of those who have officiated at our services, but particularly Leonard Glynn, Yorem Adoni and Hagai Bar Orien. It is so often difficult for small communities like ours to find people who are willing and able to take services. We have indeed been fortunate in these matters... and over the past few years those regular and occasional helpers have probably saved us from that moment when a congregation dies because there is no-one left to officiate.

On such matters our future is now more hopeful than it has been for some time.

Rather less encouraging was the turnout for the Service of Commemoration, on 15th April, to mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Bergen Belsen Camp. This was a civic event attended by Lord Mayor but, sadly, few of our congregants. To quote a former MP for Bristol: *Those who forget the past, condemn themselves to relive it...*

During the year the shul has held a number of events: Purim and Channuka parties, kiddushim, a couple of Bar Mitzvahs, evening lectures, a visit by Kahled Kaldi from the Israeli Embassy; indeed, all of the activities that make for an active community.

During the year we have lost some old friends including the indomitable Nat Smith and although not a member: Terry Parsons, who was our very able handy-man for very many years.

On matters of shul attendance, contrary to national trends: ours has gone up. Shabbos mornings now, usually get a minyan and sometimes considerably more. Our High Holydays were generally well attended, and certainly better than in previous years. For the first time in a number of years, we marked Tisha b'Av, and with a minyan! Bearing in mind the number of more observant students now in Bristol, Rabbis Daniels and Rosten did attempt to revive weekday morning services, but perhaps that is something for the future.

Cheder.

Our newly re-founded cheder has taken root, and we must thank some of our newer and younger members for pushing this most important project forward. Hopefully this will extend to older children and bar and bat mitzvah preparation.

Shul Buildings.

I trust you are all feeling moderately warm, at least. You are now enjoying the benefits of our new central heating system. The old one broke down, was instantly condemned as dangerous and the gas supply was officially cut off. The old boiler proved to be obsolete... Hence the new one.

We have also upgraded our cctv system. It now records: 24/7, and has in one instance recorded a strange and disturbing incident at 2.59 one morning, which was reported to the police.

Last year, I reported at some length on discussions that we were having with the B&WPJC community on the possibility of a joint development of the back part of our site. This is proving to be complex and there have been legal costs. However, it is for the B&WPJC to meet architects' fees from this point on. The shul council has decided that we have reached the point in this project where we really need a proper debate within this community on how we should develop the back part of the

site. There are at least six possibilities. I shall not go into them now, but rather leave the future for future discussion in which you will all be asked to partake.

Much depends on the university giving us some level of access. They have already indicated that they are favourable. I hope that the Vice Chancellor of the University will join a group of us to look around the shul and discuss future cooperation. Matters have been complicated by the back wall. We initially agreed with the university that this wall which has become unstable should be lowered. However, The university applied to the city council to obtain building regulation permission, and the council officer promptly recommended that the wall, which is historically part of Lunsford House, should be listed. This complicates matters but does not preclude the possibility of an entry being created through it. May I also point out that I was in no way involved in the recommendation or decision concerning the listing of the wall.

We and the Jewish Student Society have been in some correspondence with the university on the future use of Lunsford House. The students must soon vacate the Ark and Dove in Southleigh Road, and there was some thought given to Lunsford House as a replacement. However, the building is apparently in a poor condition, and is also listed to a higher grade than the shul.

Schools' visits & open days

We have held a number of open days in conjunction with local heritage and inter –denominational events. These have been very well attended.

Reflecting recent changes in the schools' curriculum we have been entertaining an increasing number of schools' visits. These have mostly been hosted by Helen Barcan and "Jay Jay" Martin, and I would like to thank them for their efforts. However, numbers have now obliged us to re-think; and it was Rabbi Daniels who drew our attention to the more organised system being used by Reading Hebrew Congregation. We have now adopted the same programme which a few of us witnessed working so well in Reading. Namely, the visit begins with a short talk in the synagogue. The group of children are then split into five or six groups, and taken to the shul hall where half a dozen tables are laid out with items relating to shabbos, the festivals and Jewish custom. At each table there is a member of the community to explain and engage with the children. At the end of the visit the children are given matzo, honey cake and fruit juice. These visits are scheduled for the second Monday of every month. To make these visits effective we do need to have at least six members of the community present. We do have a group of volunteers but with our timetable being nearly fully booked until July; some extra volunteers would be appreciated. I would like to stress that particularly at this time it is essential that children learn who we are.

Constitution

Later during this AGM you will be given an opportunity to vote on acceptance of the new CIO constitution. Much has already been explained and we will deal with any outstanding matters then. I would stress that we are recommending adoption of this new legal entity, so as to protect the community and its officers. Much of the format of the document is as required by the Charity Commissioners. Alongside this constitution we will draw up a rule book which will contain those more details requirements that are presently contained in the present constitution.

Epstein Trust

Many of you will not know much about the Epstein Trust. This was created by the late Cyril Epstein: one of our more colourful Bristol-born congregants. The trust gives Bristol Hebrew Congregation 80% of its income, mostly from a shop and flat in Cotham Hill. This has provided us with a good income for the last thirty years. There have been three trustees for all that time. Colin Berkovitch, Gerald Gee and Arnold Greenwood. Colin is now standing down, as of the 29th of this month. I think we can all extend our thanks to Colin for his efforts over so many years, and indeed we should thank the other two trustees, too. No doubt they will be appointing a new trustee to replace Colin, and I'm sure we can look forward to continued income from the assets that the trust holds.

No doubt some of you will have heard that I and subsequently the shul council have had some difference of opinion over the proposed sale of 24 Cotham Hill. I want to stress that it was a difference of opinion on the value of the building and whether it should be sold at this time. There are no hidden issues here. The shul council remains firmly of the opinion that the premises can continue to provide us with a good income and that under management, that income could even be increased. We are also of the opinion that Bristol is a rising market for house prices, and will continue to be so even after the changes to stamp duty in April.

I am personally also of the opinion that the building could well be of interest to developers, if the builders' yard at the rear comes up for re-development.

The next year.....

Will be hard work, but hopefully with new members to add to the old and with Mark Daniels back in harness on a consultancy basis, I hope we will hear no more about Bristol Hebrew Congregation being "in decline."

Alex Schlesinger. President.