

# **BRISTOL HEBREW CONGREGATION**

Incorporated Charity Number 1165722

Registered address: 9 Park Row, Bristol BS1

## **ANNUAL REPORT: 2017-2018**

Although, officially, this report should only cover the year up to April 2018, it will be appropriate for me to report on some factors and events beyond that date.

The year under review has been one of considerable activity for the board and the community. It might best be described as a year of raising the profile of Bristol Hebrew Congregation, and promoting ourselves in the wider community.

Despite former members moving away or passing away, we have a sufficient number of new members to enable us to have slightly increased our membership, which now stands at ninety two individuals. The old categories of family members and country members ceasing to apply when we became an incorporated charity.

We have continued to enjoy the professional services of three rabbis. The Chabad rabbi, Mendy Singer provides services through Chabad Bristol, whilst *Aish Rabbi Uri Jaskiel*, works with the burgeoning student population in Bristol as does the official student chaplain: Rabbi Alex Tsykin. All three have made their professional services available to the community, which for the first time in several years enabled us to hold high holy day services without having to employ cantors from elsewhere.

Improvements and maintenance work on the shul premises has been undertaken. The new kitchen was completed in the year under review, and the roofs of the shul and the shul house, last worked on in 1975, were both stripped back to the timbers, new insulation and water-proof membrane installed and the whole lot re-tiled. This latter undertaking was part funded through the Bristol Jewish Burial Society.

Through representatives, we have continued to negotiate with the Bristol University authorities. What has become clear is that the university will continue to refuse us any access via Medical Avenue, at the rear of the shul premises. We must therefore consider the best ways to develop the principal

part of the shul's site: namely the main building, the shul house, the old committee room and the yard.

Later in this meeting you will be given details of a proposal to be put to the university which, if it is accepted, will enable us to rebuild the old committee room, upgrade the flats in the shul house and put the ground between the shul house to community use.

The Frank Cohen Hall has come into more regular use by community demand, including the cheder, student groups and others. Indeed, for some appropriate activities we are even using the shul itself.

The shul has been open to the public for European Jewish Heritage Week and for the local Open Doors events. For reasons that have not been fully understood, the open day on the 9th September attracted several hundred visitors, perhaps nearly a thousand. I must note that all visitors have been very positive about the shul and the community.

We have also continued to receive school visits, although these are now fewer in number, possibly due to the cost to schools of organising outside visits.

Support of community volunteers in connexion with school visits has been essential and commendable. We have also entertained a number of visits from adult groups, normally associated with churches in the city. I cannot stress how important this outreach into the wider community is at the present time

In June of 2018 Bristol hosted the Limmud Conference. This was a huge event that had to be accommodated at Bristol Cathedral School. Some two hundred and fifty people attended the dozen lectures on Jewish cultural and religious subjects. As by far the largest Jewish event ever to have occurred in the city. I think we should all congratulate the dedicated few who made that day an outstanding event.

Our cheder continues and develops. Classes are now taking a more structured form and are being held more regularly and detailed programmes are being drawn up. Once again, our sincere thanks should go to those members of our community who run the Cheder

Hopefully, you will all be wondering how a committee going to administer all of these additional activities. We have already attached an on-line community calendar to the web site, and we are in the process of selecting a paid part time Events Co-ordinator who will work for one or two days a week.

Although there is much more to a functioning community than *Shabbos* morning attendances, they do remain a central part of our existence. Whilst attendance has been better than at some times in the past, they do still need more support. High holy day attendance was better than in recent years, with a *minyan* or more, occurring for nearly all festival services.....sometimes even at the start of the service.

Quite literally: the physical location of women's seating in the synagogue has continued to be vexatious. It was agreed two years ago that there would be a temporary *mechitza* at ground floor level; although a specially formed sub-group failed to report effectively. Before the most recent High Holy Days a last-minute, temporary and admittedly unsightly arrangement was created for a disabled lady who, in the event, failed to attend.

However, a few women did use the *mechitza*, even if only to better supervise their small children, who wander about the synagogue during services. The temporary arrangement has now been removed, and we plan to install a new, more elegant provision that meets the Chief Rabbi's *halachic* requirements.

During the year under review the shul council was approached on the possibility of creating a *mikva*. Bristol's last *mikva*, was in Dighton Street, and closed in 1892. We understand that there are a number of women in Bristol who now want access to a *mikva*, and we have been approached by a group in London who may provide the necessary funding and professional services to build a *mikva*, probably in the area between the shul house and the shul building. This will enable a separate access to the facility.

I now want to move onto some broader issues. Some four years ago this community discussed and narrowly rejected becoming *Masorti*. As a result of that vote a small *Masorti* community did come into being and has since folded. More recently, I have read one or two communications complaining about the format of our services and the apparent disappearance of familiar tunes. I'm sure that at least the latter issue can be dealt with very easily. And some aspects of the first issue are being addressed.

I find myself the president of a very diverse community. I like to think that I have the one necessary qualification for a president of BHC: namely a good sense of humour. However, there are some matters that are not for joking. We're an orthodox community by designation, although the word "orthodox" does not sit well with debate-loving Judaism. Let's say rather: the institution of

this synagogue, its public space, is *traditional* and what takes place in this community space has to be, to the best of our efforts: compliant. However, as I have said we are a diverse community, and hopefully we will also remain an open community; where our public space, this shul, will continue to be welcoming to all who are Jewish, or who might be Jewish, or who want to be Jewish, or who are just respectfully visiting. We will continue to do our best to provide enabling facilities for those who wish to be observant, and we will do our best to extend those provisions. We are even considering the possibility of using the shop in Cotham Hill and presently owned by the Epstein Trust as a future retail premises for kosher food and supplies. However, that does not mean to say that anyone is under some compulsion to use those facilities. We cannot be an ideal society of perfections.

Indeed, what you do once you have walked down those front steps is very much your own business. Park Row is not Stamford Hill.

Rather: use the facilities you choose to use, but do support and work for the whole our community with enthusiasm. Above all, treat each other and each others opinions with respect and kindness. We live in a world where the sky is darkening with old intolerances wrapped around with new dangers. If we as a tiny community cannot depend on each other, then who can we depend upon? There is a old injunction that a shul must have windows.....So obvious, that no-one states the fact: A shul must also have a doorway! And that door must remain open to all who present themselves with goodwill.

In a few days, and if my anaemia can be sorted out, I shall be going into hospital for surgery. If you re-elect me today I will not be active in the community until February. My duties will therefore fall to other members of the community.

To conclude, I must thank everyone who has worked so hard in the past year; and certainly we should all remember the loyal support of the late Hagai Bar Orien.

He would have been the first to say: This is your community. We're all Jews, so quarrel as much as you want.....but keep working.

Alex Schlesinger.

Hon President.

# Bristol Hebrew Congregation

Charity Number 1165722 (Incorporated 24th February 2016)

Bank Accounts - movement for the year ending 31st July 2018

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



	July 2018	July 2017
<b><u>Income</u></b>		
Members Contributions	£7,853.04	£8,714.22
Golden Giving	£462.11	£421.36
EEA Distribution	£13,000.00	£9,746.51
Sundry credit	£0.00	£14,880.00
Donations and Offerings	£4,643.70	£17,390.95
Investment Income	£4,216.58	£18,800.01
Gross Rental Income	£24,265.10	£16,083.20
Chevra Kadisha donation	£20,000.00	£0.00
Epstein Trust donation	£9,000.00	£0.00
School visits	£265.00	£0.00
	<b>£83,705.53</b>	<b>£86,036.25</b>

	July 2018	July 2017
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Ministerial Assistance	£15,130.00	£7,275.00
Gas	£887.64	£1,051.55
Electricity	£466.99	£411.60
Rates (Water & General)	£211.54	£160.88
Telephone	£199.20	£208.89
Insurance	£5,256.98	£4,949.69
Subscriptions & Donations	£1,190.00	£4,666.00
Repairs, Maintenance & Cleaning	£41,935.22	£74,080.09
Recorder	£742.34	£399.36
Wine and provisions	£1,781.35	£621.95
Legal Expenses	£0.00	£1,180.80
School visits	£36.57	£992.71
Accountancy	£630.00	£918.00
Subscription Refund	£240.00	£0.00
Talk	£404.50	£0.00
	<b>£69,112.33</b>	<b>£96,916.52</b>

Movement for the period	£14,593.20	-£10,880.27
Bank Balance Brought Forward / Introduced	-£150.31	£12,566.49
	<b>£14,442.89</b>	<b>£1,686.22</b>

Reconciled Bank Balance Carried Forward	<b>£14,442.89</b>	-£150.31
Gift Aid Refund due @ 31st July 2017	<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£1,836.53</b>

Approved by

Mr White

Esther White ACA  
DATE: 14th November 2018

## Investment Schedule

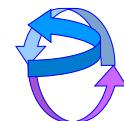
EEA Fund Management	Value @ * 31-Jul-18	£11,395.00
Smith & Williamson - Investments	Value @ 31-Jul-18	£220,991.00
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