

Thank You to Four Corners

I have reason to be grateful to "Four Corners". In a recent number a headline caught my eye – "wobbly gravestones in Dundee". As I was born and brought up in Dundee and several of my family are buried in the Jewish section of the cemetery, I made enquiries and, sure enough, my late father's stone was one of the wobbly ones. So I got in touch with the stonemasons and after a delay, no doubt because of winter weather, they have finally fixed it. As it happens I lit a yahrzeit light for him recently, on the eve of the 8th of Nissan. It is 61 years since he died of lung cancer.

There had been a very big crowd at his funeral (we women, of course, did not attend funerals in those days) because he had been a well-know amateur entertainer organizing and performing in variety shows in aid of charity. He was a magician, a member of the local magic circle, a song and tap-dance man and played the piano, banjo, ukulele and tin whistle. I don't know how he, a poor Glasgow Gorbals boy, had learned these instruments, but he was already using those skills in the army concert parties in Egypt and Palestine in the first World War.

My father, Harry Silver, had also been for a number of years the Secretary of the Dundee Hebrew Congregation and JNF representative for Dundee. When he died, in 1944, I took over the emptying of the blue and white boxes in people's homes. This was fascinating as it gave me an insight as to how people used the boxes, perhaps forgetting to fill them and just giving me a donation, or, in one case, using it as a swear box (and it was very full).

To change to a happier subject, the latest issue of "Four Corners" has a picture of Dundee Shul at Chanukah and my cousin Francine and her father Jack Miller are right in the middle of the crowd. So keep "Four Corners" coming – they're always worth reading.

SONIA FODOR (EXETER)

JEWISH LOGIC

After months of negotiation with the authorities, a Talmudist from Odessa was finally granted permission to visit Moscow. A young man boarded the same train at the station after him. The scholar looked at the young man and thought:

"He doesn't look like a peasant, so he probably comes from here. If so, he must be Jewish because this is a Jewish district. But if he's a Jew, where could he be going? I'm the only Jew in our district who has permission to go to Moscow. Ahh, outside Moscow there is a little village called Samvet, which doesn't require special permission. But why go there? He must be visiting one of the Jewish families there. But there are only two Jewish families in Samvet - the Bernsteins and the Steinbergs. The Bernsteins are a terrible family, such a nice looking fellow like him, he must be visiting the Steinbergs. But why? The Steinbergs have only two daughters, so maybe he's their son-in-law. If so, which daughter did he marry? They say that Sarah Steinberg married a nice lawyer from Budapest, and Esther a businessman from Zhitomer, so it must be Sarah's husband whose name is Alexander Cohen, if I'm not mistaken. But with all the anti-Semitism they have in Budapest, he must have changed his name. What's the Hungarian equivalent of Cohen? It is Kovacs. But since they allowed him to change his name, he must have special status to change it. What could it be? Must be a doctorate from the University. Nothing less would do.

At this point, the scholar of Talmud turns to the young man and says, "Excuse me. Do you mind if I open the window, Dr. Kovacs?"

"Not at all," answered the startled co-passenger. "But how is it that you know my name?"

"Ah ha," replied the Talmudist, "It was obvious."



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Welcome...

Welcome to the 6th issue of Four Corners; Israeli trades unionists in Dundee, new legislation to protect children, a book to read in the summer holiday and a questionnaire about being Jewish in Scotland.

Why a questionnaire? Because to represent the Scottish Jewish community SCoJeC needs to know what affects you. We're trying to improve the way we work but we can't do that on our own. SCoJeC only exists because the community exists – and YOU are the community. Please do complete the questionnaire – and feel free to tell us anything else that concerns you at the same time.

And whilst you've got your pen out – why not write an article for the next issue of Four Corners and slip it into the same envelope? What's happening in Dundee, Aberdeen, Oban and Lochgilphead? What are your childhood memories of being Jewish in Scotland? How has your community changed over the years? What do you see as the future? Four Corners is your newsletter - please fill it with your news and ideas.

Thank you to everyone who sent in their memories of Seder nights recent and not-so-recent. Look out for them in the next Pesach issue of Four Corners in Spring 2006.



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Please send us your comments about and contributions to Four Corners

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NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF SCoJeC.

FOUR CORNERS IS AVAILABLE ON THE WEB
www.j-scot.org.uk

Congratulations!

One whole year – wow! I've really enjoyed reading Four Corners and the challenge of writing something of interest to and linked with Scotland.

Aye, the fifth corner has been up to Scotland. Not much to write about as I had no contact with Jewish people – my friends are all non-Jewish.

Except one that is. Have you heard that Wigtown in South-West Scotland is a dedicated Book Town? Lots of bookshops - mostly specialist ones.

Well, a friend of a friend gave me a lovely surprise. Donna herself is an authoress – 'The House that Sugar Built' which is a 'faction' book based on the slave trade around the West Coast of Africa and Scottish Plantation owners in the West Indies.

So I came into Donna Brewster's house and the first thing I found was a large black woolly dog – now renamed – YOFFEE.....!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

"Oh" I said, "that means 'lovely' in Hebrew". Donna squeaked! "You are Jean's Jewish friend! Of course – I remember you!" Over coffee I found out why the excitement. She comes from America originally, and while in Israel found a lot of people with the surname Bensaul, which was Donna's mother's maiden name..... and research proved that Donna is Jewish! She is so pleased about this as she always has had a love for Israel and the Jewish people. She belongs to a Christian group called Prayers for Israel, and this is what they do. They pray for peace and stability, and, on the practical side, donate money and finance projects like drug rehabilitation in Israel itself.

Next year I will not go west as my health went west too – it was too tiring. So I hope to spend more time in Edinburgh and meet up with the community – PG next year.

Kingsmill, Allinson, Burgen and Sunblest Breads go Kosher

All Allied Bakeries breads have been certified as kosher with immediate effect, under the Sephardi Kashrut Authority. Among the more famous brands of bread are Kingsmill, Sunblest (bread and crumpets only), Allinson and Burgen. Additionally, the other products in the Kingsmill range such as rolls, muffins, crumpets and pancakes (dairy) are also kosher. Allied Bakeries, part of Associated British Foods, are the largest producer of bread in the UK. Some of their other products are already well known to the kosher consumer, including Ryvita, British Sugar (Silver Spoon), Twinings, Jackson's Teas and Mazola oil.

This is a tremendous breakthrough in Scotland, where there is only one kosher bakery. In times gone by it could be presumed that a bakery would just produce bread, but with modern food processing, many different products can be produced in the same premises, giving rise to doubts as to its purity.

Allied bakeries have thirteen factories, produce over 14 million loaves of bread a week and are the largest bread producer in the UK. The average loaf will utilise 100 ingredients in its production, all of which have to be fully investigated. This project by the Sephardi Kashrut Authority, to investigate ingredients, processes and equipment such as ovens, has been fully endorsed and monitored by the Sephardi Beth Din over the last six months.

During the course of the year, as packaging is replaced, the SKA logo will appear on the Kingsmill range of products. Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy OBE, Spiritual Head of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation, explained

"although it is preferable to buy bread from a Jewish Baker this bread is perfectly permitted in areas where no Jewish baked bread is available". Rabbi Levy continued "We wanted to make kosher facilities available to as large a section of British Jews as possible whilst giving our total support to local Jewish bakeries".

Congratulations on this achievement in making kosher products more readily available to the wider communities were received from the London Beth Din, The Federation of Synagogues and other rabbinical community leaders in the UK and Ireland.

SKA Executive Director, David Steinhof, said these products were available at most supermarkets and local convenience stores and most supermarket managers would be happy to arrange for the full Kingsmill range to be made available if this was requested by customers.

Lag B'Omer BBQ



The Sunday after Lag b'Omer, Polkemmet Park just off the M8 between Edinburgh and Glasgow, sunshine after a Shabbat of pouring rain, and more than 40 adults, teenagers, children and toddlers from Edinburgh and Glasgow talking, playing football, strolling in the woods and demonstrating their culinary skills through the dense and billowing smoke of a dozen barbecues.

Burned sausages, jacket potatoes done to a turn, bananas filled with melting chocolate, fruit kebabs all spiced with conversation and laughter, with young people from the two communities getting to know each other and planning to meet up again soon and with toddlers delighting in the opportunity to get messy with impunity.

Friendships made and friendships renewed; the latest film; the Edinburgh Festival; the doings of the great and not-so-good; plans for the Edinburgh youth Shabbaton; for the teenagers' Shabbaton in the Lake District; the trials of being a member of a shul committee; exams; summer holidays; we must do this again; we must do this again.

We will do this again.

Remembering the Dunfermline Jewish community

The Jewish community in Dunfermline has been remembered and the last minister of its shul honoured by the naming of a new street and unveiling of a commemorative plaque.

Reverend Morris Segal was minister of the synagogue on Pittencrieff Street from the mid 1920s until 1944 when the synagogue closed and he moved to Dundee. The synagogue building was demolished many years ago and the area has now been redeveloped into a new housing estate and community centre.

The community has not, however, been forgotten, and the local Council, feeling that the synagogue and Jewish community should not be allowed to vanish without trace, decided to name one of the new streets 'Segal Place'.

An official naming ceremony was held in June, and a plaque was unveiled on the site of the synagogue recalling the origins of the community, most of whose members arrived from Eastern Europe in the early years of the 20th century. Relatives of Reverend Segal, representatives of SCoJeC, the Edinburgh Jewish community and of the Scottish Jewish Archive Centre joined the Provost, Councillors and members of the local Dunfermline community to remember the small but active Jewish community that once lived and worked in the town and to honour its leaders.

The ceremony was followed by a kosher reception in the city chambers - which one participant commented was probably the first time a brachah had ever been said there!

Do you remember the Jewish community in Dunfermline or Reverend Segal or his predecessor Reverend Balanow? We'd like to hear from you and to include your memories in the next issue of Four Corners.



PLAQUE INSCRIPTION:

FORMER SITE OF THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

"The original Jewish community in this area had their synagogue on this site.

Many arrived in Dunfermline around 1900 from Eastern Europe and soon became prominent in the retail trade. Some such as the Sclars, Bernsteins and Ruddicks became well known local families.

The Reverend Morris Segal followed the Reverend Balanow as the minister for Dunfermline's Jewish community and served them from the mid-1920's until the closure of Dunfermline's Synagogue in 1944. Several families then moved westward to join the larger Jewish Community in Glasgow."

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The Italian says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have wine."

The Frenchman says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have cognac."

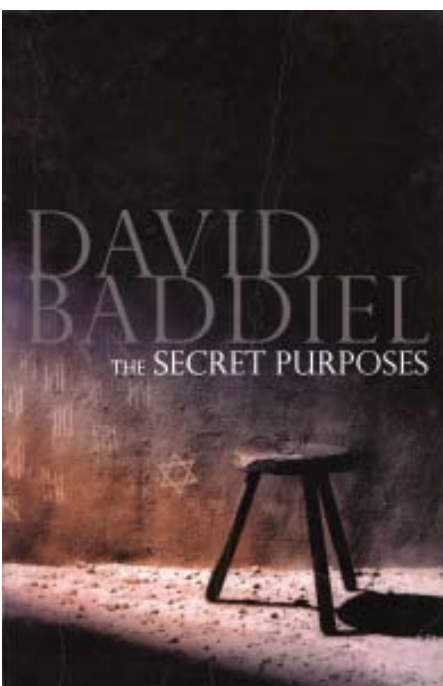
The Russian says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have vodka." The German says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have beer."

The Scot says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have irnbru / a half-an-a-half"

The Jew says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have diabetes"

A FOUR CORNERS BOOK REVIEW

DANIEL CLAPHAM



The Secret Purposes by David Baddiel

The comedian David Baddiel is well known for his "laddish" humour, usually in the company of his ex-flat mate Frank Skinner. What might not be known is that he has a double first from Kings College, Cambridge in English Literature! He has also written three novels, the last one of which draws on the experiences of his some of his family, during the Second World War. The novel has three separate sections, with the inter-linking of them only becoming clear towards the end of the book.

The opening section describes a Rabbi's Sunday walk around the streets of Konigsberg, soon after the Nazis came to power, and before the readers eyes we can see and imagine the changes that are affecting Jews. The central section tells the story of Isaac Fabian, a refugee from Nazi Germany, who has renounced Judaism in favour for communism. He is classified for internment in the Isle of Man during 1940, whilst his wife is not, and this enforced separation has consequences for them both. Isaac meets and falls for June Murray, an official from the Ministry of Information. June is on the island to interview the internees so that she may inform the Ministry of the real impact of Nazism, and to use the material not just for propaganda, or so she thinks. The last section brings all these narratives together with the imagery of Auschwitz very powerfully in the background: "if the (Holocaust) never happened, where is my mother, where is my father"- questions that both God, and David Irving, are asked.

This is a work of real erudition with many Jewish themes forcibility expressed, whilst at the same time many of them are left simply for the reader to surmise. I am not ashamed to say that many passages moved me to tears - although a Glasgow bus may not be the best place to read these bits. Although this book deals with great tragedies I was not left with an immense sadness, but rather a feeling of enlightenment and understanding.

This book deserves to be read.

Disclosure Scotland!

You may remember this was mentioned in the last issue of Four Corners...

New laws that affect most organisations in the Jewish community came into effect in January 2005 to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. As a result anyone who is involved with running communal activities such as cheder classes, Jewish assemblies, crèches, toddler groups, youth groups and sports clubs must undergo a **DISCLOSURE CHECK**. This is a search of the Criminal Record Office database by the CRBS (Central Registered Body in Scotland). A check is required for everyone from the age of 12 upwards who works with children, young people or vulnerable adults, whether paid or as a volunteer.

These checks are intended ensure that unsuitable people are not able to move freely between posts. In addition, if any organisation is aware of an individual who has behaved inappropriately with people in their care it has a legal obligation to report it to the relevant authority.

How do you apply for a check to be made?

To prevent abuse, organisations cannot simply apply for Disclosure Checks without first being checked out themselves; they first have to be registered to do so by the CRBS, and this is a far from simple procedure. Representatives of all the Jewish communities in Scotland agreed that SCoJeC should register so as to be able to act as a single clearing house for Disclosure Checks on behalf of communal organisations.

Why have an umbrella organisation?

If SCoJeC acts as an umbrella organisation for the whole of the Jewish community in Scotland then individual people only need a single Disclosure Check to work with any number of different organisations in the Jewish community.

If applications are submitted for specific organisations rather than for the Jewish community as a whole then each Disclosure Check is valid only for the organisation concerned, and the same person will need separate Disclosure Checks for every organisation with which they are involved. For example, a teenager who teaches in cheder, is a leader in FZY and JLGB and helps run events for UJIA and at Maccabi would need five separate Disclosure Checks!!

Having a community-wide Disclosure Check will also enable someone to run occasional 'one-off' events involving more than one communal organisation without having to undergo an additional Disclosure Check. At present it takes the CRBS around three months to process applications so not having a community-wide Disclosure Check in place would prevent someone from stepping in to help at the last moment.

What will it cost?

The CRBS does not charge for making checks on volunteers but there is a charge of £13.60 for checks made on paid employees.

SCoJeC is taking on this role as a service to the Jewish community. It has not been awarded any funding to cover the extra administrative costs involved but does not intend to make any charge to communal organisations.

DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION!

It is anticipated that the authorities will want to make an early example of a number of organisations which have not fulfilled the requirement for Disclosure Checks, and we hope that none of these will come from the Jewish community!

If you have already received a letter from me and have returned the enclosed form give yourself a pat on the back! If you haven't returned the form please return it NOW!! And if you haven't received a letter and think you should have then please get in touch with Leah as soon as possible on 0141 638 7550 / 07887 488 100 / e-mail: leah.granat@onetel.net



Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Histadrut in Dundee

Dundee played host, just before Pesach to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) which this year included representatives from both the Histadrut (Israeli Trades Unions) and the Palestine General Federation of Trades Unions (PGFTU).

The visit was hailed as a great success with the two Israelis and two Palestinians standing on the congress platform with linked arms pledging to work together for peace and social justice, and the PGFTU delegate ended his speech by wishing a good Passover to the Jews of Scotland and the world - in Hebrew.

Whilst they were in Scotland the Histadrut delegates, Avi Bitchur and Yaakov Shammai also attended a communal dinner at Edinburgh synagogue and spoke at a public meeting in Giffnock synagogue in Glasgow.

So how come SCoJeC was involved?

Because we hold regular high-level meetings with the STUC to discuss a wide range of issues affecting the Jewish community, issues such as racism and anti-semitism, and how best to support the implementation of new legislation against religious discrimination in the workplace. We now have a very good relationship and good communications with the leadership of the STUC so that if problems we can work together to resolve the difficulty as quickly as possible.

Please let us know if being Jewish has led you to experience any problems at work or whether there's anything particular you'd like us to raise with the STUC at a future meeting.



Part of SCoJeC's work involves liaising with a range of organisations to improve facilities and services to minority communities across Scotland.

To do that effectively we need to know what you really think – not what we think you think – so please complete and return this questionnaire to me in the enclosed SAE, (or print the PDF file and post it to the address at the bottom of page 2, or copy/paste the text into an email.)



Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Your views are important!

If you live in one of the smaller communities of Aberdeen or Dundee your experience will be different from someone living away from any community in places such as Oban or Gairloch, and different again from someone living in the central belt in Edinburgh or in Scotland's largest Jewish community in Glasgow. To be able to represent you properly we need to hear from you, so please don't just put this in the bin or lose it in a pile of things that you intend to get round to at some time in the future.

If there isn't enough space on this form then please continue on another sheet of paper. You don't have to give your name and contact details if you prefer not to, but if you're happy to do so it will let us respond to you directly about any issues you raise.

Name (optional):..... Telephone number (optional):

Address (optional):..... e-mail address (optional):

.....

.....

What area of Scotland do you live in?

Do you live in: a large Jewish community a small Jewish community away from any Jewish community

How long have you lived here?

Do you think you will still live here in 5 years time? Yes No

How important is it to you to have easy access to a Jewish community?

Very important One of the things you consider Not at all important

If there is one, are you actively involved with your local Jewish community? Yes No

In what ways?.....

Would you like to be more involved with the Jewish community? Yes No

In what ways?.....

Do you have to go to other Jewish communities in Scotland to find things you need? (eg Chanukah candles? food? a Rabbi?)

If so how often?.....

Do your friends and neighbours know you are Jewish? Yes No

Have you had any problems due to being Jewish? Yes No

Please would you tell us about them and whether you have been able to resolve the situation.

.....

.....

Do the services provided by your local council take account of any needs you might have as a Jewish person?

.....

What about services from your GP and local hospitals?.....

.....

Have you or one of your family ever experienced any anti-Semitism or racism? Yes No

If so, did it take place where you are living now? Yes No

What happened?.....
.....
.....

Did you report it to anyone? (Police, employer, school, university etc) Yes No

If so, what was their response? And how did you feel about their response?.....
.....
.....

As well as producing Four Corners SCoJeC provides a single point of contact with the Jewish community in Scotland for bodies such as the Scottish Parliament and Executive and the NHS. Where policy issues might impact on the Jewish community SCoJeC consults Rabbis and lay people and ensures that the Jewish view is heard. Last year we responded to consultations on issues such as religious education in schools, hate crime, organ donation, race equality, charity law, proposals for a Commission for Equality and Human Rights, the census, and shechitah to name but a few. We also produce occasional briefing papers on issues of concern to the Jewish community and hold briefing events in the larger Jewish communities with speakers from the Scottish Executive and similar bodies to update the community about new policy and legislation.

Are any of these issues of particular interest to you? If so which?.....
.....

Do you feel you know enough about SCoJeC and what it does? Yes No

If you would like more information how would you like to receive it?
By e-mail Post From the website

What else do you think SCoJeC should be doing to represent the Jewish community in Scotland and to support the smaller Jewish communities?.....
.....
.....

Do you think you would be able to help us in any way because of your experience or expertise?
.....
.....

If there is enough interest SCoJeC would like to hold meetings for people to discuss these issues further. Would you be interested in attending a meeting? Yes No

Which of the following venues would you be able to get to?
Aberdeen Dundee Edinburgh
Oban Lochgilphead Glasgow

And what time of the week would be most convenient? Sunday afternoon Weekday evening

Thank you for taking the time to help us.