

# SCoJeC meets FIRST MINISTER

*"I was delighted to meet with the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities to hear their views on the experiences and issues of concern to Jewish communities in Scotland. I look forward to greater engagement with members of the Jewish community in the near future as we work together to eradicate antisemitism and intolerance in this country."*

FIRST MINISTER NICOLA STURGEON MSP

The First Minister was particularly concerned to hear about the feelings of vulnerability expressed by the majority of participants in our *What's Changed about Being Jewish in Scotland?* inquiry, which was funded by the Scottish Government Community Safety Unit in order to gain an understanding of the anxieties of the Community following the unprecedented spike in antisemitic incidents during and after last summer's conflict in Gaza.

Commenting that even the low level to which the number of incidents has now returned is unacceptable, she acknowledged that the effect on the Community is cumulative and has been further affected by events abroad, such as the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen earlier this year. She was very concerned to hear of people who now feel they have to conceal their Jewish identity, and that some are even talking of leaving Scotland, and she commented that people's perception is part of the reality that we need to address together.

We told the First Minister about the anxieties that have been expressed in UK and international Jewish media about Scotland and the SNP, and expressed our concerns about the increase in antisemitic and anti-Israel activity on campus. We also explained how partisan gestures during the war in Gaza affect Jewish people, because the Hamas Charter calls for the murder of Jews world-wide, and conveyed the concerns that had been expressed to us about the number of Members Motions condemning Israel in the Scottish Parliament, most of them proposed by SNP MSPs.

The First Minister was delighted to accept our invitation to address a public meeting and answer questions on any matters members of the Community wish to raise, and also offered to hold a series of smaller meetings with particular groups within the Community, such as Jewish students and Israelis in Scotland. She also asked us to arrange for her to visit a synagogue. The first public meeting took place at the end of August jointly with the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, and details of the others will be published in due course.

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski said: *"We are very grateful to the First Minister for giving us so much of her time, and are reassured by her desire to engage personally with the Community and address their concerns at first hand. We look forward to working with her and her Government to make sure that Scotland is a place where Jewish people can feel welcome and at home, and above all safe and secure."*



## New Year Message

FROM THE FIRST MINISTER, THE RT HON. NICOLA STURGEON MSP

Once again, Rosh Hashanah is upon us and it is time to reflect on all that has come before, and to look forward to a new year and all that is yet to come.

From meeting some of you in Giffnock recently, it was once again evident how valuable a contribution the Jewish community makes to Scotland and how important it is that everyone feels connected with, and has the opportunity to participate in, civil society.

I know it has been a challenging year, but I think we can be proud of the resilient way in which we continue to work together to tackle prejudice and in which we plan to support each other in building the society we want to be – a safer, stronger, and fairer Scotland.

**From the Scottish Government and the people of Scotland, to all Scotland's Jewish communities on Rosh Hashanah, shanah tovah umetukah.**



**Shanah Tovah ! שנה טובה !**  
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The  
Scottish Council  
of Jewish  
Communities  
**www.scojec.org**

THE UMBRELLA REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION  
OF ALL THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND





## Musical Memories IN INVERNESS

SCoJeC returned to Inverness for an evening of Jewish music that attracted a small but highly enthusiastic crowd from as far away as Argyll and Glasgow. Many of the audience sang or brought their own instruments to play along with the *Kleyne Klezmer* trio, and we were particularly delighted to welcome four Jewish American holidaymakers who happened to be in Inverness that day, including a honeymoon couple and a well-known Jewish folk singer, as well as members of the local interfaith group.

One participant produced a copy of *Jewish Folk Songs in Yiddish and English* that had, in the early 1970s, resided in the library of Keith Grammar School, Banff – perhaps a somewhat unusual choice for the school, but may have been inspired by the popularity of *Fiddler on the Roof* at that time. Everyone also joined in with Israeli and Shabbat music brought by other participants – and everyone was soon on their feet dancing!

The music was inspiring and varied, and, over our traditional kosher buffet, everyone shared their earliest memories of music, and its impact on their lives. SCoJeC's volunteer Ambassador to the Highlands and Islands, Linda Martin, who organised the event, explained the background of an old Yiddish song *Zog es mir noch a mol*, and the allegorical meaning behind a Pesach favourite, *Chad Gadya*.

One participant, David Gallant, who has amassed a collection of children's songs of the Far East, gave a surprise rendition of an Indonesian song. A further break from Jewish music came with the arrival of the local community police who called by to ensure all was running smoothly – their entrance provoking an impromptu rendition of Gilbert & Sullivan's old favourite, *A Policeman's Lot is not a Happy One!*

## ABERDEEN at 70!

DEBBY TAYLOR

The Aberdeen Jewish Community, the most northerly in the UK, has marked a significant milestone with a busy few weeks, including a bat mitzvah, a guest Rabbi, and a Civic visit!

The community has been in the synagogue in Dee Street for 70 years, and the Chief Rabbi's Centre for Rabbinic Excellence has given us financial support to celebrate this. The community invited the Lord Provost and Councillors to a tour of the Synagogue, including a short act of worship and an explanatory talk about Judaism. This was followed by afternoon tea and a chance for the Lord Provost and Councillors to chat with members of the Community.

The previous day, Rabbi Robert Ash, whose mother was born in Aberdeen and who describes himself as a "Liberal/Reform/Progressive Rabbi", visited us from Preston, leading the Friday night service, which was followed by a pot-luck supper. After the Saturday morning service, the community gathered for kiddush and lunch, and a discussion on a range of subjects, including the history of Liberal Judaism and the differences between its practices and those of Orthodox Judaism.

Then the following week, we had our own Mitzvah Day! Normally this takes place in November, but for Aberdeen that means short days and bad weather. So to take advantage of the better weather and light, we brought it forward to August, and members of Sukkat Shalom, the Edinburgh Liberal Community, and one family from as far as Northumberland, travelled north to help our members and friends to paint the synagogue.

Starting work at 8:45 and finishing at 19:00, the team volunteered their time and energy to help wash, scrape, sand, and paint the walls and ceilings, and to do a much-needed clearing of the garden. In total there were 29 volunteers, ranging in age from 8 to 68 years of age, and our youngest helpers took with enthusiasm to cleaning and painting the toilet cubicle. We all learnt some new skills, from painting toilets to wrapping the Ark to protect it from dripping paint, to balancing on a ladder without falling off!

The volunteers were nourished throughout the day with food breaks, and the event gave members of both communities a chance to get to know each other better and share a fun experience.



RIGHT (TOP): THE CIVIC VISIT TO THE SYNAGOGUE;  
(BOTTOM) THE DEDICATION SERVICE IN 1945.

LEFT: CLEARING, WASHING, SCRAPING, AND PAINTING.



# Antisemitism Rises

## AS OTHER HATE CRIME FALLS

In his statement accompanying the statistics for religiously motivated hate crime in 2014-15, the Lord Advocate, Frank Mulholland QC, acknowledged that, *“Although there are many positives in the figures, there are some causes for concern. The number of cases involving Islamophobia and antisemitism have both risen ...”*

As in previous years, intra-Christian sectarianism was responsible for the vast majority of charges for religious hatred, but the reduction in the total conceals a significant increase in both the number and proportion of charges for conduct directed against Judaism and Islam. The disparity becomes even more severe when the relative size of the respective faith communities is taken into account: although Jews make up barely one tenth of 0.1% of the population of Scotland, antisemitic hate crime accounts for 4% of the total.

### Comparison of this and last year's statistics

	NUMBER OF CHARGES 2014-15	NUMBER OF CHARGES 2013-14	SIZE OF COMMUNITY (2011 CENSUS)	CHARGES PER 10,000 MEMBERS (2014-15)	CHARGES PER 10,000 MEMBERS (2013-14)	% CHANGE
PROTESTANT/C of SCOTLAND	151	215	1,717,871	0.88	1.3	- 29.8%
ROMAN CATHOLIC	370	378	841,053	4.40	4.5	- 2.1%
OTHER CHRISTIAN	6	4	21,275			
ALL CHRISTIAN	527	597	2,850,199	1.85	2.3	- 11.7%
ISLAM	72	50	76,737	9.38	6.5	+ 44.0%
JUDAISM	26	12	5,887	44.17	20.4	+ 116.7%

Until all these cases are determined by the courts, it is premature to speculate about causes, but it is extremely likely that the increase in charges is related to the unprecedented spike in antisemitic incidents reported to the police, the CST, and SCoJeC, during last summer's war in Gaza, but also the victims' increased preparedness to file a report.

As shown by the initial findings of our *What's Changed about Being Jewish in Scotland?* inquiry (see previous issue of *Four Corners*), many Jewish people in Scotland now feel much more anxious and vulnerable than they did a few years ago. One participant said:

● *“For the first time in 62 years I did not attend high holiday services this year due to my security concerns.”*

Other typical comments included:

● *“I have come to realise that identifying myself as a Jewish Israeli, or just identifying my wife as Jewish, or our house as one where Jewish people live in, might pose a risk to our lives and our property.”*

SCoJeC continues to raise awareness of this situation, most recently when we held meetings with the First Minister and the Communities Minister. We also continue to meet the Lord Advocate, Police Scotland, and civil servants, on a regular basis, and to work with other communities and organisations to reduce hate crime.

The Lord Advocate has reiterated his reassurance that

*“the full force of the law will be brought to bear on anyone engaging in this hateful and divisive conduct, so I would urge victims of all forms of hate crime to come forward and not suffer in silence”.*

Responding to this undertaking, SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski said:

*“We welcome the renewed commitment by both the First Minister and the Lord Advocate to a Scotland that has zero tolerance for antisemitism. Although unfortunately these figures bear out all the previous evidence we have of a significant increase in the level of antisemitic hate crime in the second half of 2014, it is nonetheless reassuring to have this confirmation of the seriousness with which these incidents are treated by the Scottish legal system, and we look forward to Scotland once again being a place where Jewish people can feel welcome and secure.”*



SCoJeC DIRECTOR EPHRAIM BOROWSKI AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER NICOLA LIVINGSTON MET COMMUNITIES MINISTER MARCO BIAGI, TO DISCUSS A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES FACING THE COMMUNITY.

## Calderwood in Parliament

Calderwood Lodge Primary School choir, conducted by Karen Geoghegan, entertaining guests at the first celebration of Yom haHatzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, to take place in the Scottish Parliament. The event was hosted by Ken Macintosh MSP, seen right talking to Deputy Ambassador, Eitan Na'eh.







## Lord High Commissioner VISITS EDINBURGH SYNAGOGUE

Edinburgh Synagogue was delighted to welcome the Lord High Commissioner, the Queen's personal representative to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to the synagogue in May.

Relations between the Kirk and the Jewish community have not been entirely comfortable during the last few years, after the Kirk published a controversial report, *The Inheritance of Abraham?*, in 2013, which, among other things, presumed to advise Jewish people how to interpret Jewish texts and Jewish theology. The High Commissioner's visit was, therefore, another important step to improved relations, after Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis made history when he became the first Rabbi, and only the third Jew, to address the General Assembly.

The Rt Hon the Lord Hope of Craighead, who has recently retired as Vice-President of the Supreme Court, and his wife, Lady Hope, were particularly interested in the many stained glass windows in the synagogue. Rabbi David Rose showed the party a *siddur* (prayer book) and took them up onto the *bimah* (central reading platform) to see a *Sefer Torah* (Scroll of the Law, containing the Hebrew Bible inscribed on parchment). The party then moved downstairs to the Beit HaMidrash, which is used for smaller services. This was expanded and consecrated in 2012, and incorporates wrought iron partitions and carpeting from the former Netherlee and Clarkston Synagogue in Glasgow, which had closed earlier that year.

Following the synagogue tour, Chairman Raymond Taylor presented Lord Hope with two books about the history of the community: *Two Worlds* by the late Professor David Daiches, and *Scotland's Jews* co-authored by Kenneth Collins, Ephraim Borowski, and Leah Granat, and published by SCoJeC.

Lord Hope thanked the community for their welcome, saying that he had never visited a synagogue before, and that the visit had given him a better understanding of both Judaism and the Jewish community. He said he had specially requested this visit as part of his programme during the General Assembly, because of his personal interest following a recent visit to Israel, and also because his father had played a role as part of the British forces in Palestine in rescuing Jewish refugees after the Holocaust.

## Blessings & Achievements

TALYA SILVER

The High Holy Day season commences with the awe of Rosh HaShanah, moves to the entreaty of Yom Kippur, and culminates in the rejoicing of Succot. There is a mitzvah to be happy on all the festivals, but that of Succot is mentioned with special intensity. Succot celebrates our cleansing from sin and the rejuvenation of our relationship with G-d.

But Succot is also an integral part of a different series of holidays: the pilgrim festivals, when Jews from all over Israel would converge on Jerusalem for the Temple ceremonies. Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot are listed together numerous times in the Torah. They commemorate aspects of the Exodus (leaving Egypt, the giving of the Torah, and travelling from camp to camp through the desert), as well as being closely tied to the agricultural cycle. So which series is Succot really the climax of?

Another ambiguity about Succot is the question of what we are actually commemorating. We eat and sleep (maybe not in Scottish climes!) in the Succah for the seven days of the festival to remember the makeshift dwellings the Jews lived in in the desert. But there is a dispute about what these actually were – "booths" or Clouds of Glory. Did the wandering Israelites hammer nails into boards or prop up canvas on sticks? Or is our makeshift DIY hope-the-schach-stays-on-in-the-wind job merely a symbol of the spiritual dwellings that G-d bestowed?

Answer a question with a question! This dispute (which I can't personally resolve) thematically demonstrates why Succot is the culmination of both series of festivals. While all the festivals are about our relationship with G-d, the emphasis differs. The pilgrim festivals focus on what G-d does for us; the High Holy Days on what we do ourselves. The escape from Egypt was miraculously engineered by G-d. The Jews did nothing to earn the covenant of the Torah except to acquiesce. Food, drink, and shelter in the desert were received from G-d without toil. The pilgrim festivals showcase G-d's unconditional love for us, that essential bedrock in a person's sense of self.

The High Holy Days, on the other hand, open with the fearsome judgment of Rosh HaShanah. Each person's actions are analysed and evaluated; each will receive exactly what he or she deserves. The prayer that recurs most throughout Yom Kippur is a detailed accounting of our transgressions; we are held responsible for our every action.

### Festival Calendar

<b>Rosh HaShanah:</b>	SUN 13 SEPT EVE, MON 14 & TUES 15 SEPT
<b>Fast of Gedaliah:</b>	WED 16 SEPT
<b>Kol Nidre:</b>	TUES 22 SEPT EVE
<b>Yom Kippur:</b>	WED 23 SEPT
<b>Succot:</b>	SUN 27 SEPT EVE MON 28 & TUES 29 SEPT
<b>Chol haMoed:</b>	WED 30 SEPT – SHABBAT 3 OCT
<b>Hoshanah Rabbah:</b>	SUN 4 OCT
<b>Shemini Atzeret:</b>	SUN 4 OCT EVE, MON 5 OCT
<b>Simchat Torah:</b>	MON 5 OCT EVE, TUES 6 OCT

And if you want shelter from the blazing sun, you have to build it yourself. The High Holy Days are about the merit system.

Conditional love gets a bad rap these days, when we all want to be accepted just the way we are. But thinking about it, would we really want our spouse's, or even parents', feelings towards us to be independent of our actions? On the contrary, we want to know that we have earned their respect, that we deserve their admiration, that we are worthy of their love. To have no expectations towards someone is to infantilise them. Conditional love builds our self-esteem.

Both aspects of love are essential components of a close relationship. Succot, which celebrates the unique relationship between the Jewish people and G-d, exemplifies their convergence. Sitting in our shaky huts, rain dripping in our soup (Scotland) or panting in the heat (Israel), we simultaneously bask in our blessings and take pride in our achievements.



# Biscuits, Bagels AND KNITTING!

## The Edinburgh community's Festival Open Day

returned, after a break in 2014, when a host of visitors, including the Glasgow branch of the Association of Jewish Refugees, joined members of the Edinburgh community in the Synagogue hall.

David Ian Neville introduced and interviewed a number of Fringe performers whose shows were of Jewish interest, and they each then performed an extract from their shows. These included

Daniel Cainer's *21st Century Jew*; Sue Kelvin's *Bette Midler ... and Me*; *Talking With Angels: Budapest, 1943* by Shelley Mitchell; Naomi Paul's *Price Includes Biscuits*; *Mancunian Rhapsody*, by Tammer Productions; Mo Shapiro's *Victoria Wood and Me*; and *Stitch in Time*, a knitting cabaret by Melanie Gall. Some of the acts were new to Edinburgh, others old favourites. Daniel Cainer, a regular performer, had written a whole new show, in part inspired by Edinburgh's Rabbi Rose commenting, "You're not going to sing about the laundrette again?", referring to one of our favourite numbers, Daniel's notorious ballad of the Surbiton Washerama. This year his turn was a song about the *Yiddishe Neshamah* of a certain hollow bread roll – which was followed by a magnificent bagel lunch!

TOP TO BOTTOM: DANIEL CAINER; DAVID IAN NEVILLE INTRODUCING MANCUNIAN RHAPSODY, THE AUDIENCE ENJOYING THE SHOW – AND THE BAGEL LUNCH!



**SCoJeC is collecting Jewish artefacts,**  
such as mezuzah cases, tallitot, and dreidels,  
to create 32 resource boxes – one for each  
Education Authority – to help improve  
education about Judaism for pupils in  
schools all over Scotland. If you  
are able to help, please  
contact Zoe Jacobs:  
[zoe@scojec.org](mailto:zoe@scojec.org)  
07504 081219.

ZOE WITH SOME  
OF THE GENEROUS  
DONATIONS WE HAVE  
ALREADY RECEIVED.



## SCoJeC's first VOLUNTEERING GRADUATE

SCoJeC's first volunteer training course has its first graduate: Rachael Henderson from Dundee.



The course, which consists of four training sessions followed by a series of placements, aims to help volunteers who represent Judaism in the local community or who would like to do so, by leading synagogue visits, going into schools, or working with youth, adult, or interfaith groups. It focuses on four areas of Jewish life, including the Festivals, Jewish Food, and the Jewish Life Cycle, as well as information about the Religious and Moral Education syllabus in the Curriculum for Excellence, presentation skills, session planning and preparation, and how to be mindful of the diversity of faith and practice at an interfaith event. The placement involves four sessions, often in a school, where the volunteer is able to experience a classroom situation, and, with the help of a mentor, learns to evaluate and improve his or her work.

Rachael's placement took place at Moor Park Primary School in Kilwinning. She said "I really enjoyed taking part in the volunteer training course. When it finished I felt much more confident about being able to talk about different aspects of Jewish life to different groups of people. I was initially nervous about going into the primary school, but by the fourth time, I was able to lead most of the session. I look forward to doing more placements."

Volunteer training sessions were held in Glasgow and in Edinburgh for 25 volunteers from Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Tayside and Fife – with one volunteer from Aberdeen joining in by Skype for some of the sessions! We're planning to run more training courses across Scotland in the autumn – if you would like to attend, or if your school would like a visit from one of our volunteers, please contact Zoe Jacobs: [zoe@scojec.org](mailto:zoe@scojec.org) or 07504 081219.







# SCoJeC AGM 2015

SCoJeC's 2015 AGM was held in Aberdeen for the first time, almost 70 years to the day since the synagogue was consecrated. We were also delighted to welcome Itamar Nitzan as the first elected representative of Israelis in Scotland following their request for affiliation to SCoJeC.

The formal business was followed by a wide-ranging discussion about the priorities and strategy of the Council. One main theme that emerged was the difficulty of managing workload when so much of SCoJeC's work is responsive – whether to government consultations, ensuring that a Jewish voice is heard in many different contexts, or responding to security issues. There was unanimous agreement that communal bodies that regard themselves as serving and supporting the entire UK community, such as the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council, should not leave it to the Jewish Communities in all the Devolved Administrations, some of which are much smaller than ours, to operate hand-to-mouth, but have an obligation to provide adequate support to enable them to engage with their governments on all those aspects of day-to-day life that are no longer controlled by Westminster.

The other main topic of discussion was the effect of events in the Middle East on Jewish people in Scotland, and how best to respond. The two issues are related because it was reaction to the war in Gaza that generated – and is still generating – most unplanned work for the Council. The unprecedented number of incidents reported in July and August last year resulted in many contacts with Ministers, officials, and others, to discuss how best to ensure the safety and security of the Community. Concern was expressed about the apparent unwillingness of Scottish political leaders to make their condemnation of antisemitic attacks public, especially when contrasted with the UK and other governments; about the continuing failure of the Church of Scotland to make amends for their 2013 document on the *Inheritance of Abraham*?; about the obsession of some members of the Scottish Parliament with condemning Israel when they have nothing whatsoever to say about Syria or Iran; about the inherently antisemitic nature of support for Hamas and calls to “make Scotland a Zionist-free zone”; and about the detrimental effect of events on campus on an entire generation of students.

After the formal business, the guest speaker was Superintendent Ross Aitken, Head of National Safer Communities at Police Scotland, who also answered questions about the security of communal venues and events, the police response to last summer's incidents, and the difficulty of balancing the right to demonstrate with the right of the public to go about their business.

## The following were elected to the SCoJeC executive:

**CHAIR:**  
Hilary Rifkind (Edinburgh)

**VICE CHAIR:**  
Micheline Brannan (Edinburgh)

**HON SECRETARY:**  
Simon Dover (Glasgow)

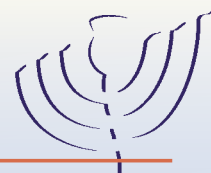
**HON TREASURER:**  
Howard Gordon (Glasgow)

**SMALL COMMUNITIES:**  
Debby Taylor (Aberdeen)



ABOVE: SUPT ROSS AITKEN  
WITH SCoJeC DIRECTOR  
EPHRAIM BOROWSKI.

RIGHT: GLASGOW JEWISH  
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL  
PRESIDENT PAUL MORRISON WITH  
SCoJeC CHAIR HILARY RIFKIND.



**SCoJeC**

SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES  
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
222 FENWICK ROAD, GLASGOW G4 6UE  
scojec@scojec.org 0141-638 6411 07887-488 100

PUBLIC AFFAIRS	NICOLA	07801-286 881 nicola@scojec.org
PROJECTS & OUTREACH	FIONA	07779-206 522 fiona@scojec.org
EDUCATION & EVENTS	ZOE	07504-081 219 zoe@scojec.org
POLICY & RESEARCH	LEAH	0141-638 6411 leah@scojec.org

## Contacts in the Corners

GLASGOW	ORLI	0141-577 8200 office@glasgowjewishrepcouncil.org
EDINBURGH	JACKIE	07734-291 836 secretary@ehcong.com
TAYSIDE & FIFE	PAUL	07906-219 262 taysideandfife@scojec.org
ABERDEEN		07810-024 456 info@aberdeenhebrew.org.uk
SMALL COMMUNITIES	FRANK	01445-712 151 communities@scojec.org
HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS	LINDA	07527-040 501 linda@scojec.org
STUDENTS	YOSSI & SARAH	07791-292 790 yossi@mychaplaincy.co.uk

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