



Committee Reports for The Belsize Square Synagogue Annual General Meeting

**Monday 1 June 2015
8pm**

The Belsize Square Synagogue

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HON SECRETARY'S REPORT - DEBORAH COHEN

As usual it has been another busy and happily successful year with many memorable occasions and a year where we have had the benefits of a full ministerial team and no building works to worry about!

There have been many events to mention and I apologise in advance if I miss out any of them. But for me 2014-15 has been marked by the coming of age of our extensive music programme that is becoming the signature of Belsize Square. The programme was organised by the new Committee and included:

- Against All Odds: a concert for Holocaust Memorial Day in which distinguished cantors, Jason Green, Gedalya Alexander and our very own Cantor Paul Heller took us on a journey through the full participation of Jews in European Culture to their complete exclusion from it after 1933 – and finally to a new emerging Jewish culture in the State of Israel
- The Vengerov/Burla concert which was a fantastic event with over 150 people in attendance
- A film and discussion on the founding of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

Huge thanks to the Goldstein family who organised the Jazz On The Square evening with the Ralph Freeman Quartet playing to a packed house.

One of the highlights of the year was undoubtedly the joint memorial service at Westminster Abbey with West London Synagogue to mark the 70th year since the liberation of Auschwitz. Our choirs and Cantor Heller sang and Rabbi Altshuler participated in the service.

All events involve a considerable amount of work behind the scenes, so big thanks to the Rabbi, Cantor Heller, Ben

Wolf, and the Chair of the Music Committee Philip Keller.

We have also had a very active programme of speakers this year reflecting the very keen interest of many members in both home and Israeli current affairs. These included Dr Chaim Peri from Yemin Orde, Ben Helfgott MBE, Paul Perkins from The Winch, a very successful Belsize Lehrhaus learning day organised by Claire Walford and the Rabbi and two forums organised by the Israel Committee on the current situation in Israel. The Mayor of Camden made the Three Faiths Forum his chosen charity and we were very honoured to be the Synagogue that hosted a dinner to promote the work of the Forum. Most recently in association with the London Jewish Forum we organised hustings for the forthcoming general election attended by all the candidates for Hampstead and Kilburn Constituency.

There are two very long-standing members of the Board who are standing down this year: Brenda Brod and Marion Nathan. Neither of them want me to say how long they have been Board members but suffice it to say a long time. Very big thanks are due to them for their long years of dedication to making Belsize Square what it is.

I also wish to thank Dorothy White, our Community Care Co-ordinator, who is retiring after 12 years. Dorothy will be a very hard act to follow.

Finally, I took on this role not knowing that after a few months as Hon Sec I was going to take up a new job in Cambridge (UK alas not Massachusetts). This meant that I haven't been around as much as the Hon Sec needs to be and makes it impossible for me to continue. So with regret I am not putting my name forward to continue into next year. In truth, Lee in the Office has been fantastic in keeping things going, and I owe him a big debt of thanks.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE - DENNIS NATHAN

You will be pleased to hear that our "house" is in good order.

This past year has seen very few major problems. We constantly strive to maintain and improve the building. Our focus this year has been to embrace technologies such as the LED lighting revolution.

We changed the lights in the Ark which are now brighter, more economical, and more importantly do not produce the heat of the old bulbs so are therefore safer as there is less risk of fire. Hopefully you have also noticed the improved sound system in the hall which was installed last September in time for the High Holidays.

Apart from occasional roof leaks, problems with smelly drains, air-conditioning too hot, air-conditioning too cold, we now have a good maintenance regime with reliable contractors so hopefully our coming year will be relatively trouble free.

This financial year our major project was to replace all the light bulbs in the sanctuary. Rather than wait for a few bulbs to go we decided that after 4 years it was practicable to change them all at the same time. Due to the height of the room this was not so easy as we had to clear all the chairs, hire a scaffold tower, carry out the works, and still keep the

area functioning. However this has now been completed. We have a great team of Gordon, Paul and Yelena and have the invaluable support of Lee and the office staff. We are truly indebted to all of them.

Last but not least thank you to my fellow committee members for their support sharing the load.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE - SAM SANDERS

I am pleased to be able to report that we have had a strong year in terms of numbers of new people joining our community. We have concentrated on ensuring that the system for handling and converting enquiries has been efficient and that new members are "buddied up" with suitable members of the community. We have also had some success from approaching the younger generation to join and will continue to devote our attention to this next year. Once again, I would like to thank both Hilary Solomon and Lee Taylor for their tremendous support.

If anyone is aware of people who may be looking to join a Shul, please let us know so that we can approach them and invite them to visit us to find out for themselves what a wonderful Shul we are!

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - ELIZABETH NISBET

The Education Committee would like to thank all our professional staff for their dedication and commitment to developing the Jewish experience of our children, young people and our adult Synagogue members. Particular thanks are due to Jeanie Horowitz, the Head Teacher of our Cheder, who continues to guide our Cheder from strength to strength by her imaginative programming ideas and hard work in bringing these ideas to reality.

Our thanks are also due to the Rabbi for his continuing commitment to developing education and for his stimulating talks to Adult Education, and to Cantor Heller for taking over the co-ordination of the B'nei Mitzvah programme. We would also like to thank Alyson Denza for her work with the Youth Choir culminating in the contrasting events of performing at Westminster Abbey in a Service of Commemoration for the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz and a delightful production of Joseph and His Technicolour Dreamcoat in the Shul at Purim.

We would also like to thank all the teachers, tutors, lay leaders, parents and volunteers who contribute to the continuing education of our members. You are too numerous to mention by name, but your energy and ideas have been truly appreciated.

My own thanks are also due to all members of the Education Committee, newly strengthened by Frank Joseph and Ruth Vered, both of whom are qualified teachers and were new Board members in 2014. The assistance I received from the Committee over the last year has been greatly valued and I look forward to working with you to create an exciting new year in Jewish education.

Cheder Report

Jeanie Horowitz, Head of Cheder

There are currently 110 children on the register between years 1-10. The numbers on our role have remained constant this year. Our biggest growth has been in our GCSE class which has 14 children. Three of these are not members of Belsize Square but joined because of the reputation of the GCSE class. We retained fewer than 50% of our Bar/Bat Mitzvah class. Our numbers for primary school are significantly smaller, with most classes having fewer than ten children.

Every class had Parent and Children Together mornings where the parents attend Cheder and then meet with Jeanie to share their impressions. The parents seemed satisfied with the progress their children are making. They bring issues that need to be addressed to the attention of the teachers and Head Teacher and changes are often made.

Mitzvot and Tzedakah: Jewish values and mitzvot are an integral part of our curriculum. We participate in Mitzvah Day each year and this year a small committee of parents met with Jeanie to see how we could bring Mitzvah Day to the Cheder throughout the year. This includes collecting food for the Camden Food Bank as well as for the charity GIFT which provides Jewish families living below the poverty line with weekly groceries and support in other areas.

We learn about our responsibility to our world by helping to improve the lives of others and collect Tzedakah for a variety of causes including Meir Panim (a network of food centres for the poor across Israel), WJR, The Jaffa Institute, Red Nose Day, and Jewish Child's Day among others.

Children are encouraged to bring in pocket money and learn that everyone can give something to help others.

GCSE: There are four students registered to sit the Jewish Studies GCSE in May-June and 14 who will sit it in 2016. Elizabeth Nisbet and Sheila Chiat share the teaching of the GCSE. Once this year's exam is over, the year 10 students receive teacher training, in order to prepare them to be teacher assistants starting in January of year 11.

Sheila Chiat will be retiring at the end of the Summer Term and we thank her for her dedication to the Cheder over many years. We are looking to recruit a new GCSE teacher.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Group: We currently have 28 children in Year 7 and started the year with 18 in Year 8.

Jeanie has been teaching the year 8 group focussing on personal responsibility and what that means as a Jewish adolescent and Jewish adult. The focus has been on looking at Jewish texts and historic as well as modern Jewish experiences. The students have tended to leave the Cheder after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah which means that those who are celebrating in the summer term or even the autumn term of the following year have a very small class and tend to be demotivated to attend Cheder, even if they intend to return to join the GCSE class in the following year.

Hebrew Programme: Year 1 learns Hebrew, mainly orally, through games and pictures with letter recognition and an introduction to reading. Years 2 and 3 learn Hebrew reading as a group. Years 4, 5 & 6 learn Hebrew in year groups but also have time to work in ability groups within the class. We have a team of Hebrew teachers who work with them. We also have one-on-one sessions with the students who we feel would benefit from this. Many of the teenage teaching assistants help out with this programme. Years 7 and 8 learn Hebrew in the second lesson through Siddur, dialogue and reading with meaning for the students at a higher level.

Holidays: We celebrated the holidays in our uniquely Belsize way, creating an active, educational, but most importantly, enjoyable learning environment. Purim was celebrated with PJ Library, a puppet workshop, with the Creative Director of the Angel Puppet Theatre in Islington and a social action morning for Years 7 and 8. This year we learned about Pesach by re-enacting different parts of the Hagaddah. Shavuot will be celebrated with the community on Sunday 24 May.

International Trips: Year 9 took part in a trip to Amsterdam. This was the first year in a long time that we didn't link the trip with a group from another community. Twelve of our GCSE students travelled to Amsterdam with their leaders, Mia Zur-Szpiro and Aaron Burke. Next year we will target year 9 and 10 to go to Prague.

The Israel trip which took place every three years is currently under review.

Staff: We have had a good year as far as staffing is concerned. We have a strong team of committed staff members, who have been teaching at the Cheder for many years and who help make it the warm, creative and stimulating place it is.

We retained most of our staff from last year and also recruited very good new teachers. One new teacher is a new member of the community and has been an excellent addition to our staff. We have two parents volunteering to help with year 6 Hebrew and this has been great.

If you could volunteer to help with Hebrew Reading, contact Jeanie Horowitz via the Synagogue Office.

Two teachers had to resign mid-year due to work and family commitments. Jeanie will send out an email requesting staff tell her their plans for next year but it would be fantastic to recruit a couple of teachers from the community for next year. Please contact Jeanie via the Synagogue Office.

Communication: Jeanie has continued to produce a newsletter, Belsize Bits, which is sent out twice a term highlighting the events that took place the previous half term and letting parents know what is coming up in the future.

Challenges: One challenge this year has been getting students to progress in Hebrew. This is an age-old issue and involves inconsistent attendance by some students. This will be the focus of the Cheder in the summer term.

Another challenge is providing a programme that encourages year 8 students who are post Bar/Bat Mitzvah to stay on. Whereas we thought the GCSE was becoming less popular, this year almost the entire cohort opted to stay on.

The Department for Education has changed the syllabus for the Jewish Studies GCSE for students taking the examination in 2018 and onwards with minimal input from the Jewish community. We, along with others, are reviewing the implications of these changes.

Final point: The students are all having a good year and it is all thanks to the commitment of the teachers, teaching assistants and parents who support us. Thank you to all of you for your energy, skills and dedication to our children.

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Bar Mitzvah Programme: This has continued to run very successfully this year, co-ordinated by Cantor Paul Heller. The teenagers have responded really well to the challenges of demonstrating that they have reached Jewish adulthood and we have many wonderful memories of celebrating their maturity together with their families and friends. They are a credit to our community and we wish all who have graduated through this programme success and fulfilment as they continue on their Jewish journeys into adulthood.

A number of enhancements to our B'nei Mitzvah Programme have been introduced this year. The Rabbi meets with every family 14 months ahead of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and the Cantor assesses the child's Hebrew reading to establish whether they need specialist one-to-one help. We have increased the number of tutors available to teach our young people their parashot.

We have expanded the programme for the B'nei Mitzvah families. The Rabbi and the Cantor now meet the parents once a term so that they too can participate in continuing Jewish education. These have been both well attended and much appreciated. Justyn Trenner and Leah Hurst have continued to offer monthly bagel breakfasts for the B'nei Mitzvah families on the third Shabbat of the month and to offer twice-a-month discussion groups during the Rabbi's sermon on Shabbat morning.

We thank all those for all that they do to prepare our teenagers for their special day. Further enhancements to the Bar Mitzvah Programme are being actively discussed and we would welcome any new ideas.

High Holiday Youth Services: This year saw an excellent trio of Services, co-ordinated by Dilys Tausz and Alyson Denza and their teams. Special mention must be given to the readers of Torah and Haftarah as well as the readers, the soloists and the youth choir who worked so hard to make the services memorable and enjoyable. Thank are also due to the young adults who delivered the Address – Charlotte Samuelson, Yohel Heller and Katya Bazar-Rosen.

Dilys Tausz, Leah Hurst, Ellie Melkuhn, Karen Sanders, Joe Hacker, Justyn Trenner and Cantor Paul Heller and others have been preparing a revised youth machzor, which we are aiming to have ready for 2015. We look forward to a new look for the Service this year. Everything is in-hand for stimulating High Holidays in 2015.

Kikar Kids: Services have continue to flourish and have become a regular part of many families' lives. The lunches have also attracted growing numbers and provide a lovely opportunity for families to get to know each other better.

Frank Joseph, Ruth Vered, Caroline Loisson and others have been actively involved in reviving the under 5s' service and are now ready to turn their attention to the 5-9 service. If you know any children in this age group who would like to become part of this community within a community, please come along and meet new friends.

Adult Education: The Sunday Morning Discussion Group continues to attract new members and generally has 15 or more to each session. The Rabbi has been teaching about the Great Philosophers and the Jewish response. This has been very interesting and well received. A wide variety of topics have been discussed during the second half of the morning. We have been fortunate to have attracted a number of excellent guest speakers from outside the community, including Patricia Parker MBE from Kids for Kids, which supports the starving children of Darfur. As well as this, our regular talks from members of the community have continued and we particularly enjoyed a showing of the Green Prince.

Our thanks are due to all those who have contributed to this stimulating group, whether it is for their careful preparations before their presentations, or for their considered and thoughtful contributions to the debate...or for their provision of food and refreshment during the morning.

Claire Walford and the Rabbi continue to provide excellent leadership to the Adult Discussion Group and are due our thanks for all their hard work.

The highlight of the year was the Lehrhaus, a whole day devoted to study in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of Belsize Square Synagogue. We were privileged to participate in learning sessions led by a wide range of renowned speakers from the wider Jewish community, including talks from Rabbi Dr Jonathan Wittenberg, Rabbi Danny Rich, Rabbi Markus Lange, Professor Glenda Abramson, Ben Barkow, Dr Annette Boeckler, Dr Bea Lewkowicz and Mordechai Pinchas.

We are also grateful to a large number of members of who introduced their specialist subjects and to the numerous people who participated in the discussions. The grand finale was a fascinating vision of the future of Judaism chaired by Rob Nothman with contributions from Rabbis Wittenberg and Rich and our own Rabbi Altschuler as well as the Deputy Ambassador of Israel, Eitan Naeh.

YOUTH COMMITTEE - ADAM NATHAN

After great work from Zoe Cowan, we were delighted when Michelle Heller joined Yohel to become the Youth Leaders. The two have formed a great team together, bringing a wealth of new ideas from previous youth groups they worked with in Sweden and Colombia, and we are really excited to see what they have planned for the future.

Following on from last year's incredibly successful Winter Camp, we were again

delighted to have 16 kids joining us in Mill Hill. Although it was a little bit wet and muddy at times, the kids all had a fantastic time, and we were particularly pleased by the number of teenage volunteers who came down during the weekend to help Yohel and Michelle. It was a great weekend and we look forward to running it again this year.

Because of numbers, and a very congested schedule, we were unable to

run a Mini Machaneh, but this was replaced with a Sunday Funday in Primrose Hill which was well attended and enjoyed by all. We hope to run more of these during the Cheder year.

Throughout the year we have run other activities, such as bowling nights and film trips. Our aim is to continue making our activities bigger and better so please help us ensure that these are well attended and successful.

BELSIZE MEMBERS' GROUP - MARION NATHAN AND DILYS TAUSZ

2014 has been a quiet year for the BMG due to the 75th anniversary of the synagogue filling the social calendar – apart from the Supper Quiz, always a profitable evening. The positive side of this inactivity is that it has given our wonderful committee of enthusiastic and dedicated members the opportunity to reconsider the role of the BMG within the synagogue community.

The conclusion we have reached is that we are a social committee pledged to provide two or three really special events, which will be attractive to the whole of the community. This means we will no longer be having a Supper Quiz every year, or an Indulgence Evening every two years. Instead, we will be having new imaginative offerings that will showcase the best of the talents of the BMG, especially our catering skills. Watch out for the Puzzle Evening in the autumn.

The New Members Breakfast held in 2014, although enjoyed by everyone who came, could have been better attended, so

we decided to revamp it. On 10 January 2015 we held a Belsize Members Breakfast, open to all, with new members invited as special guests. It proved a fantastic success and there was a big turnout. The New Members reported that they felt really welcome and appreciated the warmth they were shown. They also really enjoyed the traditional breakfast fare of bagels with a choice of smoked salmon, cream cheese and egg mayonnaise all washed down with freshly brewed coffee or tea, a tradition which the committee, in its wisdom, decided should not be changed.

None of this would be possible without the wonderful support Marion and Dilys have from the members of the committee whether they be long standing or those who are newly joined. We all have a great time on this committee and try to keep meetings to a minimum, with most of our effort being put into the BMG functions. If you would like to join in (you no longer need to be able to bake) please let the Synagogue Office know and we would welcome you with open arms.

MUSIC AT BELSIZE - PHILIP KELLER

We are now well over half way through our second season of Music at Belsize and have been blessed by some truly wonderful performances in our Sanctuary. Few of our audience members will forget the poignant beauty of our Holocaust Memorial Day concert earlier this year or the excitement of welcoming young piano prodigy Alice Burla to Belsize Square with her mentor Maxim Vengerov. We also held our first Jazz concert which was a great success last December. Most recently we welcomed back The Wallace Ensemble with a full orchestral programme to celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut.

The enduring image of the last 12 months was of course the trio of Alice Burla, Maxim Vengerov and our Rabbi performing the Bach concerto for two violins. It is available to watch over and over again on the BSS website. My thanks go to our Music Committee for their work and commitment, to our inspirational Music Director, Ben Wolf, to our Rabbi and Cantor for their support and to Lee for so much work behind the scenes.

SECURITY COMMITTEE - DANIELLA SAUL

Thank you to all our supervisors and volunteers who have assisted with carrying out their duty of standing outside the synagogue, whatever the weather, and keeping all of us safe. We are indebted to all of you and are so grateful when you arrive and take responsibility for everyone's safety. It is of course vital for our security that everyone participates when they are called upon, so please always let the office know if you are unable to attend for any reason so that someone else can be found to replace you. Also many thanks to our office staff for all their assistance.

Due to the incidents in recent months, we are planning on improving our security systems and procedures even further to make sure we are as prepared and up-to-date as we can be. We know that we are statistically safer when security is in place. Security as a deterrent is a very powerful tactic and

it is always better to be safe than sorry. If you have any concerns or ideas, contact the office to get in touch with me. I'm always delighted to hear from you.

We are always looking for more reliable people to help us out and your help is greatly appreciated. It can also be a fairly fun and interesting experience! Younger congregants, who are over the age of 18, can also have the positive benefit that doing security looks great on your CV.

To become a supervisor, contact the synagogue and ask the office to give you details of what is required. It's actually simple - just go on a free short course with the CST.

What are you waiting for? Vacancies still open for volunteers! Come on join us if you dare!

COMMUNITY CARE REPORT - DOROTHY WHITE

This will be my last Community Care Report. After 13 years I feel it is time to hand over the role and move on to whatever will be the next chapter in my life. Many of you will know that I really struggled with this decision. I have loved working with the community; I have made many friends and learned so much. I will of course still continue to be a member, so I am not planning to disappear. I have recently handed over my position to Eve Hersov and wish her well. Oddly enough she is another Yank and also from Philadelphia. I believe she will put her own stamp on the Community Care role and I hope she enjoys it as much as I have.

We continue the work of our Telefriends who undertake to ring all members of the congregation over 75 at least twice a year. We have found that this is a good way to keep in touch. The majority of people phoned do not require any assistance, but are pleased to have the contact from the Synagogue. If issues are raised they are referred to the Community Care Co-ordinator.

Our visiting volunteers support people in their homes and in residential care, at times acting in loco family.

Our Bereavement Support group continues to write and phone members of the congregation and their relatives who have suffered a bereavement. Though most people phoned do not need extended help all have been pleased that the Synagogue is acknowledging their loss in this way. Leaflets explaining this service are available in the Synagogue Office.

Our birthday visits to everyone over 80 continue. Most months we have about 15 birthdays and both the volunteers who do the visits as well as those celebrating their birthdays enjoy the occasion. It has proved to be a good way to keep people connected. No volunteers are asked to do more than two visits a month, so any of you who have a few hours a month that you could spare to help with these visits please contact Eve Hersov.

We continue with our usual activities of lunch groups. Our Wembley Group has now decided to join forces with the NW3 group and they now meet monthly at Giacomo's. Our three local lunch groups meet monthly; a good way for members to keep in touch and have a schmooze. Any members are welcome to attend any of the groups, even if they don't live in the designated post code. It has been very

nice that some younger members have been able to join in the lunch groups helping with transport for those who need it and generally joining in the feeling of community.

We had a very successful Community Lunch in January. About 80 people attended and as always our volunteers presented a lovely meal. The room looked beautiful and the Rabbi and Cantor participated making it a warm, fun occasion.

This year we again had a very successful Mitzvah Day with many activities organised by the Cheder and a group of our adult members spending the day helping out at Marie Curie Hospice. We did try to involve the Regent's Park Mosque in our going to the Hospice; sadly it didn't work out, but we will try again this year.

Many of our members are involved in giving to charity and performing mitzvahs throughout the year. This year we formed a Social Action Committee as we wanted to do something for the wider community. We decided that we would support The Winch, a youth project in Winchester Road that supports young people in Camden. This is about giving of our time and expertise, not money. Once a week the Winch has a "family meal" for the children who use the centre and their parents. Our volunteers helped with setting up and serving. We would hope to have enough volunteers to do this once a month. Judith Farbey is leading on this and she will be alerting us to other volunteer opportunities at the Winch.

Our Belsize Book Group led by Paul Lindsey meets every six weeks in the homes of the members and discussion is always stimulating. Recently our numbers have grown, but we can always squeeze in a few more.

"Square Meals" led by Hilary Solomon is now in its fifth year. Members prepare food that is kept in a dedicated Synagogue freezer and we distribute this to people who are unwell, have had a bereavement, a new baby, or a situation that the Synagogue wishes to acknowledge in a practical caring way. (We are not trying to replace Meals on Wheels).

We have a good group of volunteers, but can always use more. We need another volunteer or two to be Telefriends or visitors. Please contact Eve Hersov if you are able to help with this. Thanks to everyone whose efforts have made the above things possible.

BelsizeLIVE - ANNETTE NATHAN

Thanks to the special grant from Six Point Foundation, the tireless technical support from David Pollins, ably assisted by our ever helpful caretakers Gordon and Paul, webcasting our services is now part of our weekly routine.

Six Point Foundation is an organisation which is committed to providing extra support to Holocaust survivors and refugees resident in the UK. With the help and knowledge of Dorothy White, an advertising campaign by AJR and our own regular advertisements in News From The Square, we are reaching out to members who are no longer able to make the journey to Synagogue but can now feel part of the community they love and miss.

We want to reach out to everyone, either in their own homes or in residential care. Lack of knowledge or the right equipment should not be a barrier as training and funding may also be available.

Fortunately BelsizeLIVE is available to us all and is easily accessible on the Synagogue website by simply clicking on the yellow button to access the service live or by following this link www.synagogue.org.uk/live. Many of our services are also archived; some for a shorter period of time and some for far longer, so you never need to miss out. Whether you are at home, under the weather or basking in sunshine somewhere exotic, you can tune in and go to Shul!

Special thanks to the dedicated team: Sandra Burke, David Pollins, Paul Burger, Juliette Alexander and Dorothy White.

BOARD OF DEPUTIES - ERIC MOONMAN AND ROBERT SACKS

Several issues discussed at the meetings of the Board are worthy of your attention. The Board co-operates with the CST in its annual review of anti-Semitic incidents. Members will be aware there has been a worrying upturn in the numbers, but it is relevant to look more closely at the details.

The annual total for the year was 1,168 incidents, more than double the 535 we recorded in 2013 and the first time we have recorded over 1,000 incidents in a single year. The previous record high was 931 incidents in 2009, and incident totals had fallen in the years since then.

The figures suggest that even without what is called the Gaza factor there is still a rise in incidents. Most of the incidents, over 900, involved verbal abuse, hate mail or anti-Semitism on social media. There were 81 incidents of physical assault, but only one involved serious violence.

The strength of the Board's work may be best assessed by its day-to-day

work in the community. Key roles are played by **Education**.

- Working with other faith organisations in a variety of forums to understand the requirement to teach fundamental British values within schools, ensuring this is done in a culturally sensitive manner and to brief schools on this issue to prevent further downgrading of Jewish schools by Ofsted.
- Meeting held with Ofsted to discuss the need to monitor anti-Semitism and the actions schools take to counter it, as well as the training of inspectors going into Jewish schools and concerns raised by schools about the insensitivity of some inspections.
- Meeting exam boards to explore ways to ensure continued A level qualification is offered in Ivrit.
- Working with expert panel on the completion of the new GCSE Religious Studies Judaism paper.

Pikuach (checking)

Training new school inspectors, conducting a session on creating a new framework for Inspection. Two training sessions have been held for new inspectors including four Sikh trainees.

Conducting two inspections with one more to come. Four more are lined up for the summer term.

Outreach

The Board continues to run a number of successful Jewish Living Tours for non-Jewish schools throughout the country. The response is most encouraging with many positive comments.

The Leadership Council and the Board meet regularly to discuss a strategy for the community (more to report next year). Finally, as the Board's constitution demands, a new President will be selected as Vivian Wineman completes six years in office. Other divisional appointments will all be voted on in the next month or so.

EDITORIAL AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE - EMMA BROOKES

The Belsize Square Synagogue website, the monthly publication of Our Congregation in both paper and electronic format, and the weekly News From The Square by email as well as Twitter and Facebook have continued to convey information about us and our busy community.

Building on Brenda Brod's hard work, the committee has worked towards improving the format of the electronic version of Our Congregation and now it is sent as a much more accessible PDF file. This remains a work in progress,

and plans are underway to improve the layout of News From The Square and to redesign the website with the intention of establishing a clear corporate identity across all output.

Each of our methods of communication has a specific role and the aim is to be sure that they are all utilised appropriately; NFTS only for the upcoming week's events, Our Congregation for advertising future events and reviewing recent ones, as well as other items of interest. The website allows us to present ourselves

to the world beyond BSS and is used to headline events and activities with the option of including much more detailed information. The use of Twitter and Facebook is being maximised so that we have an immediate presence on social media.

Work is also underway to improve our ability to publicise upcoming events by ensuring that the communications team is in receipt of information about events from the planning stage so that we can help and advise other groups and committees on publicity and reviewing.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE - JACKIE ALEXANDER

Committee membership changed this year with Elizabeth Nisbet stepping down to take on another role. Jackie Alexander took over as Chairman, Henny Levin became Deputy Chair and Brian Harris joined the Committee. The Committee is very grateful to Elizabeth for all her hard work.

Belsize Square Synagogue continues to be represented on the Edgwarebury Joint Burial Board by Steven Bruck, Jackie Alexander and Henny Levin (who also sits on the Operations Committee). The Operations Committee deals with all matters relating to cemetery upkeep.

At the beginning of the year the service from the funeral directors deteriorated when they were sold to Funeral Partners and after review a decision was taken to move to Calo's. Calo's are located very close to Edgwarebury and have their own Taharah facility. They will handle all funerals for us regardless of which cemetery is chosen for the burial or cremation.

Edgwarebury Cemetery is developing a Woodlands Burial area and we are represented on the working group. Landscaping of this area is planned to start shortly.

The Committee is grateful to Lee Taylor for his support to them and to those who have been bereaved in helping them with arrangements.



LITURGICAL COMMITTEE - JOE BROOKES

The Committee continues to be one of the larger Constitutional committees of the Synagogue and has had an active year with quarterly meetings planning the Festival and Shabbat Service in conjunction with the Rabbi, Cantor and Hon Officers to advise the Synagogue Board on Liturgical issues.

This year the Liturgical Committee has along with the whole Community lost two stalwart members. Norbert Cohn passed away soon after the 2014 AGM. His wise counsel on all matters is greatly missed. Then early in 2015 Herbert Levy passed away, another long standing Liturgical Committee member whose advice and experience could similarly always be relied on.

Cantor Paul Heller continues to provide liturgical reasoning to our discussions. He has introduced new melodies and ideas to our Services whilst maintaining our German Liberale traditions.

Last year we reported that we have set up a Male Chevra Kadishah team and it was entirely appropriate that Norbert was able to see it before his passing.

Festival Services: Members of the Liturgical Committee volunteer to help in the organisation and preparation of special services. The Shavuot Tikkun organised by Rabbi Altshuler and Alasdair Nisbet was a great success running from after the Service until early on 1st Day Shavuot morning.

Purim was an undoubted highlight of this notion. Thanks to Pat Hirschovits for taking the lead in conjunction with Jeanie Horowitz, Alyson Denza and Cantor Heller. The production of Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat was superb and a fitting memorial to Herbert Levy who directed a production of the same play many years before.

This year's Communal Seder hosted by

Rabbi Altshuler and his family took place on 2nd Night Pesach and was a great success. We look forward to next year's Seder which will hopefully be bigger and even better. Following on from the success of last year's Communal Seder we have been able to purchase new Haggadot for use at the Communal Seder which was possible thanks to a generous donation by a Bar Mitzvah family.

This year in conjunction with Cantor Heller and Jeanie Horowitz the Liturgical Committee supported the Youth and Cheder Shabbat Service on Shabbat Hagadol. This is hopefully an ongoing collaboration.

As ever, the committee exists to reflect the opinions of the greater Community so if congregants wish to raise any issues, please get in touch with any of the committee or Chair, Joe Brookes, or Vice Chair, Pat Hirschovits.

ISRAEL COMMITTEE - JEFFREY GRAHAM

As well as being a difficult 17 months for Israel (from January 2014 until today) including a war in the summer, increased isolation, and a most virulent election campaign, it has also been a difficult year for the Israel Committee in Belsize Square. There was a new and enthusiastic committee which attempted to generate interest through various events.

We started the year by attending a most interesting briefing at the Israeli Embassy, and followed this by inviting the Deputy Ambassador, Eitan Naeh, to speak with us one Shabbat. Other speakers we invited included Martin Ben Moreh of the Reut Institute, we had a most interesting evening with both a Palestinian and Israeli representative of the One Voice movement, and we invited Dr Chaim Peri, the legendary and inspirational director of Yemin Orde to address us. We had discussions with Jeanie Horowitz to establish how we could potentially help education about Israel amongst the youngsters at Cheder (and were delighted to hear how well the staff are dealing with this important issue).

We established a survey of members to find out from our members how they felt about Israel and to ascertain what type of activities would interest them. The committee meetings we held were not well attended and despite approaching a number of members who had expressed interest in an Israel Committee, we have not yet been able to bring them on board.

The attendance at most of the public meetings was embarrassingly small, and it was felt that we could not continue to invite outside speakers of international calibre to our congregation as there did not seem to be enough interest. There was an attempt to encourage members to take part in a trip to Israel, but this too did not evoke sufficient response to make such a trip viable. Instead we held a couple of internal Open Forums to enable members to voice their concerns about matters relating to Israel and the Diaspora, and these were lively affairs.

We had hoped to arrange an Israel Dinner, our traditional fund-raising event, which has proved popular in past years, but due to major Synagogue events last year we could not find a suitable date. This year too, despite requesting to hold an event in the autumn (rather than close to Yom Haatzmaut in order not to clash with the Auction of Promises), we were advised by the Board that this would not be feasible and we should wait until next year. I am delighted though to inform you that I have initiated an excellent group who are willing to take on this most important venture and we will hold the event in April 2016 and we look forward to seeing you all there.

My conclusion is that members do not really feel a need for an Israel Committee to arrange activities in the same way as in the past. Today, for those who are interested in Israel there are many local organisations such as JW3, Zionist Federation, Yachad, and New Israel Fund that arrange speakers, cultural events, Israeli films, as well as Limmud, Jewish Book Week and the Jewish Film Festival, which all hold fascinating events. However, the magnificent Israeli charities that we support are thankful of our support and are awaiting our renewed efforts to raise funds to assist them in their crucial work and I am sure that there is still the desire in our Synagogue to help them.

CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE - LEAH HURST

The Committee met three times in the last year with a view to ensuring the Constitution is up to date and that each committee has effective Terms of Reference. A template is about to be circulated to all Committee Chairs so that they can produce an accurate set of TORs for their committee. In addition we are looking at creating an annual timetable for Board meetings so that regular items are effectively split up over the course of the annual cycle of meetings. We also looked at the question of burial rights and marriage. As ever, more committee members would be welcome as we are a small and select group.