



# Committee Reports for The Belsize Square Synagogue Annual General Meeting 8pm, Monday 4 June 2018

## HON SECRETARY'S REPORT - ANNETTE NATHAN

Inside this publication are reports, written for you, in preparation for our AGM. I urge you to read them as they will give you a snapshot of all the committees and activities which have taken place since last year. It is customary for the Honorary Secretary to 'headline' the leaflet and in the past I have gone through the year and picked out some highlights. Rather than repeat what you will find inside, I will try to write about some aspects of Belsize life, which may not get a mention and which I will refer to as our 'unsung heroes'. Some are people, some not.

Square Meals is a service which is there to help people who are going through a difficult time to be able to have a home cooked meal. We have moved on from the Synagogue freezer which ended up full of food which was often in the wrong place at the wrong time. Now, if there is a person or family in need of a meal for example through illness or bereavement, a group of people (clearly unsung heroes as I do not know who they are!) will cook, exactly when it is needed most.

A couple of weeks ago I was made aware that our hearing loop was out of

action. I suppose like many other fortunate people, it has never occurred to me how important it is. When it was explained to me, I learned that it is not just a question of amplification, but it helps with both high and low frequency to enhance so many aspects of our service to the hard of hearing. Thanks to Stephen Wiener, who has been a 'technical' unsung hero for many years, the loop is now repaired. We will ensure that signs are put up so that both members and visitors can get the full benefit of our unsung hero - our hearing loop.

Henny Levin and Sue Leon (maybe not entirely unsung but never the less) have worked tirelessly for so many years to put on our Holocaust Memorial Day Schools Event. This year, aided by around 20 volunteers, they invited and educated approximately 1000 children, from 8 schools over the period of three weeks. This event is a jewel in our crown and our thanks go to all who volunteered - you are all unsung heroes and of course, to Sue and to Henny, who will be standing down this year. Apart from HMD Henny is involved in so many areas of Belsize life and still

managed to provide 140 jars of her exquisite jams and chutneys for the Chanukah market!

Members who attend our Succot Services will have been delighted, year after year by the beautiful display of fruit and flowers which adorn the Bimah. We have Sue to thank for that too!

Those of us who do security cannot fail but to be both amused and in awe of our caretaker Gordon. He is probably one of our Synagogue's best ambassadors. As the neighbours come

and go throughout the morning, it is clear that he knows them all. He has either helped them build shelves, assemble a wardrobe, encouraged them to enrol their children into Keren's Nursery... the list goes on and on. To the residents of 'The Square' he is the face of our Synagogue and every year he hosts a barbecue in the forecourt. You cannot put a price on this local knowledge and goodwill between us and our neighbours. Definitely an unsung hero in my opinion.

You all know Adam Rynhold. You will either know him as the name on all the emails, the tireless 'Shamas' at services, the ever-present throughout Synagogue life. What makes him an unsung hero in my eyes is his knowledge of our members. If I cannot recall how some families are connected, how long someone has been a member, what job they do... Adam will know. If a new or prospective member comes to a service, Adam will approach me and other Board Members to alert us so that we can approach them and make them feel welcome. This is an invaluable skill and I am so delighted that the Synagogue are honouring Adam with a kiddush on 21 April in celebration of his 50th birthday.

Not necessarily unsung, but heroic all the same is our wonderful Chairperson Jackie Alexander, who steers us through the challenges of running our Synagogue with wisdom and clarity. Thanks also to our Ministers, our lay readers, community and youth choirs, our committee members, and to the other Honorary Officers, to the Executive and Board and to Lee Taylor for keeping everything together!

I am sure I have omitted others within the community who are worthy of a mention. Quite possibly they are working away, making their contribution inconspicuously and modestly. Please do let me know of anyone not included in this, or the attached reports, who deserve some recognition. Perhaps we can take this a step further and hold a special Shabbat service and kiddush to honour them and all our unsung heroes.

### EDITORIAL & COMMUNICATIONS EMMA BROOKES

Little has changed since last year and we have continued to work on our four main methods of communication.

- **Our Cong**, a bi monthly publication sent to all members in hard copy and available online. Ruth Rothenberg works very hard to include all submissions and makes editorial decisions so that everything is included even if it is in the next publication.
- **News from The Square** is put together and continually monitored by Lee Taylor in the office, who ensures that all upcoming events are publicised in the week they happen. The format of NFTS is under review and we hope a better version will be with you later this year.
- **The website** continues to be updated regularly by Hilary Curtis so that it is always current.
- **Social Media** continues to be a discussion point. Lee Taylor keeps our Facebook presence updated and Hilary Curtis tweets on a regular basis. We will continue to discuss our social media presence and considering ways to improve it.

Many thanks to all who work so hard to keep this going.

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE - ELIZABETH NISBET

### Education – Young people and children at the core

The Jewish education that Belsize Square Synagogue offers is so much more than learning the rituals and language of being Jewish. Whilst we are passionate about all our young people becoming able to read Hebrew, feeling confident with the practice of being Jewish, and being a credit to themselves and their community at their bar or bat Mitzvah, we have far loftier ambitions.

Education is about thinking creatively. It is about stepping out of the box of the formal definitions and rethinking how we present learning to our children. We want our young people to remember the time spent at Belsize Square, whether at Kikar Kids, Cheder, Youth Services, Youth Choir, in the B'nei Mitzvah programme, GCSE preparation or in the teaching assistant training as stimulating, interactive, challenging, for the most part fun and when they learned how to be a mensch.

We want the students to remember this Synagogue as a second home, where they learned about their heritage. For much of the time, our students participate in learning, without necessarily realising at the time what they have absorbed about our Jewish values. Often, these lessons are only seen as important in retrospect, when they dig into their memories to navigate their future. We care more about these long term benefits than short-term rote learning.

This is a Judaism that is not frightened of the twenty-first century, but uses technology (the cheder really enjoyed the new experiences of 'Jewish Interactive', an iPad based learning tool!) and modern ideas, as well as drawing on the past to help our young people to navigate their own modern lives. Most of the young people spend much of their time in the "non-Jewish world". At Belsize Square, we support them to be on their own journey, giving them an understanding of what is the same and what is different about a Jewish environment and how their Judaism can add to their lives. As Jeanie Horowitz says, we want our young people to find their own place in a future Jewish narrative; one they write for themselves, drawing on what the past has to show them.

In this way, we can open our students' eyes to their Jewish heritage so they experience the richness of our history and the wealth of our tradition and they learn to make it their own.

### The work of the Education Committee

It is a strong passion for the benefits of Jewish education that has supported the diverse work of the Education Committee over the last year. As well as supporting the leadership of each of the activities under the umbrella of the Education Committee, providing peer-led co-operation and acting as a 'critical friend' on behalf of the synagogue Board, the Education Committee has taken on its own initiatives. If you would like to join this group, please get in touch with the Synagogue Office.

Whereas for the last couple of years, the main focus of the Committee's work has been on the B'nei Mitzvah programme, this year, the focus has been on creating a social action programme.

#### **Mitzvah Day**

It had been noted that the cross-communal event, Mitzvah Day, had become an activity for only the cheder. The Education Committee set out to reinvigorate this day as a time when everyone could participate in social action and the adults could become suitable role models for our young people.

With the aim of educating our young people in the value of social action, our Mitzvah Day activities were vastly expanded. For the first time, the cheder was joined by all sections of the community, the young and the not so young: the Kikar Kids families, the BMG, the adult education group, the Reut Committee, the conversion to Judaism students, the Community Choir led by Ben Wolf, and other members of the community and their friends who participated in a day of activities. These ranged from singing and chatting at a local non-Jewish care home to packing toiletries for Homeless Action in Barnet and local homeless charities in Camden, collecting packaged foods for the local foodbank and delivering warm clothes to the Separated Child Foundation.

With all this taking place you may be forgiven for thinking that there was nothing left for the cheder to do but you would be wrong. Under the leadership of Jeanie Horowitz, who combined with Eve Hersov and Suzanne Goldstein, the cheder children cooked and drew and entertained and brought so much joy. The highlight was a tea party and concert arranged for the older members of the community.

As Margit Laser commented, "I was sitting there with my friend Vivien Kendall watching the children work so

hard and do so much and I thought – 'Belsize Square Synagogue is in good hands. I really felt – the future is good'"

#### **Cheder**

##### **Jeanie Horowitz – Headteacher**

There are currently 77 children on the register between years 1-10. The numbers on our role have fallen by 8 compared with last year. This is due to children not returning to Cheder after they have celebrated their bar/bat Mitzvahs and small classes at the younger end of the school. There are six children in year one and two children in year two. Our largest year group is now eleven children. This includes the upcoming year seven which in the past has been larger.

Every primary class has an open morning where the parents attend cheder and then meet with Jeanie to share their impressions. The parents are generally satisfied with the progress their children are making, but they are encouraged to bring issues that need to be addressed to Jeanie's attention. This year our Cheder year groups 4, 5 and 6 participated in an Israel 70 art competition. Year 5's entry won a place at the art exhibition will be displayed at JW3 for one week from 15-22 April and will then be on display for three months at the Iraqi Jewish Heritage museum in Or Yehudah in Israel. We are very excited and proud of year 5 and their teacher Susannah Alexander and her teaching assistants.

#### **Hebrew Programme:**

Year 1 is learning Hebrew, mainly orally, through games and pictures with letter recognition and an introduction to reading. Year 2 begins to learn Hebrew reading. Year 3 reviews letters learned in year 2 and learns to read phrases related to their Jewish studies lessons. Years 4 and 5 learn Hebrew together but spend part of the lesson in year groups. In year 6, we ensure that children who require more individual help are receiving it ahead of their preparation for B'nei Mitzvah. 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 with a higher standard of Hebrew. One of our Hebrew teachers is taking the higher ability students to a Hebrew Shakespeare club which they really enjoy.

#### **Holidays:**

We celebrate the holidays in our uniquely Belsize way, creating an active, educational but most importantly



enjoyable learning environment. This year we assembled beautiful Purim packages for 17 elderly members of the Belsize Square community and our Cheder families delivered them. All the children made hamantashen. This year for Pesach we will have a model seder where each year group learned part of the Hagaddah to present to the rest of the school and the parents who attend. Shavuot will be celebrated with the community on Sunday 20 May.

**International Trips:**

Unfortunately, we still do not have the funding to repeat the Israel trip that has been so inspirational for our teaching assistants but several children have participated in the trip to Berlin for the choir.

**iGCSE:**

With the reorganisation of Religious Studies curriculum instigated by Michael Gove, Belsize Square Synagogue has switched to teaching the International GCSE, for which the teaching still can be wholly from a Jewish perspective. The syllabus has a huge amount of content and from a larger year group, two students will take the exam this summer but several others attend the lessons regularly without wanting to commit to doing the revision necessary for taking the exam.

**Staff:**

We have an excellent staff this year. We have welcomed to the teaching team Caroline Loison, a parent in the cheder, which has been an incredibly positive addition. Caroline is both a trained teacher and a long standing member of the community who grew up at Belsize Square. We also welcome Alitzah Grant and Adina Bernstein our two new teachers for years 7 and 8 who are also both trained teachers. They have added a sense of professionalism to our school and each have different strengths.

**Communication:**

Jeanie emails parents regularly to inform them of trips, special days and to report on what has been happening at Cheder. Parents are generally happy with the level of communication.

**The Cheder Parents' Association (PA)**

This is now led by Frank Joseph and we have a new cohort of parents coming through as class reps. A big thanks is owed to Mandy Brass for many years of successful leadership of the PA. This year the PA have organised and run a profitable Children's Chanukah Market, and supported the Cheder with the celebration of festivals. Parents and

children's Friday nights are planned for the Spring.

**Kikar Kids and Junior Shabbat service**

The Shabbat Children's Services continue to thrive. The Kikar Kids service for toddlers is now led by Richard Pollins and his group of parents. The kids sing, dance and pray every month before enjoying their own Kiddush. The 5 - 9s service has been rebranded as the Junior Shabbat Service. Numbers are gradually increasing and we now have a number of parents and educators leading the service. Special mention should go to Jeanie Horowitz and Alasdair Nisbet for inspiring us with some really engaging services. Jeanie continues to organise Cheder Year Group shabbats, giving the youngsters the chance to attend the service and be recognised on the Bimah.

**High Holidays Youth Services**

The services were very well received this year and there was much positive feedback. With the synagogue hall being packed out with standing room only for the first day of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and half-filled for the second day of Rosh Hashanah, our youth services go from strength to strength.

It is important that those who attend the services realise the work that is put in by the participants. It is not just a case of coming up and reading a prayer or opening the ark, it is about understanding why they are doing it. Knowing how to read a prayer accurately works, but what works best is being able to put over to the congregation what the prayer is about. Therefore, time is always spent in rehearsals discussing the meaning of each part and especially what it means to the person reading it. We are teaching our children the necessary skills and confidence to equip them to take a full part in the congregation for the rest of their lives.

It is gratifying that so many of the Youth Services alumni are now taking part in the main services, not just on the High Holidays but on Shabbat. We are especially proud of those who have learned to play shofar from Alasdair Nisbet who are now to be heard on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in the sanctuary, and of those who have been taught to leyn by Joe Hacker.

We always try to invite all children, including those who attend Jewish schools instead of cheder and last year was no exception with three such

children involved. If you know of a child who falls into this category please let the office know so that we can reach out to them.

These Youth Services are a jewel in the synagogue's crown and it is thanks to the committed members of the Youth Committee, Leah Hurst, Joe Hacker, Karen Sanders, Joe Brookes, Adam Hirschovits and Alasdair Nisbet that they have achieved that status. The team is fully supported by Jeanie Horowitz who is in charge of Cheder and now Miles D'Cruz who has taken over as conductor of the Youth Choir from Alyson Denza, who sadly left us after the services last year.

**Post B'nei Mitzvah Shabbat Youth Service**

In March 2017, the Synagogue welcomed back twenty-five of the post B'nei Mitzvah students to lead the Shabbat morning service. This uplifting event showed Belsize's commitment to the youth as the future of the Synagogue. We hope that this will be repeated in future years.

**Youth Choir**

The most significant change in the Youth Choir has been that Alyson Denza left to live on a farm in France, but not before she had encouraged Miles D'Cruz to apply for her role. Now that Miles has his feet firmly under the desk, or his hand on the baton, the choir has adapted to his different style and attendance has been good.

We have worked to strengthen the team leading the choir. Helena Trenner (year 11) was appointed general assistant to the Youth Choir in December last year, and Maya Brookes (year 11) as Youth Choir librarian in January. Sixth-former, Isaac Adni has been playing both organ and keyboard for the rehearsals and services. Helena, Maya, and Isaac have held regular meetings with Miles to voice their ideas.

In addition to their regular duties of singing at the B'nei Mitzvah services and at the three Youth Services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and at Mincha on Yom Kippur afternoon, the choir have performed at the Chanukah Market and on Purim to a high standard.

This March, 17 members of the youth choir have once again visited the Pestalozzistrasse Shul in Berlin to perform with their resident youth and professional choirs for the erev and boker shabbat services. Isaac, the shul's

young organist, had the opportunity to play the Pestalozzistrasse shul's organ, accompanying Chazzan Paul Heller for the musaf service. Thanks to Simon Cutner for arranging this trip and ensuring that everything went well.

### **B'nei Mitzvah Programme**

Cantor Heller's B'nei Mitzvah programme is running smoothly, with all the procedures in place as mentioned in the Cantor's report from last year. We are still working to fulfil our stated aim: *"We are committed to our B'nei Mitzvah programme, which engages the whole family with the BSS community in order to perpetuate Judaism and Jewish identity."*

We encourage every student to attend the services and cheder regularly during their preparation year and this benefits all the young people. This year, we have had eight B'nei Mitzvah students in the programme and we are confident that the experience that they have had will benefit them in their future Jewish life.

We have in place a tutor's get-together on a yearly basis and currently have 5 regular tutors, Ben Wolf, Adam Rynhold, Yohel Heller, Joe Hacker and the Cantor. We would love to include female tutors. If you, or someone you know, is a confident leynner and would like to participate in teaching our young people, please get in touch with the office.

Being able to lead Kiddush on Friday night, to read Maftir and Haftarah and corresponding blessings are still the target for all BM students. We also work with special need students to give them other ways to fulfil their goals, and we have to thank Antge Heller for her help with this.

Kabbalat Shabbat Chat is still happening but not every month, due to the smaller numbers. We are still looking into having a weekend away as a family Shabbaton which was cancelled in the past year.

### **Education – Adults**

The Adult Discussion Group has had another excellent year of learning, discussion, films and outings. Numbers continue to grow and some days we now have every inch of the library filled with second row only seating for late comers. It is wonderful to see and be part of. We have new shul members, friends of shul members, members of other shuls and also unaffiliated members who see continued learning as an important part of their Judaism. Our discussions with the Rabbi and guest speakers are lively and always interesting as each person brings with them their unique knowledge,

experience and opinion. Many have two, three or even four opinions fulfilling the old adage *'two Jews three opinions'*. That is why the mornings are always interesting, stimulating, thought provoking and enjoyable. Come and see for yourself and add your opinion(s)! You may get hooked even after one session.

The first session of each Sunday is led by Rabbi Altshuler. This year's theme has been based around Zionism starting with the Early Zionist thinkers, Krochmal, Graetz, Alkali, Kaluscher and Hess via Max Nordau, Ahad Ha'am, Syrkin, A.D.Gordon, Rav Kook and Martin Buber. Through their writings we have looked at Political and Cultural Zionism, Zionist Marxism and Mizrahi/Religious Zionism. We still have Martin Buber's Zionism, Practical Zionism of Chaim Weizmann, the New World responses to Zionism, David Ben Gurion, Zionism ideology and Israel today to come before ending our year with two big questions - How has Zionism affected our lives and what does it mean to us today? Although sessions are linked by the theme it is not too late to come and join in any session.

The second session of our Sunday mornings is either led by one of our group, a shul member or by a guest speaker. Our topics range from Jewish history, Israel, BDS, World politics, Islam, Jewish culture and Jewish film. Some of this year's topics included The Jews of Medieval Norwich (Maurice Mendel), How the young Jews of Budapest are resisting the rise of hate (René Cassin scholars), Trump's Doctrine for the Middle East (Jonathan Paris), How Albanian Jews were saved and thrived under Nazi occupation (Imam Mehmed Stubbla), Reporting the Middle East - is the BBC biased? (Jonathan Charles), How 3000 years of Jewish Civilisation in the Arab World Vanished overnight (Lyn Julius), Challenges in Gaza and the disengagement plan - evacuation of Gaza and parts of the West Bank (Tamir Oren- Stand With Us), Christian and Jewish women in Britain 1880-1940 (Dr Anne Summers) and Bukaharian Jewish culture through food (Lilian Cordell).

We aim to have an outing for the morning/day every Cheder term. This year, our first outing was to listen to Douglas Murray in conversation with Bernard Henri-Levy at the How to Academy, followed by Jewish Book Week. Thanks to the help of Professor Tessa Rajak, a day trip to Oxford to see the rare Jewish books at the Bodleian Library and tea with Professor Martin Goodman, author of The History of Judaism was an amazing day, that complemented our day outing last year

to Cambridge to look at the manuscripts and artefacts from the Cairo Genizah.

If you and or your friends like debate, discussion, have a topic or an opinion to share please feel free to join us. There is no charge, no commitment and no obligation. Just come whenever you want or when a specific topic interests you. If you would like more details or want to join our weekly mailing list please contact Claire Walford on [claire.walford@yahoo.com](mailto:claire.walford@yahoo.com) who is looking forward to continuing on her Jewish learning journey with you.

### **Introduction to Judaism Classes:**

Lead by Rabbi Altshuler this weekly Monday evening class is for everyone - those choosing to become Jewish and Jews who want to extend their knowledge of Judaism. The year course covers God, Jewish history, life cycle events, the Festivals, kashrut, Israel, Hebrew and so much more.

### **Our Thanks**

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 special Belsize Square Synagogue cheder from strength to strength by her imaginative programming ideas and hard work in bringing these ideas to reality.

Thanks are also due to the Rabbi for his continuing commitment to developing education at Belsize Square and for his stimulating Adult Education talks and to Cantor Heller for his B'nei Mitzvah programme. We would also like to thank Alyson Denza for her work with the Youth Choir last year and Miles D'Cruz for stepping into Alyson's shoes as Director of the Youth Choir.

We would also like to thank all the teachers, tutors, parents and volunteers who have contributed to the continuing education of our Belsize Square Synagogue members over the last year - our education programme would be much diminished without your efforts.

We would also like to single out and thank in particular those of our lay leadership who have supported our professional staff and taken on their own projects and made the last year particularly special. The educational events that really stick in my mind over the last year as truly transformative could not have taken place without the unstinting generous efforts by key lay leaders.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE - JOHN ALEXANDER

The work that was begun last year, when the committee was reconstituted, continues. The main purpose of the committee continues to be to attract new members to the synagogue and to this end we focus on marketing/selling and the promotion of the synagogue.

In 2017 we have seen a net increase in membership. We've had a net increase of nine adults and net decrease of eight children. We continue to encourage children to become adult members in their own right when they turn 21. We closely monitor the reasons people join and leave, but to date there has been no single or consistent reason for either. Obviously we sadly lose members to death but happily new joiners more than make up for them, particularly by those in the Rabbi's *Introduction to Judaism* class. There has been a significant fall in the number of children attending Cheder over the past two years, despite the number of children members having only dropped by a total of four over the same period. We are trying to identify the reasons for this whilst at the same time looking at ways to encourage families with young children to join.

The office continues to produce a weekly information leaflet with details of the Shabbat service and forthcoming

events and a brief introduction to the synagogue, which is handed out to visitors by those on welcoming duty. We are in the process of finalising a new leaflet about the synagogue which will be made available to people who enquire about membership and also distributed more widely in the local community.

We continue to raise the profile of the synagogue to attract new members. We placed another advert in the JC, specifically targeted at the non-orthodox. We continue to look at ways of actively raising the profile of ministers by articles in the press, attendance at Kikar Kids' services and attendance at Limmud. We were pleased to see our involvement in Mitzvah Day being acknowledged in the JC and hope we will have more coverage in future.

A major new initiative this year has been to look at and improve our 'inclusion' offering. It is our mission to treat everyone equally at BSS and we are, therefore, trying to be as inclusive as possible for all of our members, whether they have a physical or mental disability, or other such issues. We have visited other Shuls in the area to see how they address this issue. Additionally, we have attended a Judith Trust talk on learning

disabilities, which can hopefully help us in our Cheder. We participated in the national Mental Awareness Shabbat, organised by JAMI, to which Rabbi Altshuler spoke on the Shabbat morning. In our foyer we are now displaying brochures of several charities which could be of help to our members - these include Chai Cancer Care, JAMI and Langdon, to name just a few - and we are in the process of preparing information sheets about all the varied welfare services available from our own care team which will be added to them. We have historically celebrated a number of B'nei mitzvot for children with disabilities and hope to be able to do more in the future. From a physical point of view, Belsize Square Synagogue is now registered as 'Disability Confident Level 1', as noted on our website and in NFTS, which will assist with inclusive recruiting. We continue to keep our ears and eyes open to improve our awareness and the support we can offer to those who need it. Most of this work has been done by our new Board member, Michelle Wayne, to whom we are grateful.

I would welcome new members to the committee with fresh ideas and who are enthusiastic and prepared to actively participate in the work of the committee.

## BELSIZE MEMBERS' GROUP - MARION NATHAN AND DILYS TAUSZ

It has been a busy year for the BMG committee. Our plan is to hold two or three events during the year, depending upon what else is in the Synagogue calendar and to be as inclusive as possible - all are welcome.

Our role is to serve the Synagogue members and to help integrate new members into Synagogue life. To this end we organise a members' breakfast on a Shabbat morning when all are welcome to share in smoked salmon bagels and excellent coffee. It is an opportunity for both old and new members to meet the Ministers and the Board in an informal way. The committee not only supplies the breakfast but also makes sure that no-one is left standing alone and new members are introduced around as we want them to feel at ease with their new 'family'.

Each year we put on one fundraising event. Due to popular demand this year it was another supper quiz, though held in February rather than in October/November as in previous years. Those who did not want to take a whole table but still wished to join in were put on

tables with conducive company. Attendance was high with 14 tables sold and a profit of £2,200 was made. The quiz proved good fun with just the right amount of difficult questions so that everyone went home feeling a warm glow of achievement. For instance, were you aware that a person who collects flags is called a 'vexillologist'? - well the winning table probably did!

In the opinion of the BMG, just because an event is non-profit making does not mean that it is not worth-while holding. Indeed on the evening of Sunday 4 June the Kiddush Room was packed with an audience who heard a fascinating talk about the Weiner Library. There was no charge for this event. It was fascinating to hear how the archive is being moved into the 21st century using modern technology especially digitalisation. We were told that much of the original material in the library's archive, which was transferred to Yad Vashem some years ago, had deteriorated so that some of the documents are now unreadable, yet the copies that were saved digitally are available in their original form at the

Library. The questions posed by the audience were wide ranging and promoted discussions about the problems of school children and their teachers knowing nothing of the holocaust, which resonated with our congregation, many of whom are actively involved in disseminating that information.

The BMG serves the congregation in so many ways without anyone knowing. It is us who organise the welcoming rota for Shabbat services, which is no mean task; it is us that is approached to put on events such as a possible jazz evening in 2019. We are a great committee whose members work well together as a team. We keep committee meetings to a minimum, yet still fulfil our brief.

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Pat Hirchovits who has decided to step down from the committee after more years than she would like to admit to. She will be sorely missed. If you are reading this report and wish to fill this gaping hole in our number please get in touch with us. We have a lot of fun and no boring meetings!

## FACILITIES COMMITTEE - DENNIS NATHAN

I am happy to report our spiritual home is in good shape with another relatively trouble-free year. 2017 saw very few major problems. We took on a few projects to upgrade the building, including completion of the office refurbishment, redecoration of the sanctuary & old Kiddush room and replacement of more lights with new LED fittings. Our kitchen also received a 5 star food hygiene rating, which we strive to keep, so we ask all who use the kitchen to be mindful of this.

Going forward we need to review what we will do with the hall to 'freshen it up' without undergoing a major refurbishment. We also aim to reduce our carbon footprint as well as trying to recycle more and, where possible, use eco-friendly products.

We have a great team of Gordon, Paul and Yelena, and have the invaluable support of Lee & the office staff to whom we are again indebted and I cannot stress enough what a great job they do on our behalf. Last but not least thank you to my fellow committee members Michael, Paul, & Peter for sharing the load.

## BelsizeLIVE - ANNETTE NATHAN

We have not needed to meet this year, which is testament to the superb job David Pollins and Lee Taylor continue to do with their care and maintenance of all the equipment. Every week, and for most of the festivals, our services are streamed into people's homes.

As there is no longer funding, we were delighted to receive a very welcome donation from the Ann Hirschfield Discretionary Trust, along with some very generous gifts from members who wished to show their appreciation.

We have an annual license contract,

and must ensure that our equipment is maintained and upgraded where necessary to enable us to continue to provide this much needed and hugely appreciated service to the isolated, infirm or vulnerable in our community.

At times we are at the mercy of the internet and are aware it can be very disappointing when a service cannot be shown. There are also certain services, meetings and concerts which cannot be shown due to a different layout of the Synagogue. But all things considered we believe we are offering something very special. Here is one of the many

messages I received over the year:

*I was not feeling well, so unfortunately, I could not come to the New Year service but I watched the whole service on my computer.*

*I think it is a brilliant idea to have this service especially for the old or disabled people.*

*I know that we have to pay for this service now, but please, do not give it up.*

*I know that some of my friends who are over 90 years old watch it a lot.*

## BURIAL & CREMATION COMMITTEE - STEVEN BRUCK

The Committee has continued to work by email and telephone whenever personal issues arose regarding individual burials. As agreed we met just once to review operational/financial matters and Tahara arrangements.

I am grateful to Freddy Lehmann for agreeing to join the Operations Committee of Edgwarebury cemetery, where he has already played an active role in the recruitment of a new Operations Manager. Henny Levin and Brian Harris continue to join me on the cemetery Board, and Michael Brod has been assisting as an alternate representative, with particular involvement in a project to improve on site drainage.

Calos continue to be our Funeral Directors. We are also very grateful to Lee Taylor for his support, both to the Committee and to those who have been bereaved in helping them with arrangements.

Whilst the committee is particularly involved in considering matters directly affecting members, the issues discussed at Edgwarebury Board and Honorary Officer level (where I am vice-chair) are many and varied, ranging from personnel and budgets to grounds maintenance and a substantive project for improvement to drainage which I

have, thus far, been heading up. As fully participating partners at Edgwarebury we continue to be actively involved in the decision making process and of course various matters arise requiring substantive involvement. I am pleased to report that the underlying theme continues to be one of admirable and harmonious co-operation between four Jewish communities of varying religious complexions which is a model for the Jewish community generally. The cemetery is very well maintained and the facilities have been progressively improved over time.

One final note; in September 2019 as part of the normal routine, the current excellent chair of the Edgwarebury Joint Burial Board, Liberal Judaism's Phil Stone, will retire and in accordance with the cemetery constitution, it will be our turn to take the chair of the cemetery for a 3 year period. I have served so long, both at

Edgwarebury and in various roles at the Synagogue, that I think it is now appropriate for me to pass on the baton. We are therefore talking to members interested in this role, which would involve 1 years involvement prior to the date of changeover. Anyone interested to learn more would be most welcome.

## ISRAEL COMMITTEE - REBECCA TRENNER

If I may begin with a request? Please join! The Committee needs young people, actual Israelis, people with energy, people with time and people with ideas.

2017 has been quiet on the activity front but plans are taking shape for a series of events for Israel's 70th .

We are partnering with UJIA to bring speakers about Israeli advances in environmentalism. There will also be a link to volunteering opportunities for our young members (and the young at heart but physically fit) with environmental projects in Israel.

Exploration is underway to link young Israeli musicians with our youth for workshops. Watch this space!

This year will also include a food festival to celebrate the explosion in popularity of Israeli food in the UK.

Israel is about more than just politics - although it is a source of fascinating debate and justifiable concern - so, let's celebrate what is exciting and innovative in Israel in this milestone year.

## COMMUNITY CARE REPORT - EVE HERSOV

It is now nearly 3 years since I took on the role of Community Care Co-ordinator. Each year my role adapts as the requirements of our community changes, intensifies, and as other support services are stretched by austerity, and families may be juggling to manage competing needs. My duties have shifted significantly towards more complex issues focussing more and more on the multiple challenges of ageing, illness, bereavement, and the emotional and bureaucratic concerns that each of these issues can entail.

In any given week I may be a sounding board to families trying to determine the best way forward for someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's, terminal illness, chronic disease, or someone struggling to adapt to a loss of hearing and vision. Or I may be involved even more directly with our members who have no family, as well as those individuals who may have family that cannot be safely or easily relied upon.

Another area of involvement is with family carers amongst our congregation who may need assistance with emotional and practical support. Increasingly my work also centres on people who are isolated and who benefit hugely from the sense of belonging that the synagogue, our

Ministers, and office staff team provides. This may come into play especially during a hospitalisation.

Another area of my work is reacting when we are made aware that a congregant is in hospital and would like a visit. We do try to meet this need, although sometimes, due to time constraints and competing concerns, we are grateful when volunteers can step in to assist. If you live near a hospital or a care home, and wish to assist with occasional visits, do let me know.

This winter particularly, has been a time when illness and bereavement have been prevalent. This can shift priorities immediately from other activities and can lengthen the time it takes me as a part-time member of staff to respond to concerns that are less time sensitive. Examples are the on-going development of resources, connections and relationships with and primarily for our older members, but others in the community as well.

I want to thank everyone serving on our Bereavement Support Group. This has certainly been a year when we have felt the weight of loss on our membership. Also, my thanks to Judy Field, who has been phoning up people and organising the NW3 Lunch group which continues

to meet monthly for good food and lively debate and conversation. As mentioned in the Re'ut report, our festival lunches and intergenerational tea for Mitzvah Day were all extremely popular and well attended; providing a welcome opportunity to bring together older members and some newer members and volunteers.

We are a congregation with many vibrant older members who enjoy contact but may be increasingly housebound. Finding ways to engage and enable people to stay in touch and find new friendships is an important part of my role. With the help of Suzanne Goldstein and Re'ut this last year we have recruited new volunteers who have been "matched" to older members who appreciate visits and phone calls. We are always in need of new people and are thankful to the hard work of our new and long-standing volunteers whose involvement makes a significant difference in the lives of our remarkable elders.

I have a debt of gratitude to the staff of the synagogue who support my work and our members with great affection and respect, and also to our volunteers and members who do their utmost to keep me well-informed of needs and issues. Thank you.

## LITURGICAL COMMITTEE - JOE BROOKES

We remain one of the larger committees and in the last year have met three times. Services continue to be our main remit and, as with last year, members of the Committee have taken the lead in helping to plan many of these Services.

The Shavuot Tikkun was organised by Alasdair Nisbet and drew a good attendance. The Committee thanks Alasdair for all his hard work.

Our High Holyday Services were again of the highest order and thanks must go to both Rabbi Altshuler & Cantor Heller for leading us through the myriad of Services from Selichot to Simchat Torah where Roni Hirschovits & Adam Davis were honoured.

Both the first and second day of Succot saw congregants participating in the Hakafot, carrying their own sets of Arba Minim (lulav and etrog) which they purchased through the Synagogue and we will be offering congregants the opportunity to purchase sets again this year, this an opportunity for the whole family to participate in an easy Mitzvah.

For the first time we held a New Baby Service on Shabbat Chol Hamoed Succot. We welcomed the new born

babies and their parents to the Synagogue with a group aliyah and each child received a Belsize Teddy Bear.

Once again thanks must go to Pat Hirschovits for co-ordinating our Purim celebrations. Having indicated that she would stand down after Purim 2017 Pat continued to spearhead the 2018 celebrations but will be handing over from 2019 to Michelle Samson.

There has been an increase in participation in our Services, thanks to our lay leaders. The Gabbaim have made a concerted effort to ensure that aliyot are spread around the Congregation.

B'nei Mitzvah Services are a true reflection of the fact that the future of any Congregation lies with its youth, and in our case the youth is flourishing.

This year has also seen the

rewriting of our Service Guide for Shabbat Morning and these are being amended to take account of Special Shabbattot such as Zachor, Hagadol etc...and for the Festival Services as well.

Finally, a big thanks to our Rabbi and Cantor for their spiritual and religious guidance.

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

## CHANUKAH MARKET 2017 – ANNETTE NATHAN

The Chanukah Market raised an outstanding £16,033, a 91% increase on 2016. This was due to so many members who ran, or helped on stalls, cooked, baked, brewed, entertained, shopped, funded through very generous sponsorship, or who simply came to shop, eat or be entertained.

Throughout the year a small group of wonderful people met regularly to plan this successful weekend. We met up in January and will meet again soon, to plan this year's market. Many thanks to Cheryl Davis, Pat Hirschovits, Emma Pollins, Freddy Lehmann and to Frank Joseph for your ideas, enthusiasm and support.

## CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE - MICHAEL HOROWITZ QC

We have held three meetings during the year. The main topics covered in discussion and further action taken were:

1. Terms of Reference of Committees: Judith Farbey QC carefully considered several Committee documents and re-drafted them for clarity, simplicity and uniformity of practice. The Education Committee has confirmed, as has our own Constitution Committee, that their ToRs are agreed. We are following up Burial & Cemetery and Finance for confirmation that their documents are formally in place. We have outstanding queries for the Liturgical and Youth Committees.
2. Terms of Reference for other Committees remain outstanding and will be vigorously chased up in the next few months. We hope to have a full set in place across the list of Committees during the year.
3. Marriage Certification: We are satisfied that the current system (or lack thereof) by which BSS has to use indirect certification of our power to marry is cumbersome and undignified. We are also of the joint opinion that the otherwise admirable outgoing President of the Board of Deputies is unduly deferential to the Office of the Chief Rabbi in declining to certify us directly under the 1949 Marriage Act etc.
4. Informal contacts have failed to establish movement. We

are also aware that the issue of same sex marriage as proposed by some Masorti and Progressive Synagogues complicates the issue. In theory judicial review might be open to us but we suspect that the Synagogue would not wish to go down such a provocative path. Discussions with the Board of Deputies and another synagogue are continuing.

5. Voting procedures in Committees: One of the objectives in securing Terms of Reference across the Committee Structure will be to confirm the position of invitees to any Committee in a uniform manner.

### Longer Term

6. During the coming year we will trawl through the proliferating guidance from the Charity Commission and check compliance and advise on any potential issues of governance likely to affect the Synagogue and its structures.
7. A larger task is to consider whether the time has come to draft a Constitution that moves away from the Company law model that was adopted in 2011 and is perhaps now in danger of being regarded as outmoded.
8. We are satisfied that we continue to be properly constituted and fit for purpose.

## SECURITY COMMITTEE - JUSTYN TRENNER

While, unfortunately, there were important incidents in the wider community and some concerns in the Jewish community, we did not suffer any major incidents. At the same time, we were alerted by the police of the need to be mindful of the risks of general crime, including moped and acid attacks, and took appropriate precautions.

I want to remind members of the importance of keeping personal belongings with you to prevent unnecessary security worries. Some false alarms alerted us to weaknesses that I am pleased to report we have addressed and we have also taken the opportunity to review and replace our

contracted security supplier. We have appointed SRS Security, who come with excellent references. Members will see some personnel continue and other new faces. Please let me have any comments on their performance.

We continue to respond to the challenge that we must always remain fully alert - an act of insurance that we hope will rarely or, hopefully, never be called upon. We are, as always, very grateful for the care and support we receive from the Police, ranging from physical presence to rapidly responding to check suspicious vehicles.

We need more members to volunteer to

increase our panel of CST-trained volunteers who can then assist as Shabbat and Yom Tov Security Supervisors – we have members whose service we have much appreciated but now need to replace. The CST training is free, rigorous, fun and useful both at Belsize and beyond; and appropriate for anyone from 17-60! Please contact me or the office for more information.

Finally, most importantly, thanks to all our many security volunteers but most especially our volunteer supervisors – the people you see most frequently on the gate waving you in or out and on whom we depend to keep us safe inside.

## MUSIC AT BELSIZE - PHILIP KELLER

We started this musical year with a celebration of choral music with our friends from the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in Berlin. Over the course of a weekend our combined choirs teamed up with the adults and children's choirs from Germany to enrich our Shabbat services. The weekend culminated in a wonderful concert on the Sunday night when various choral combinations presented a programme of Jewish music along with Cantors Heller and Sheffer from Pestalozzistrasse. The weekend was a joy from start to finish and it was an honour to host and perform with our guests.

In November we welcomed back the Wallace Ensemble for a concert centred on Jewish Vienna. Once again the Cantor was in great voice and once again Ben Wolf curated a thought provoking and soulful evening of music for us. We are profoundly indebted to them both.

We ended our year with our most ambitious project to date. In March we invited a cast made up of some of London's finest young singers along with the London Young Sinfonia to BSS to perform Mozart's comic operatic masterpiece, *Così fan Tutti*. We were treated to an outstanding production full of humour, enthusiasm and sublime singing. I hope we will be able to welcome this group of performers back to BSS for future opera performances.

Once again, I would like to thank Cantor Heller and our Music Director Ben Wolf, along with the rest of the music committee.