



IN THIS ISSUE

What's on at BRS 1
 Thoughts from the Rabbi 2
 View from the Chair 3
 Cheder and Youth 4-5
 View from the Kitchen 6
 In Our Community 7-9
 Nightingale 10
 Jewish Living Experience 11
 Member profile of Mani 12
 BRS Area Groups 13
 Books, Youth, WIZO 'n' Jazz ... 14
 Czech scrolls and HMD 15
 KKL, Advice from Longfellow *and*
 Endowment Fund update 16
 Theatre review and future of
 Progressive Judaism in UK 17
 Pen portraits *and*
 post-AGM contacts list 18-19
 An Iftar and a Final Word 20

NEW FACES, OLD FACES: THE GLORIOUS MIX THAT MAKES UP A THRIVING COMMUNITY

Has much happened since the last HighLight? You bet! We have a new chair – Linda de Lange, above – after Michelle’s marathon term that saw her working with three rabbis while negotiating a pandemic and all the highs and lows of personal and community life, and now a war. New incumbents in other key roles include Michael Abrahams (above and p.19)

Recently – under the guidance of Vicki, our brilliant cover girl of the last issue – we hosted the wonderful Jewish Living Experience Exhibition. It was so popular that follow-up dates are already being planned. See p.11. Chanukah was celebrated with the fair, parties and candle lightings; individuals have had simchas and sadnesses, and Rabbi Laura has continued to reach out to so many different segments of the community it’s a miracle she has enough Zoom time to cope.

One thing we’ve been asked to mention this month is the Endowment Fund. A new round of funding has started and applications are invited. See p. 16. Looking at last year’s successful bids, you will see that Judy Taylor asked for and won funding to hire the “best music in the business” for **BRS’s 60th Anniversary Party in November**. Watch out as the year progresses for more on how we will be marking this BRS milestone.

An AGM can be an excuse for a good dust-up and lots of negative publicity (as per numerous public bodies in recent years) or, conversely but almost as unfortunately, a quiet rubber-stamping exercise, passing unnoticed by most within an organisation. Not so at BRS! What an opportunity to celebrate the diversity and dedication of our community’s leaders, past, present and future. Talking of the future, plans for Progressive Jewish life in the UK are being discussed between the Reform and Liberal movements. More news on that on pp.8 and 17. All that’s left now is to wish everyone enjoyable and meaningful sederim. **Chag Pesach Sameach!**

Recent events have prompted many quotable comments from members, visitors and our rabbi, each throwing light on some aspect of our community or tradition. This poem was written by **Shaul Vardy**, a friend and contemporary of Rabbi Laura, in the aftermath of the 7 October atrocities in Israel, and quoted by her during the service on 2 March.

***Each man to his home.
 Each woman to her home.
 Every boy and girl to their bed, in safety.
 Here
 There
 Everywhere
 Shabbat shalom***

You'll find more quotes and poems throughout this issue, each in response to an event of some kind.

Jews DO count, and the numbers tell us a tale

RABBI LAURA delves into recent research findings and finds a mixed but interesting bag. Have a look!

I love a good piece of data – well researched, interesting and important. My favourite Jewish research organisation is the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), as its findings are grounded in sensible assumptions that are well researched and thoroughly checked.

Don't go to fact-dodgy organisations for your data!

If you want a feet-on-the-ground approach to the latest data on Jews in the UK, and often in Europe as a whole, go to JPR rather than the often cavalier and frankly fact-dodgy campaign organisations (especially those who earn money by campaigning about antisemitism and in whose financial interest it is to have high figures. End of rabbinic rant for today).

At the beginning of February the JPR published its National Jewish Identity Survey (based on 5,000 interviews), which reflects many fascinating aspects of Jewish life in Britain. The first thing to note is being a member of Bromley is good for our health! Actually, to be fair, it's not just Bromley... it's great news for us and for others who love communities like ours.

Happiness is greater when community has meaning

There is a proven correlation in the survey between levels of happiness and community. The more attached they are to communities such as ours, the happier people say they are. As the Director of JPR, Jonathan Boyd, points out, this doesn't necessarily mean anything, but lots of sociological research shows that if we are interwoven into strong social networks such as communities, our levels of happiness and of psychological and even social wellbeing rise. There is plenty of literature on the relationship between being embedded in strong social networks

and personal wellbeing to suggest that **community involvement is good for us.** This level of happiness is strengthened when communities have meaning – social involvement and social purpose – and are multi-generational and diverse in their views. This diversity enables us to learn to value other views but also to be alongside those with whom we disagree when they need support despite their views.

If we love it, we have to teach it and live it.

It's fascinating that if we grew up Jewish, whichever denomination we grew up in, most of us - about six in ten - will stay broadly-speaking in the same denominational place over the course of our lives, while three in ten will move religiously 'leftwards' (i.e. in a more religiously progressive or secular direction), and one in ten will move religiously 'rightwards', or become more rigorous. Our broader context of a secular society is impacting on Jews, with the exception of the strictly Orthodox, 'Haredi' communities, who rarely move towards liberalism. This means that we, in our shul, must be proactive, creative and committed to enabling our members and future members to connect with the traditional and enriching aspects of Jewish knowledge and ritual. If we love it, we have to teach it and live it.

Another fascinating and uplifting element of the survey is the confirmation that the more we do in Jewish frameworks, particularly informal ones, the more we feel attached to the Jewish community and, also, to Israel. Informal educational and religious experiences bind our hearts and minds to each other and to Judaism. Interestingly, for those of us whose children do not or did not attend Jewish schools (we chose not to

send ours to Jewish schools in North London) it is the informal frameworks that really matter – such as synagogues, youth movements, film festivals, Limmud.

When I read the survey, there was one element that really saddened me but echoes what we have heard in Bromley – almost a third of British Jewish adults reported to the JPR that they had personally experienced an antisemitic incident in the previous year. However, the vast majority of these are comments in person and online and are not violent, often falling into the 'extremely stupid, hurtful but not threatening' category (my category not JPR's!). There are very few physical assaults, thank God, and these tend to be directed towards the most recognisably Jewish members of our community. Numbers have always risen during times of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and Israel's neighbours, and fallen again in times of non-conflict (although I don't think I'd call it peace except with Egypt and Jordan).

So, what really unites us?

Finally, let's return to who we really are. The survey confirms that the uniting element for Jews is not ritual, or food, or antisemitism but, and I love this, moral and ethical behaviour and the affirmation that being Jewish compels us to live a moral lifestyle, albeit with different interpretations of course. So, I invite you to geek up and look at the JPR's website – and I'd welcome a chance to think together how we might build even more opportunities for being a community, not just for the future but for our enrichment, enjoyment and well-being now.

Rabbis Levy and Baginsky echoed many of Rabbi Laura's words immediately above when they visited BRS recently. Why? How? See p.17.

Excitement and Trepidation

By the time you read this, I should have become the new chair of our synagogue, a role which I am looking forward to with some excitement and possibly a little trepidation. Following on from Michelle will be no mean feat. She has been incredibly involved for the last five years and I am hoping that she will still continue to bring her inimitable energy and insight to our community.

Some of you will know me and to others I will be a new face, even though I've been a BRS member for well over 30 years. At various times I ran the Gan, was Cheder Head, and ran Family and Children's High Holyday services. I even ran the social centre when it started, becoming less involved as my career as an antenatal teacher became more demanding.

A great place to belong

Being the vice-chair and sitting on the education committee this year has reminded me of the joy of being enveloped within the community, and that is the part I am really looking forward to. It has been a great pleasure getting to know the Board members and appreciating how much they care about making BRS a great place to be a member.

However, it won't be all joys. There will be challenges ahead, too. Being Jewish in the UK today has certainly become more challenging. The aftermath of the terrible events in Israel will continue to reverberate, making it important that we support each other, even if we don't always agree. There will also be changes in the coming years as our community grows and develops – and in meeting these changes and

challenges I hope that the Board and I can prove to be adaptive while still maintaining the values that make Bromley special.



So, what makes BRS special?

- *Our welcoming and friendly atmosphere, providing a place for all within the community;*
- *Our volunteering spirit;*
- *Our commitment to placing the education and development of our young people at the heart of the shul;*
- *Our support given freely by individual members as well as the rabbi and caring community; and*
- *Our proven ability to make the changes we need to keep BRS an exciting place to be.*

These are only some of the attributes of our community that I personally hold dear and I am sure we could all add to this list from our own experiences.

A new Board will have been elected on March 19. Most have enjoyed being Board members so much that they are continuing. However, having served six years, **Michelle Brooks Evans, John Posner** and **Marilyn Freeman** will be stepping down, though I am sure they will all continue to be very active in the community. So, on behalf of that community, I would like to thank them for all

they have done, and all they will continue to do, and to welcome their very worthy successors, **Zac Bates Fisher, Sonia Hyams** and **Joe Millis**. Each of them has already made a significant contribution to BRS and I am sure they will all bring their talents and dedication to their new roles. **Linda de Lange**



IT'S THE PESACH ISSUE, SO WHERE ARE THE RECIPES?

Where should we start? With folk from so many backgrounds attending seders these days a big question is always "Ashkenazi or Sephardi?" So here's one of each for the ever-popular sweet mortar, **Charoset**.

Ashkenazi (provided by Jo Jaeckel)

Take: ½ lb apples, 2oz raisins (soak overnight in sweet wine if desired) 2oz almonds, ground cinnamon
Peel and core the apples and chop finely, together with the almonds and raisins. Mix together, then add cinnamon to taste. Form into a neat block and either place in a glass dish or roll into tiny balls and coat with chopped nuts.

Sephardi (from Turkey, in Claudia Roden's Book of Jewish Food, suggested by Judy Woolfe). Take:

2 sweet apples (250g) peeled and cut into small pieces; 250g pitted dates; 150g raisins; juice and grated zest of an orange; 250ml sweet red passover wine; 2-4 tbsp sugar or to taste (optional); 60g coarsely chopped walnuts.

Put all, except sugar, in a saucepan and cook on very low heat until mixture is soft and mushy and liquid is reduced, stirring occasionally. Add sugar to taste. Blend to a paste in food processor. Put in bowl and sprinkle with walnut pieces.

Double the quantities of this one for 10+ people. **Thank you both.**

MAKING ROOM FOR JOY – AND CHEESECAKE

“Some things are, quite simply, better experienced than taught alone,” says cheder head Frankie. “In an era when the self is often at the epicentre of mainstream values, we need to be overt about creating community and the joys of togetherness. This requires us to think anew about the content-led, classroom-based approach that worked for previous generations of cheder pupils.”

“One who learns with joy can learn more in one hour than he can learn in many hours when he is sad,”

said Rabbi Ruach Chaim (Avot 6.6).

Chaim and other such Jewish thinkers were ahead of their time. Jewish educationalist Jonathan Woocher argues for a profound shift for chedarim in the 21st century. Jewish educators need to recognise the centrality of relationships and the social experience of learning as dynamic forces that shape an evolving identity and community continuation. Secondly, he says, the old formal teaching of things one “needed to know, recite by heart and not forget so as to be Jewish” is not relevant in an age in which even the most obscure bracha is accessible on-line in seconds; and thirdly, chedarim must be responsive to the *daily lives* of Jewish children who are growing up in an increasingly fragmented society and face demanding schooling weeks. Hence, nowadays, the emphasis is on collective learning and immersive experiences, in which pupils create a joyful space in which to *“explore community for themselves and grow Jewishly”*

At one time it was feared this sort of change would lead to a dilution and diminution of transmitting ‘what’s needed’ to maintain an authentic sense of Judaism. However, empowering our yeladim to create, sustain, and celebrate their Judaism within a community context *relies* on a knowledge-rich approach. The difference is it is less prescriptive, sessions are more varied and there is greater realism about how much can be taught productively within limited cheder hours.



New Hooray leader: Sonia (L) hands over to Anna (R) *Anna is excited to be stepping into the role. She says she is “...looking forward to seeing how this journey unfolds and the contributions we can make together for our Hooray Cheder!” Sonia comments on her new role on p. 5.*

Change always brings challenges. A shift towards experiential and whole-cheder events requires high levels of participation from parents as weekly kittah leaders, event hosts and drop-in volunteers. We can do more only with hands-on help and participation. That is why Hooray Cheder, our PTA, is and remains such a big part of our successful cheder. Indeed, its new leader Anna Huggins said on taking on the role that she was *“looking forward to working together for the benefit of our community”*

Our Gan and Chai School team works hard each week to provide

a range of activities, language games, drama and craft that particularly encourage our yeladim to embrace ideas and values through the essence of the group dynamics and joyful togetherness. This positive and uplifting Jewish space for our children is often where Judaism and kehillah come most alive, when proud Jewish identities and friendships are formed and the seeds of connection are planted.

For example, before Chanukah Hazel Sado and Sam Hyams led Kittah Alef in building a **giant papier mâché dreidel**, which their yeladim proudly shared with everyone when they led Assembly at the end of term.

We had “fruitful” sessions for Tu Bishvat, including a seder, a chance to taste and share a **rainbow plate of exotic fruits** from dried durian to fresh dates, and Robert Cohen got his kittot thinking about and building their **own human trees**. In some classes, role plays and drama skits provided amusing and dramatic ways of exploring themes from the weekly parashot, and voices were raised in **debates** that were linked to our senior kittot’s own daily challenges and interests.

Tables were turned as Aaron Russell presented Education head **Vicki** with her **Jack Petchey Award** and paid tribute to her work for cheder and BRS. Thanks to the JLEE (*see p.11*), we had enough props to stage a few weddings and learn about this life cycle event. As a regular part of their session, Maria Sonino and Keo Kyazze in Kittah Bet-Gimmel practise Shabbat blessings. Nobody can wait to taste Maria’s irresistible **home-baked challah!**

WITH DANCING, DOUGHNUTS AND DELIGHT



Making Room for Joy

Many parents have told me how much they appreciated Chai School's end of term Chanukah Party Morning. In December it felt even more important than ever to have a wonderfully uplifting Jewish celebration after the events of 7 October.

We challenged our families with a range of baking and making competitions. The doughnut category was won by Will Ross, with a particularly fine lemon drizzle giving a zesty twist to this oily treat, while there was no end to the artistry behind the edible chanukiah, challah, sushi, cheese-cake, spring rolls, and biscuit versions that vied for the judge's attention. Our senior classes completed a chanukiah quest and a few games of dreidel before joining our Chanukah tunes disco and party games led by Karen Moore, and festive favourites singalong, led by Roland and Vicki. Sue and Gan provided the cutest eight little candles singing to light up our morning event.

Holding our Chagim celebrations during cheder time rather than later has proven popular with many and enables more from our community to share these joyous times. Our events now attract

nearly 200 people and, as I write, we're expecting even more for our Purim event. As Jews, we are commanded to serve God with joy; while we can create happiness for ourselves, the joy that seems most Jewish is something that happens only when we collectively celebrate. It is strongest in shared moments, of dancing, doughnuts and delight but equally something we try to make room for every week at cheder. These events are now part of our scheduled learning time.

For our yeladim, these events are immersive experiences from which we hope they'll get a joyful sense of kehillah (community) and have memories of each chag (festival) – a good reason to keep returning to them beside developing a familiarity with mitzvot and customs.

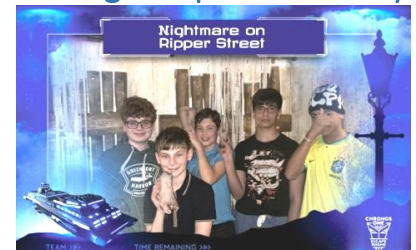
You can contact Frankie about joining the school or the team at cheder@bromleyshul.org.uk

A familiar face in a new role

I'm Sonia and in April 2024 I will be taking over as Chair of the Education Committee. The committee provides oversight for the cheder, post-13 and adult education activities in BRS. My background was working in arts

education with children and young people. I now run an arts charity, so I'm looking forward to bringing those skills to the role. *Sonia is pictured with Anna, our new Hooray Cheder leader, on page 4.*

Making Escape Room a Joy



In February, a large contingent from the Youth Group went to an Escape Room in Eltham, where they had a wonderful time and lots of adventure.

Anyone aged between 13 and 16 is welcome to join. More on p.14 and from e.aronberg@gmail.com



It's not just Chanukah that brings out pupils' creativity. A pre-Purim craft session inspired this outfit!

VIEW FROM THE KITCHEN: WHERE ELSE? IT'S PESACH!

The kitchen is at the centre of a community, possibly even more than it is at home

Our **Social Centre's** helpers are based there and its members get the benefit; **fundraising** events always contain a "food" element; no **social** function, **lecture** or **guest** visit is complete without refreshments; Book Group is famed for the fabulous fare from host Lisa and those who attend; and what would the Saturday Dining Club be without community members' culinary magic? Even **Yom Kippur** is not exempt: plans are afoot to enable people to break the fast together this year and in future. **But first...**

BRS's Communal Seder is on 23 April and help is needed

...Janvier says: People help with a wide variety of things, such as kashering the kitchen and laying the tables. Beforehand, volunteers will boil over a hundred eggs and bring them to the shul. Then there's a vegan dish to prepare, if you're keen to stretch your cooking muscles. On the day, there's the final set up if you're able to come an hour or two early, and I'm always looking for people who can bake some kosher-for-Passover biscuits and cakes for dessert! Lastly, there's the clean up. If you're not coming, but you still want to contribute, can you donate a shank bone or burnt egg for the seder plate? Please **email Janvier to volunteer. It's fun and very much appreciated: jndpalmer@gmail.com**

????????????????

MORE THAN FOUR QUESTIONS

An online seder for anyone who wants to know more:

Monday 22 April, 6.30pm

If you're new to Judaism – maybe exploring your roots, recently converted or in the process of converting via Reform or Liberal Judaism – and are not able to

attend a seder in person this year, you and your family are invited to join in online. Login details and a downloadable guide to the evening will be sent by email before the Seder. For more information, please email **Eleanor.davis@lbc.ac.uk**

Never mind Knit 'n' natter, on Social Centre weeks it's CHOP AND CHATTER

Our wonderful convener, Barbara, paints the picture:

While social centre members enjoy relaxing in the Goldberg Garden Room, where everything is set up for lunch and coffee is served, our friendly team of helpers is busy in the kitchen. We, too, enjoy catching up with friends and chatting while chopping and mixing, preparing whatever the cook for the day has on the menu. We now have a wonderful cooker, very up-to-date with induction hob, which we would love to introduce to anyone willing and able to join us! We do also get a chance to chat to our members or even join in Scrabble and Rummikub. **If you think you might like to join us, do come along and visit us at one of the meetings.** We'd love to "show you round".

Heartburn with Judy & Co

Judy Woolfe invites fellow readers to join BRS Book Group on **Tuesday 16 April** to discuss Norah Ephron's acclaimed novel *Heartburn* at 7.30pm in person, with refreshments, or at 8pm on Zoom: <https://us02web.us/j/81681697576?pwd=RHpSai1h1aXQmrV1dOYkVIYWxuUT09>

She explains: The revamped shul book club is now in its fifth year and meets every other month. We have read some 30 books ... Most of them have Jewish themes and/or were written by Jewish authors. We meet in person in Bromley, but still offer Zoom for those who prefer to stay at home, although they miss out on Lisa's lovely cakes/tea etc.

Heartburn is a short and funny book, which would be a good thing to start with if you are coming for the first time. So give it a go and enjoy a good read and a lively discussion with some lovely people from shul! Coming next... David Baddiel's *God Desire*. Details: 07989 091066 or jwoolfe@ntlworld.com



Di-di-dining, di-di-dining, di-di-dining, it's Dining Club tonight... good fun, in good company, with good nosh

We are fortunate enough to have been hosts and guests of the monthly Saturday Dining Club. It started in late summer 2022 with get-togethers in restaurants in and around Bromley. However, it was a bit challenging with everyone having to shout over the noise of other Saturday night diners.

So, from January 2023 we switched to shared-supper mode in the homes of those who were happy to entertain us, and we haven't looked back. Since then we have discovered some great dishes and stepped into some wonderful, warm and welcoming homes.

There is a bit of an unwritten rule about the Saturday Dining Club gatherings: they are all about socialising. We talk about families, travel, work, cinema, theatre, politics, whatever – there is no ritual or ceremony. It's all good fun, in good company and with good nosh. Not to mention a glass of wine or two for those who fancy it.

If you want to come along to the next Saturday Dining Club please look out for the details in e-Light. All that's expected is a good dish and an opportunity for a natter.

The Goldmans

IN OUR COMMUNITY

Page Contact:
Bob Symonds at
comms@bromleyshul.org

Deaths

We are very sad to report four deaths in our community:

Joy Goldberg, widow of the late Norman Goldberg and mother of Mark, Michelle and Anthea, died on 27 November.

David Bossick, husband of Susan, died on 4 February.

Jean Taylor, widow of the late Martin Taylor and mother of Rebecca and David, died on 5 February.

Sandy Clary, wife of Colin, mother of Joel and Robin, and beloved savta of Yonni, died on 13 March.

We extend our deepest condolences to all who mourn. May the memories of Joy, David, Jean and Sandy be for a blessing, zichronam l'vracha.

Condolences

We are very sad to record the death of **John Spiegel**, father of **Flora** and grandfather of **Curtis and Ruth**, on the eve of Curtis's bar mitzvah in December. Deepest condolences to all of them.

Welcome, new members

Smadar and Avram Cohen of Sevenoaks; **Kanatta Kyazze** - now a full member following his conversion;

Shelley Lamprell-Josephs of Havant;

Dr Hannah Nathan of SE23; and **Matthew Sear** of Sidcup.

and Community Members

Arnold Mudzengerere and **Vivien Hirshler**, wife of Daniel Hirshler.

B'nei Mitzvah

A hearty mazal tov to the following and their families:

Rodney Brookstein and Janvier Palmer, who celebrated their adult b'nei mitzvah on 18 November and 9 December, respectively; and **Curtis Miller** (below, with his family and tutor, Matthew, on 16 December)



Samson Woodward (below, with Michelle on 13 January) and **Yuri Solomon** (see p.8) on the occasion of their respective b'nei mitzvah.



"Personally, I am not too keen on stories where bakers are decapitated. Baking requires a good memory, and I'm sure that if ... the baker [had been] spared execution, Joseph's plea would not have been forgotten..."



...so said Janvier, seder supremo, Kiddush rota organiser and one of our most celebrated bakers, above with John Posner at her adult BM.

A double Shabbat date



3 February saw both the **baby naming of Eden Suss** (below, with parents Joel and Kate and big sister Ada) and the celebration of **renaming of Judith Franklin** (formerly Judith French), above, explaining its significance, on her bat mitzvah anniversary.



Ada introduced Eden to the congregation

Enjoy your new home...

Dot Gee, who has moved from Beckenham to Bromley.

If you, too, have moved, please let us know at admin@bromleyshul.org.uk

Social Centre

The Social Centre was set up by the late Gertrud Roberts, with its first meeting in September 1995. It continues to meet twice monthly. As you can imagine, the faces have changed over the years, but old and new enjoy meeting up with friends, making new ones, chatting or battling it out over the Scrabble board or Rummikub. Exercises are followed by a delicious lunch.

cont'd on page 9

We prefer the concept of “Marrying In” to that of “Marrying Out”

Rabbi Rebecca Birk, writing in the Jewish News in one of a trilogy of articles on Jewish status by progressive rabbis, explained that in British Progressive Judaism, a child is able to gain inherited Jewish status whichever parent is Jewish – no matter if it is a mother or father – depending, of course, on the family and the individual choosing to lead a Jewish life. “For us,” she says, “this is an opportunity to welcome a new family, and enable Jewish continuity. Progressive Judaism is predicated on a belief in continuous revelation, ongoing renewal of our Jewish principles and experience for every generation, including on Jewish status.”

Deuteronomy 29, read every High Holydays, recalls the covenant between Israel and God, “**not only with you who are standing here with us today but also with those who are not here today.**” Most commentators understand that to refer to future generations. It informs today’s view that Jewish ideas must keep renewing.

We all do wrong things and also make mistakes: no exceptions.



Yuri Solomon, above, pointing out in the drasha for his bar mitzvah on 23 March one of the defining things about Judaism that Rabbi Laura so cherishes: As we read on page 163 of our siddur every Shabbat:

“My God, the soul You have given me is pure”

That is, there is no concept of original sin, by that or any other name. Yuri went on to explain that we need first to understand what a ‘sin’ is in Judaism. “Unlike in some other religions,” he said, “sin is not seen to be a horrible act that puts you below others, or that every human is born a sinner. Instead, sin is seen to be a wrongdoing – deliberate or by mistake – something that people do, not because they are predestined to but instead because we all do wrong things. If you understand that sins are simply mistakes or deliberate actions that can be atoned for, then you realise that the core idea of sacrifice – forgiveness and recognition – was the basis of prayer ... which has metamorphosed into the beautiful thing it is today.

Yuri’s BM was just as we went to press.

LOOK WHO WAS IN TOWN!



BRS’s former rabbi, Jason Holtz (back, right), in London for the Czech Scrolls commemoration, met up with Marilyn Freeman, John Posner, Janet Posner, Linda de Lange and Michelle Brooks Evans. Full story, page 15

Good, good, good, good citations

You will see on p.9 that we have four new VPs. Why? It is something of a ‘lifetime achievement award’. The contribution and dedication of these individuals to this community cannot be understated. For each of them, a brief comment from former Chair, Michelle, who knows all of them well, precedes lists of just a little of what they’ve done for us.

John Posner - a fountain of knowledge, with experience and wisdom. Taking over as Chair from him was very daunting but he generously shared his time and insights with me. A beloved lay leader and b’mitzvah tutor.

John’s own list of what he calls, with typical understatement, “*some activities at BRS*” goes back to 1982. He has been shul Chair twice; and also chaired the Religion and Ritual Committee (ie senior warden); the Education Committee; and the Building Committee responsible for the new building and refurbishment of the sanctuary, including fund raising for these; teacher of cheder and adult study groups, including Gateway to Judaism; and mentor/inspiration to many. He sorts out security and lay-reading rotas; sets scroll(s), taking responsibility for their safety whenever they are moved. He even looks after the boiler. Beyond all that, he is there, always, without question, at the drop of a hat if anyone is ill or needs reassurance about medical issues.

Marilyn Freeman - when I first walked through the doors of BRS as a teenager in 1983 Marilyn was one of the first people to welcome me and **I am honoured to know her.** We still meet every Friday night on Zoom with others for our candle lighting and it’s one of the highlights of my week. Marilyn has served on

cont’d on p. 18

IN OUR COMMUNITY

Page Contact:
Bob Symonds at
comms@bromleyshul.org

Social Centre, cont'd

We try to arrange entertainment for our members and were delighted to welcome back Jon and Sue who gave us a talk on Old Tyme Music Hall - with lots of songs for us to join in. We are always happy to welcome new faces. Our next meetings will be on **Wednesdays 10 and 24 April**, starting at 10.30am .

Knit, Natter & Stitch Group

We continue to meet monthly at Barbara's home, our next meeting being on **Thursday, 4 April** at 10.30am. Most of our finished items go to the Prem Baby Unit at the PRUH or Croydon. They are always very welcome, bringing pleasure to both babies and parents. New knitters and stitchers are warmly invited to join our group. We would also welcome donations of wool - baby double knitting if possible, as members currently supply all their materials. **Please contact Barbara for further information on either of the above groups - barbarakurtz42@gmail.com**

Mazal Tov to Margaret...

... Brearley, who has become Chair of Ravensbourne Valley Residents' Association, within whose geographical area BRS lies. Margaret is keen to develop links between RVR and BRS, and got off to a great start with jazz music from BRS's Roland Perrin at her AGM. Please watch e-Light for further RVR initiatives.

Refuah Sh'lema

We wish all members who are ill or incapacitated a speedy recovery. Many members have been ill during the winter months. We hope everyone is on the mend.

If you need help or know of someone who does, don't be shy, email caring@bromleyshul.org

"I didn't reclaim my Jewish heritage; my Jewish heritage reclaimed me"

Rodney Brookstein (below, right) after his adult BM, with mentor David Zerihan



Chanukah Fair fun and food



There truly was something for every age and taste at the Chanukah Fair in December, including entertainment from BRS's klezmer band (see col. 3)



If you'd like to know more or you're interested in joining the band, please contact : vickiashmore@icloud.com

Mazal tov to our new VPs

We're absolutely delighted to announce that four members have accepted the Board's invitation to become Vice-Presidents. Mazal tov, in no particular order, to **Janet Posner, Marilyn Freeman, Barbara Kurtz** and **John Posner**, whose combined service to BRS must exceed even that of Moses to the Israelites, and who, unlike Moses, have never appeared to falter or question their destinies. Like Moses, though, **all of them can do with help**, so please look out for details of how to assist Barbara with the social centre, Marilyn with school visits, John with security and Janet with burial issues, and so much more. *There's more on all of them on pp.8 & 18.*

Good luck in your exams...

... to all who will be taking them, whether at university, school or elsewhere, in the next couple of months. Please don't forget to tell us how you get on!

Forthcoming B'nei Mitzvah

Bea Small (April), Joshua Richman (May), Kit and Will Ross (June). Mazal tov to all of you.

What's transforming the Jewish world?

Progressive Judaism, according to a recent Jewish Telegraph article. There's more on that on p.17, and you can arrange to receive the truly excellent "MRJ Updates" for yourself at rjuk.org




**nightingale
 hammerson**

Welcome Home...

Join us in one of our Homes
 Providing compassionate Residential,
 Dementia, Nursing and Palliative Care.

NIGHTINGALE HOUSE
 105 NIGHTINGALE LANE
 LONDON SW12 8NB

HAMMERSON HOUSE, WOHL CAMPUS
 50A THE BISHOPS AVENUE
 LONDON N2 0BE

“

Nightingale Hammerson is a beacon; a beacon not only for care but also of Jewish life.

RESIDENT



REGISTER YOUR INTEREST
INFO@NIGHTINGALEHAMMERSON.ORG
NIGHTINGALEHAMMERSON.ORG | TEL: 020 8673 3495

Registered Charity No. 207316

JEWISH LIVING EXPERIENCE EXHIBITION

So, what did everybody think?

Upwards of 700 visitors, comprising 600+ local children plus teachers and other non-Jewish adults, had a great time increasing their knowledge of Judaism in a really hands-on, accessible and friendly environment when BRS hosted the JLEE in January.

Lovely visit; pupils full of questions and curiosity

Over the course of two weeks, the Board of Deputies' interactive exhibition and the sanctuary were visited by groups from both primary and secondary schools.

That was amazing; you made my weekend

They found out about the Jewish calendar and festivals, life cycle events, Shabbat, religious and cultural dress, the Torah, kosher food and the diversity within the community.

"I'd worried that the children would find it too low-tech and was pleasantly surprised by how they engaged with different [topic] tables"

The overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic reaction of the visitors brought many moments of delight to the score or so of BRS volunteers who were acting as guides and answering pupils' and teachers' questions - much needed in these troubled and troubling times. Comments included

Pupils and teachers were all really engaged and interested...

It's been a great success. A great idea well executed.



Volunteer Judy Taylor checking that the Shabbat table is ready

Visitors read colourful banners and handled items such as a yad, dreidels and the very, very popular shofarot, not to mention enacting shabbat and wedding rituals.



Teachers had an opportunity to visit and ask questions before the event went 'live'

Vicki Ashmore, who had master-minded Bromley's hosting of JLEE in consultation with The Board of Deputies' Anna Silver, explained how she had felt in advance: *"Hatred, such as racism and antisemitism, comes from a fear of the unknown. By opening our shul, our community's home, we hoped we could educate children who may not have met a Jewish person before. Maybe their parents hadn't either. To show children that we are real, and we are kind, share a bit of ourselves - that's really the only way to stop the hate that comes from fear."*

Going by the pleasure that hosts and guests alike took in meeting and learning from each other over the two weeks of the exhibition, fear of the unknown, locally at any rate, has clearly been diminished.



James, David and Sara were among BRS Klezmer Band members who welcomed guests on the exhibition's launch evening. It was attended by, among others, the Mayor of Greenwich, Dominic Mbang, and Bromley's Deputy Mayor, Keith Onslow, and Deputy Mayoress, Sara Onslow

Two copies of this travelling exhibition are regularly hosted by organisations all over the UK, including churches, libraries, synagogues, Jewish social care organisations (for staff training), town councils, universities and teacher training centres. After Bromley, it was due to go to Chelmsford, Hounslow, Edge Hill University, Edgware and Salford.

And the good news is...

It will be back!

The exhibition was received so well that we have already booked a return visit for **next January**, so as to make it available to more schools and to other year groups of those who came this year.

Please watch e-Light for dates and volunteering opportunities and, if you're involved with a local school, ensure it receives details.

Want to help with a school visit?

No need to wait for next year...

Regular term-time visits by local schools continue. We often welcome several in a week. If you would like to help, just contact marilynfreeman221@btinternet.com

MEMBER PROFILE : MANI LAYWARD WELLS

Although Mani is comparatively new to Bromley, he's been involved in many events and last autumn celebrated his adult bar mitzvah at BRS. Music lover Judy Woolfe caught up with him.



JW *BRS has developed a lively and thriving musical and choral tradition to enhance the community and we are lucky that you are so quickly becoming part of that. When did you start developing your interest in music and what instruments do you play professionally?*

MW Well, I had some early musical experiences with my parents while they were playing with some friends in a band called the Button Band, having been named after there being three accordion players in the band!

I think the accordion is a “Marmite” instrument and I was more on the hating it side for my childhood, but have recently started learning it, and I’m loving it. Mainly, I play saxophone professionally, but while working with P&O cruises I was also encouraged to develop my clarinet and flute playing.

JW *How important is being Jewish to you, and how did you feel after your recent adult bar mitzvah?*

MW It’s been very important to understand and learn more about my Jewish heritage and I found the adult bar mitzvah a really powerful step in my journey to discovering this part of myself.

JW *In what way does being Jewish ‘feed’ into your life as a musician?*

MW I definitely feel very nourished by Yiddish culture and music. This has been a focus for me in the last few years, when I’ve been attending festivals and courses such as Klezfest, Yiddish summer Weimar, Tapi vert and Kleznorth.

JW *As a lifelong jazz fan, I’m intrigued to know what kind of jazz you play and which jazz giants have influenced you the most.*

MW There are many kinds of jazz that I like to play and I think it’s important to be versatile. One day it might be a jazz standards gig and on another day a gypsy jazz party, so being flexible is the key.

Recently I’ve been influenced by Israeli jazz giants Avishai Cohen, Anat Cohen and Omer Avital. In the past it’s been Charlie Parker, Lee Konitz and Abdullah Ibrahim.

JW *I understand you went to Israel to teach English via the MITF programme. Can you tell us something about this experience?*

MW It was a very last minute decision, but I’m so glad I did as though I was stuck in lockdowns while there, it gave me a chance to develop my teaching, learn Hebrew and live with a bunch of Americans for 10 months.

JW *You not only play music but you also compose. What was it like to be a finalist in a young composers competition at Benslow Music with the London Klezmer Quartet?*

MW It was an amazing opportunity. Unfortunately, we were

meant to meet up in person and hear them play our compositions, but this couldn’t happen because of Covid restrictions...

JW *Your music has a focus on inclusivity and that includes other art forms. Tell us a bit more.*

MW From autumn 2021 to summer 2022 I received close to £10,000 from the Arts Council for a “developing my creative practice” grant. Through this I was able to receive training from some highly experienced practitioners of inclusive dance and theatre and then explore what I’d learnt by offering workshops in schools, in community centres and for refugees in temporary accommodation in Birmingham.

JW *Your grandmother had a school named after her in Hackney, so she must have been a remarkable woman. How much influence has she had on your life?*

MW It was a big honour for my family to have a primary school named after my grandmother Betty z”l. She had been involved with several special needs schools in the area, working as a governor on the school boards. She was very community oriented. I often see her as a role model for myself.

JW *Finally, how do you see your musical career progressing and where would you like to be in 10 years’ time?*

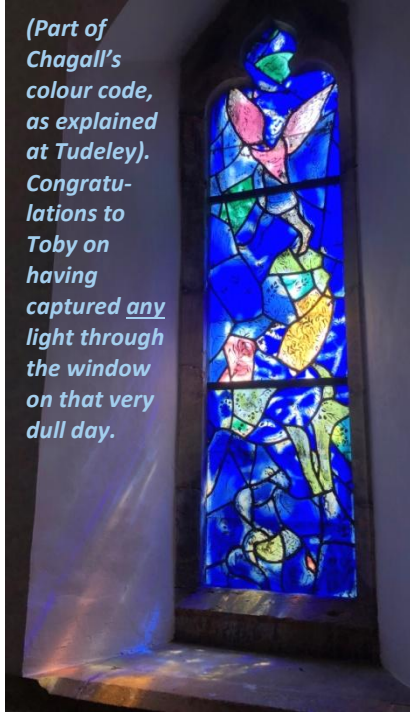
MW As well as music, I’m interested in agriculture. I spent several months in autumn 2022 volunteering with a bee keeper in Carmiel and then on Kibbutz Gezer for the olive harvest and I’d like to find a way to offer workshops that combine music and community agriculture.

Thank you Mani and Judy

AROUND THE BRS AREA GROUPS FROM SE10 TO BEYOND M25

Blue for Love, Red for Joy

(Part of Chagall's colour code, as explained at Tudeley). Congratulations to Toby on having captured any light through the window on that very dull day.



Following on from a Thursday first night of Chanukah at the Allins', we had a jam-packed Sunday. It kicked off with a curated visit to see the Chagall windows at All Saints Church, Tudeley. Unfortunately, the sun had its hat pulled firmly down over its face, so the windows were not at their stunningly radiant best. However, the 25 of us heard a very interesting talk by Josephine Willoughby on the history of the windows and her interpretations of the Chagall imagery with its strong message of hope arising from tragedy. Even in such dim light we saw enough to whet appetites for a return visit next year when we hope to have the sun blazing through the glass and to spend more time discovering and being inspired by these unique windows.

Most of us then ventured on to the nearby sister church of St Thomas a Becket at Capel, where we encountered a blaze of light from a plethora of illuminated Christmas decorations. This somewhat overshadowed the reason for this visit, which was to see the extensive medieval wall paintings, white washed over in the Reformation of

the mid-1600s and not rediscovered until 1927. These visual stimuli, which cover most of the nave and story-tell messages from the Bible to the untutored worshippers, depicting, among others, Cain and Abel, make for me an interesting opportunity to compare how we respond to Chagall's windows.

Our food-for-thought day ended with the well attended Chanukah lighting and noshing at the Citrons in Sevenoaks and the uplifting opportunity to meet both their and the Cohen-Chen young families. Hope for the future. **Toby Allin, co-ordinator, M25 and Beyond.**

"We had a great time..."
the verdict of many area groups on marking Chanukah together, and...

Doughnuts 'n' Merriment



We had a really wonderful candle lighting event. We reserved an area at a pub in Forest Hill and invited not only BRS members but other Jewish friends and family in the surrounding areas.

We had a lovely turnout and were treated to a performance by Michael Abrahams and his father. Doughnuts were overflowing as well as general merriment.

While many BRS members had to cancel last minute because of feeling under the weather, we had a chance to meet others who were unaffiliated and appreciated having a chance to celebrate. Since then, our little area group for Sydenham/Catford/Forest Hill has really grown. We're looking forward to doing much more in the coming year and as the weather improves.

Einat Aronberg, SE23/26 etc

"Salomons Sunday" outing

Beyond M25 got together again in February, when 12 people sat down for a very convivial lunch at the George & Dragon in Speldhurst before meeting its Salomons guide, local historian Chris Jones, who enthralled the now 20-strong party with his discourse on three generations of the family, starting with David Salomons, a founder of what became the National Westminster Bank, and who was well regarded by his farming tenants. Having made it as the first Jewish Lord Mayor of London, he was elected in 1851 as MP for Greenwich but was ejected from the Commons then fined for taking his seat after having refused to take a Christian oath and voted 3 times. He did finally sit - from 1859 until his death in 1873.

His inheriting nephew, David Lionel, a wonderful example of the curious, inventive Victorians, experimented with electricity and collected patents the way other Victorians collected butterflies. He also found time to pioneer the horseless carriage in Great Britain and held the country's first motor show in Tunbridge Wells. The purpose-built science theatre with its innovative electric blinds houses the largest private organ in the country.

David's son Reginald led the Territorial Army battalion that his father had founded into Gallipoli with tragic results for 155 men, including a 17-year-old Jewish trumpeter, Harry Goldblum, who'd worked on the Salomons Estate; while his daughter Vera, who trained as a nurse and died in 1969, was the last family occupier of the estate and also involved in historic events: (<http://www.judithjohnson.co.uk/blog/-the-sinking-of-hms-hythe-28-october-1915>) and (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-time-thief-who-stole-106-rare-clocks-in-a-daring-heist-180981979/>).

The M25 group's Toby recommends a visit to this beautiful museum.

Jazz, Martial Arts, Skating, Reading – a day in the life of BRS

All Right With Us!

BRS Jazz Cafe in February hit all the right notes, says **Michael Zuke**



On 3 February the Goldberg Garden Room was transformed into a convincing recreation of a jazz night club. Closely packed candlelit tables were covered with gingham cloths. Soft lighting illuminated images of Ella, Muddy and Bird.

The room filled up with parties of guests and was packed when the Roland Perrin Trio and vocalist Rachel Sutton took their places and struck up a foot-tapping *It's All Right With Me*. The enthusiastic appreciation that greeted the solos and the performance showed that it was certainly all right with the audience. The band and Rachel treated us to great performances of standards, Latin rhythms and some of Rachel's own songs. A dreamy recollection of Kent was especially memorable.

Roland's tasteful accompaniment on keyboards and inventive solos were complemented by Paul Robinson's complex drumming, hands and brushes to producing just the right volume. Curtiz Ruis on five-string bass anchored the trio and soloed impeccably.

In a spot of edutainment, Roland informed us that the depression era hit Buddy Can You Spare a Dime was based on a Jewish lullaby. He wittily worked a few bars of *Hava Nagila* into *My Heart Belongs to Daddy*, which he explained Cole Porter wrote to challenge the Jewish composers of the Great American songbook. Rachel took a break from her beautiful singing to introduce excellent guest vocalist Dr James Hooley, a nephrologist in

his day job. The band demonstrated its skill by providing, unrehearsed, flawless accompaniments to his choice of songs.

While jazz clubs were once filled with smoke, this one was enriched by trays of warm snacks and pastries. Thanks to the Social Committee and to everyone who created this memorable evening.

Meet new BRS Subs Sec Hazel... and all the family



I am Hazel and I have recently taken over from Janet as the Subs Secretary, so any queries you have about subs should be directed to me at subs@bromleyshul.org.uk, where I will try my best to help.

A little bit about myself: I have been a South Londoner all my life, growing up in Croydon. After my North London husband (Dan, above) and I met on JDate (yes, really!), we spent a few years in central London before I managed to drag him to the correct side of the river!

We have been members of BRS since 2016, with our three boys. I was a keen Gan attendee from 2017 all the way until 2022 when my younger two (twins) graduated.

But I couldn't stay away from cheder for too long, as I became the Kittah Alef teacher this year! We managed to make a giant dreidl in time for last Chanukah and are currently working on a giant Purim mosaic! In my spare time, I am a keen runner and practise Tae Kwon Do, where I am a black belt and hoping to be a 2nd Dan by the end of the year! **Hazel Sado**



Youth group members after ice skating.

BRS post-B'Mitzvah Youth Group regularly organises events and activities such as bowling, ice skating and board games cafes. There are two WhatsApp groups, one for parents and one for youth, that plan and coordinate outings. To be added (both parent and child) please send your names and phone numbers to e.aronberg@gmail.com

New WIZO Group to welcome author James Adley

WIZO was founded in 1918 to support disadvantaged women and children in what was then Palestine. Now, it is a huge social welfare organisation, supporting over 800 vital projects including day care centres, vocational training schools, shelters for women and children, centres for girls at risk, youth villages and boarding schools. It also runs life-changing programmes for numerous vulnerable groups.

For many years, a thriving and active Bromley WIZO was led by Marilyn Burchell, now the group's President. Sadly, that ceased to exist a few years ago but, thanks to the hard work of Margaret Brearley, the new Bromley and South East London WIZO has been formed

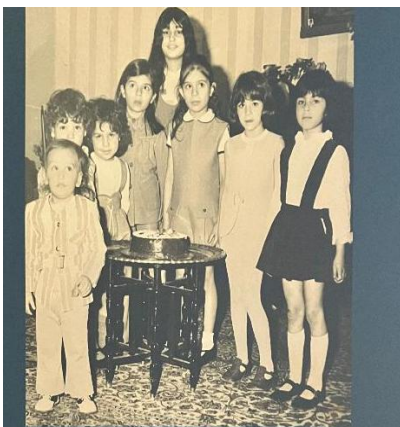
We are planning talks by an author – James Adley, who will discuss his book 'Safehouse' on 3 April – a broadcaster and a gallery owner, outings and a summer barbecue. All profits from our events will support WIZO's projects in Israel.

cont. on p.20 with contact details

Two significant anniversaries highlight resilience

Holocaust Memorial Day in Greenwich and Czech Scrolls 60th anniversary event only a week later both involved BRS folk

As many of you know, our former Chair, Michelle, comes from an Iranian family. Ahead of HMD in January, the University of Greenwich hosted ***This is our Story***, an exhibition linked to the International Holocaust Memorial Day (IHMD) theme, *The Fragility of Freedom*. Ten Jewish members of the university and the wider community, among them Michelle, who was therefore invited to the launch event, contributed personal stories of life, persecution and resilience to show the diversity of Jewish life, as well as commonalities through shared experience of the fragility of freedom. By telling these stories the exhibition aimed to encourage education about the Holocaust, something that is on the decline, says Michelle.



● For my family life before the 1979 revolution in Iran was idyllic. In reality there had been political rumblings for some time. Two of my uncles left before the revolution for the US, and my mother was in the UK. However there were family that remained until the revolution, and then had to flee. This meant my Aunt had to break up her family and send three of my cousins to live with us in the UK. They were only reunited a few years later. They had to leave with whatever they could fit into their suitcase and were forced to leave everything else behind. My grandfather unfortunately got stuck in Iran as he was a dentist and they were reluctant to let out professionals. Eventually in 1982 he was able to leave Iran as a political refugee via Vienna, London and then to the US.

Below, Michelle's grandma, Soltan Rahban, teaching in a Jewish school in Tehran, Iran. At the foot of column 1, you can see Michelle herself, with her brother and cousins, also in Tehran.



● Jews have lived in Iran since the Babylonian exile some 2,700 years ago. The 1979 Islamic revolution was a watershed moment for Iran and Iranian Jews. There was a thriving community of about 80,000 to 100,000 Jews, but post-revolution there was a massive wave of emigration from Iran. The most recent figures tell us there are 8,300 Jews in Iran today, out of a population of more than 81 million.

Commemoration Service for the Czech Scrolls at Westminster Synagogue

It was 4 February 2024, 60 years after the arrival of 1,564 Sifrei Torah at the Westminster Synagogue from a warehouse in Prague. Seven of us from BRS attended the commemoration at the Westminster Synagogue. I entered with our two scrolls and placed them in their allotted positions. Though I was early, there were already many scrolls present, from communities all around the country. Then, the scroll carriers from each of the communities present were directed upstairs to the sanctuary. Michael and I joined the procession carrying our scrolls.

In the crowded sanctuary, we found seats near the front in view of the congregation and sat holding our scrolls. The service started with some music by Dvorjak played by the Morello Quartet followed by Eitz Chaim – a tree of life. A moving service, it included addresses by Rabbi Dr Kamila Koprivova and Rabbi Benji Stanley, the current rabbis of this illustrious community,

which was formerly led by Rabbis Harold Reinhart, Albert Friedlander and Thomas Salamon. It had been a dignified ceremony and a moment's reflection makes one admire the wonderful decision to ship these scrolls to London in 1964. After 20 years rotting in a warehouse, there was a commitment to distribute those that could be restored to active communities all around the world. It's wonderful but also unbelievably sad; the scrolls are all that remains of hundreds of Jewish communities destroyed in the Shoah.

The service over, to our surprise and great pleasure, we met Rabbi Jason Holtz, who served BRS for five years before returning to the USA with his young family in 2018. He had flown to London but been just too late for the service. He was there to commemorate the Czech scroll of his community in Atlanta. By a curious coincidence it comes from the town of Ivancice, as does one of ours. It was an absolute pleasure to chat with Jason and to catch up after nearly six years; it made me feel that despite the tragedy of the Shoah, we Jews are still alive and strong. **John Posner**

On behalf of Linda de Lange, Michelle Brooks Evans, Michael Abrahams, Ann Fried, Marilyn Freeman and Janet Posner



Some of the many scrolls that had been distributed far and wide and BRS's Michael Abrahams, who had the honour of carrying one of "ours".



WISHING THE COMMUNITY A HAPPY PESACH

NOW MORE THAN EVER ISRAEL NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Leave a gift in your Will to JNF UK
to support Israel for life



LASTING
POWERS OF
ATTORNEY



EXECUTORSHIP



PASTORAL CARE



INHERITANCE
TAX PLANNING



WILL SERVICES



95 Church Road, London, NW4 4FE

020 8732 6101 • ENQUIRIES@KKL.ORG.UK • WWW.KKL.ORG.UK

KKL Executor and Trustee Company Ltd (a Company registered in England No. 453042) is a subsidiary of JNF Charitable Trust (Charity No. 225910) and a registered Trust Corporation (authorised capital £250,000).

NEVER TOO LATE

This poem was read at the funeral of Jean Taylor in February, because it so perfectly captured her philosophy. We hope it chimes with yours, too.

“It is too late!” Ah, nothing is too late—
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles
Wrote his grand “Oedipus,” and Simonides
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers
When each had numbered more than fourscore
years;
And Theophrastus, at fourscore and ten,
Had begun his “Characters of Men.”
Chaucer, at Woodstock, with his nightingales,
At sixty wrote the “Canterbury Tales.”
Goethe, at Weimar, toiling to the last,
Completed “Faust” when eighty years were past.
What then? Shall we sit idly down and say,
“The night has come; it is no longer day”?
For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress.
And as the evening twilight fades away,
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.
It is never too late to start doing what is right.
Never.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

We are delighted to announce that the third round of our Endowment Fund is open. Deadline for applications: Tuesday 30 April 2024.

Bromley Synagogue Donors Trust has received a large injection of funds.

These funds are available

NOW

to support activities and projects for Bromley Reform Synagogue and its members.

Any BRS member with a great idea is encouraged to apply.



You can see examples of successful applications and guidance notes at
https://www.bromleyshul.org.uk/?page_id=26713



We look forward to hearing from you!

What have Progressive Judaism in 2024, Cable Street in 1936 and a visit to Catford Shul in common? Well...

Hot on the heels of Tracy-Ann Oberman's 2023 "Merchant of Venice 1936" came "Cable Street" by Tim Gilvin and Alex Kanefsky at Southwark Playhouse, early in '24

"This stirring production tells of the events prior to, during and in the aftermath of the Battle of Cable Street through song and drama.

"On 4 October 1936, thousands of people of all faiths and backgrounds clashed with Oswald Mosley's fascist Blackshirts (otherwise known as the British Union of Fascists, or BUF) in what became known as the Battle of Cable Street. With barricades made of furniture and little more strength than the strength of their convictions, the residents of London's East End joined forces to keep the fascists out, joining hands to create a human shield, their battle cry of "They shall not pass!" ringing out. And it worked – the crowd was too strong, and the Blackshirts, despite having a police escort, had to turn back.

"Individual performances were strong and after each principal song there was a round of applause. There was one moment that I found particularly interesting, and it had nothing to do with the script. A frustrated young man was enticed into joining the Blackshirts. He donned the uniform and sang a strong solo whilst slowly raising his arm in a Nazi salute. The largely non-Jewish audience remained silent; you could have heard a pin drop. The performance continued, ending with a standing ovation.



Jez Unwin (centre) and Cable Street cast



Rabbis Josh Levy and Charley Baginsky (5th and 6th from left) with some of the BRS folk who turned out to welcome and question them when they came to talk about the future

"This production would suit a larger stage than at that at the Playhouse. That run has come to an end but I'm sure that it will find a new home in the West End." **Paul Stanton**

(taken from Catford & Bromley Synagogue Gazette, with its editor's permission)

...and what had that play to do with the plans of 21st century Progressive Jews to work closely together?

Cable Street's residents put aside their differences – racial, religious, political, social – when they saw wrong happening all around them and wanted to make it right.

Speakers from Liberal Judaism and Reform Judaism visited BRS in late February to outline plans for the "formation of a Progressive Movement to better reflect the one third of the UK Jewish population we represent," and answer questions. Rabbis Charley Baginsky (LJ) and Josh Levy (RJ) emphasised that leaders and activists today **recognise what Liberal and Reform have in common and want to build on that without stifling difference and diversity;** rather, to enable communities to cherish their complexity and multiplicity.

Their dream is that tomorrow's Progressive Jews will be recognised by society as a whole as a force for good, represented by a single

umbrella organisation. Both rabbis had experienced situations in which "the establishment" invited the Chief Rabbi (mainstream Orthodox) to the table at events of national importance but, faced with several comparatively small progressive bodies, chose to invite none of them. So the only Jewish voice most of secular society got to hear was the Orthodox one, which it took to be "THE Jewish view." How misleading is that when difficult contemporary issues are being discussed? The Progressive approach to one such is outlined on p.8.

...or of BRS Kabbalat Torah students' visit to Catford with Rabbi Laura and parents?

By contrast, in March a group from BRS visited nearby Catford & Bromley Synagogue to experience an Orthodox Shabbat service. They were warmly welcomed by the rabbi, Bryan Weisz, and chairman, Eddy Arram, as well as by individual members. A visiting speaker from the Board of Deputies gave his analysis of the situation in the Middle East, providing all present with an opportunity to explore what unites rather than what divides us. In the week preceding the visit, Rabbi Weisz had given a D'var Torah on keeping the light of Jewish life burning. What's the Hebrew name of BRS? **Beit Or, House of Light.** Beshert! What a welcome.

Who's who since the AGM? Some pen portraits for Pesach

Vice-Presidential Citations

Marilyn Freeman cont'd from p.8

the Board for well over 20 years and this VP honour is well deserved.

She's just finished a distinguished stint as Senior Warden – a role she only took on in the first place as a 'caretaker'. She's another one who is "always there" – representing BRS at countless local events and meetings around the Reform Movement, where her involvement goes back to before BRS was even founded. Hence her many friends and contacts around all the shuls. In recent years, she has welcomed school groups who visit BRS as part of their studies, helped with seders and supported rabbis, student rabbis and all our committees and groups whatever they have needed.

Janet Posner - *I like to think of Janet as the "guardian angel" of BRS.*

She is the first port of call when someone suffers a bereavement and at a time of such profound sadness she exudes compassion and calm.

She has dealt with JJBS and was instrumental in founding our own Jewish cemetery at Kemnal Park. As well as all of this, Janet has also chaired the Board and was Subscriptions Secretary for years.

Janet herself recalls taking on the chair at a difficult time in the late 1990s, what with a financial crisis, the new building and the redesign of the sanctuary. She's provided what she calls "just a list", but look what it includes: Chair of Education and eventually ran the cheder for about three years. Initiated the Caring Community Committee, of which still a member.

Barbara Kurtz - *always kind, witty and supremely helpful to everyone.*

As well as having served on the Board in various capacities, not least as Chair, she continues to do BRS payroll and runs the Social Centre. If others are everywhere, Barbara is ubiquity personified, whether bringing milk for a meeting

BROMLEY REFORM SYNAGOGUE 28 Highland Road, BR1 4AD

020-8460 5460 : www.bromleyshul.org.uk

Minister: Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner (rabbilaura@bromleyshul.org.uk)

Administrator/Administrator and Community Co-ordinator

Jennie Kreser (admin@bromleyshul.org.uk)

Tuesday and Friday in shul office, Wednesday at home, 10am-3pm

Chair: Linda de Lange (chair@bromleyshul.org.uk)

Vice-Presidents: Hadassah Britz, Marilyn Freeman, Judy Koekoek, Barbara Kurtz, Dianne Mathews, Janet Posner, John Posner, Sally Rosebery, Bob Symonds, David Zerihan

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY in the event of a bereavement

Janet Posner (07841 373309) or Stephen Weil (07764 475209)

or chairing one, and she habitually fills in when anyone is absent. And that's *without* her "official" roles as another former Chair who's also led the Education Committee (its longest-serving chair ever) and the shul's archivist – inevitable, really: she took Council (*now Board*) minutes for many years as probably our longest-serving Hon. Secretary, so knows everything that happened.

Our other six VPs have equally impressive BRS records. And ALL of this is voluntary work, taken on while building careers and raising or supporting families. We are one lucky community to have so many stars among us, and that includes the slightly younger members, equally talented and dedicated, now stepping into prominent roles as they become vacant.

Thank you, every single one of you.

Board Pen Portraits



Caring Community: Judy Taylor

Hello, I'm Judy. I live in Sydenham with my family, husband David and teens Sophie and Sara, and we've been members of BRS since 2013. I've been chairing the Caring

Summer HighLight deadline:

15 June

Please send contributions to comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

If you have an idea for a regular or one-off feature or a skill that you can bring to the production of HighLight or our weekly online e-Light, or news and photos of recent events/activities, please tell us at the same address.

On the **community pages**, particularly, we try to include everyone's significant life events, happy and sad, both to reflect what's going on and so that others can respond if necessary.

However, we can't do that if you don't tell us! The same applies to the subjects of **special features**. Our community is so full of fascinating folk, with myriad interests, it's hard to know where to start. The email address for suggestions is above.

Huge thanks to all who've helped to get this issue out in good time, especially the prompt, helpful contributors and fantastic proofreaders Bob and Marsha.

Here's wishing everyone a happy, safe, peaceful Pesach.

Community Committee for just over a year, overseeing its main activities of organising and running the social centre and tea parties for older members of the community, as well as supporting BRS members of all ages in times of need. I have a busy (and eclectic) working life as a drama therapist, clinical supervisor and tribunal panel member and am

cont'd on page 19

Who's who since the AGM? Some pen portraits for Pesach

Caring Community:

Judy Taylor *cont'd*

also a keen musician, often to be found playing and singing with the BRS Klezmer band and with the community choir. I really enjoy being involved with the Caring Community and working with such a wonderful group of volunteers.

Senior Warden:

Michael Abrahams, asked about himself, volunteered simply: "I live in Forest Hill with wife Anne-Marie and child Willow (14) ... and have taken over from the wonderful Marilyn Freeman the task of chairing the Religion and Ritual Committee, which is responsible for running services in the synagogue, working closely with the rabbi and lay leaders. I'm delighted to take on this role and interested to hear any ideas you have about ways in which we might improve services."

That's far too modest, so we asked around and within a day received:

"A kind, witty and intelligent man. Michael has quietly established himself as a valued Board member, and I'm so pleased he is taking on the role of Senior Warden," **and** "Michael will be an outstanding Senior Warden - knowledgeable but loves learning more, extremely kind and thoughtful, very detailed but also sees the big picture,"

and, in a very different vein...

"A former Chair of Forest Hill Society, Michael was responsible for April Fool's Day jokes such as announcement of a new canal for Forest Hill to replace the rail link, and a trebuchet to be installed when the new footbridge was delayed. He's a whisky connoisseur with an impressive single malt collection and member of SE23 Whisky Club; a keen camper and New York-visit-er and, as a former Catford & Bromley shul member, works to maintain our close links, such as by facilitating a post-BM visit to a service there.

Vice-Chair:

Toby Allin

I'm married to Vivienne, with daughters Sara and Ella, who both came through the BRS cheder. I've previously been on BRS Board but stood down due to work commitments.



I rejoined it last year after a gap of several years and was soon invited to be the Board's representative on the Executive Committee and a member of the Endowment Fund Oversight Group. At the behest of Rabbi Laura I've initiated the setting up of an area group (Beyond M25) to help connect both BRS members and non-affiliated Jews dispersed around Kent and East Sussex.

For my coming role as Vice-Chair, as well as supporting the Chair in ensuring we maintain the high governance standards that previous BRS Boards have successfully upheld, I will be focusing on how we can build our community through strengthening our social ties with existing members and enhancing our attractiveness to prospective members. Of particular importance will be to encourage younger members to become involved in the running of BRS and influential in setting the agenda for its future.

Thank you, Michael, Toby and Judy and indiscreet friends. More "who's who" next time, if we can track down any more of our very busy communal leaders, whether they're newly in post or have worked hard for years but rarely received (and certainly not sought) recognition.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:

Regents Park Open Air Theatre will be transporting us to Anatevka from 27 July - tickets available at <https://openairtheatre.com/production/fiddler-on-the-roof>

Chag
Sameach
Pesach
to all
our
readers
and
their
families



A final word from Michelle – or is it?

After five years as Chair of BRS and seven on the Board it is time to make way for our new Chair, Linda de Lange, and our new Board. Serving as the Chair of Bromley Reform Synagogue has been a privilege and an honour, yet it comes with its unique set of responsibilities and demands. When I was asked to be Chair I was told it wouldn't be too much work - but no one knew what the future held. At the time I was helping care for my mum, who had dementia, as well as my own family, and all but one of my four children were still living at home.

Life then threw us a few challenges: we had to deal with two difficult rabbinic situations, with Covid thrown in. We (my invaluable Vice-Chair at the time, Kieron Hyams, and I, as well as the Board) wanted to protect and care for our community, so we carried on as normal, pulled together, and life at BRS went on. None of this would have been possible without the many volunteers and lay readers who gave up their time and energy. This generosity and love for our community meant that we did not miss one Shabbat service, having already set up streaming via YouTube, and cheder carried on via Zoom. Again, this did not happen miraculously. Thank you, Kieron, for your IT skills and for teaching us "streamers".

We even recruited a new cheder head, Frankie, during Covid. She had the most unusual introduction to BRS but still managed, with her teachers, to give our children cheder every single week until we could return in person.

As we prepared to recruit a new rabbi, someone I first met in 1984 when she was my youth leader on my RSY-Netzer Israel trip emailed me, and we had lunch at London Bridge. That was the best lunch I ever had as it resulted in Laura applying for the job at BRS, and I think you will all agree that we now have the rabbi we deserve. Having Rabbi Laura with us, and working with her, has been a joy, and all the work we have put in has resulted in increased membership and involvement. There is still a lot more to be done, and plans for the future, so please do continue your support for your new Chair and Board.

During my time as Chair my dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer and he died just nine weeks after my mum. It was a time of such profound shock and grief, but what helped me was you, my BRS family. You cared for me, sent me messages and cards and dropped off food.

As I step down as Chair I leave a dynamic and thriving Bromley Reform Synagogue community, with a rabbi, Board and leaders who can bring energy, ideas and new approaches. Stepping down allows for the infusion of diverse talents and insights that can further enrich the spiritual and communal experience for all our members. This is not an end but a transition to a new chapter. I am not going anywhere! I will still be on various committees and involved. I am filled with gratitude for the experiences, challenges and relationships that have shaped my tenure. May BRS continue to flourish under new leadership, guided by the shared values and traditions that bind us together.

Michelle Brooks Evans
michellebrooksevs@gmail.com

Ramadan, Iftar and Dialogue

I recently attended an Iftar, run by a local branch of The Dialogue Society with the Bexley Interfaith Forum. It was an evening of laughter, warmth and celebration of what makes us different and what we have in common across the community.

There was an acknowledgement of the significance of Ramadan, the place of charity within Islam and some prayers, as well as music, piano and violin played by local schoolchildren and a Whirling Dervish dance/meditation. Members of the local interfaith groups and people from mosques throughout the borough were invited to speak on the theme of 'Peace and Unity', remembering the tragedy that division causes through the world but focusing on what we have in common.

It was the first time I had been to an event like this and it left me with more understanding and, perhaps more precious, more hope that we can work together with respect, laughter and love, to create a better world, or at least community, one step at a time, one conversation at a time and one wonderful cheesecake at a time. Ramadan Mubarak to all observing the Holy Month and I'd really urge those who don't yet do so to seek out the spaces where we can understand and celebrate together.

Vicky Hart

You'll have seen in e-Light invitations to Iftar meals in Bexley. Ramadan continues until 12 April, so it's not too late to take them up and experience some of what has so moved Vicky.

**Continued
 from p.14**



The new committee is led by Jackie Aldridge, Margaret Brearley, Marsha Berg, Gal Maier, and Joe Burchell. The membership fee remains at £15, and we will contact former members whose details we have. If you would like to join, please contact me, **Jackie Aldridge**, at jacquelinealdridge@gmail.com