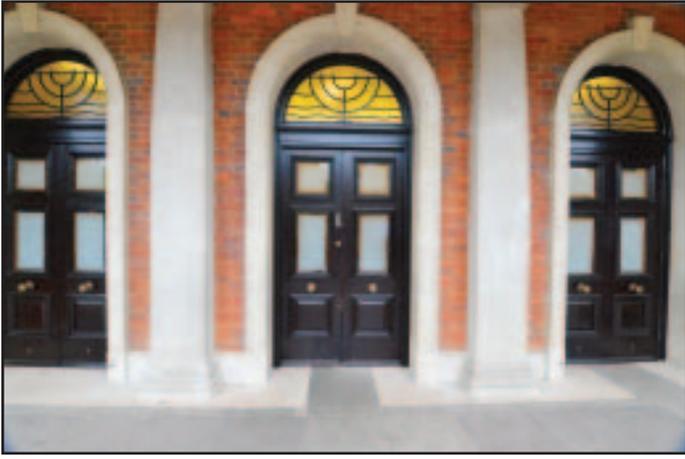


Hampstead Garden Suburb Synagogue

Annual Report

2014/15 – 5774/75

Norrice Lea, London N2 0RE
 Email office@hgss.org.uk Website www.hgss.org.uk



**There has
been an
extensive
programme**



**of
refurbishment
during the
year**



Community Leadership 2014/2015

Professional Team

<i>Senior Rabbi</i>	Rabbi Dov Kaplan	* <i>Denotes part-time</i>
<i>Assistant Rabbi</i>	Rabbi Marc Levene	
<i>Chazan</i>	Avromi Freilich *	
<i>Executive Officer</i>	David Sagal	
<i>Office Manager</i>	Sharon Drucker	
<i>Youth Workers</i>	Rachel & Steven Kaye	
<i>Accounts Manager</i>	Harris Turgel	
<i>PA to Rabbis</i>	Shelley Castaldi (from August 2014, Maddy Drucker until August 2014)	
<i>Community Event Coordinator</i>	Gayle Kravitz	
<i>ALC Head Teacher</i>	Chayli Fehler*	
<i>ALC Administrator</i>	Tanya Wides *	
<i>Facilities Manager</i>	Mark Gould	
<i>Caretakers</i>	Robin Briggs, Kwasi Kyeremeh, George Perdomo (Sundays only) and Danny Gray-Cooper	

Honorary Officers

<i>Chairman</i>	Simon Johnson	(5)	<i>Out of 5</i>
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Julian Lewis	(4)	
<i>Financial Representative</i>	Jeffrey Davidson	(4)	
<i>Wardens</i>	Joel Greenwood	(4)	
	Robert Kastner	(3)	

Board of Management

Men		Women	
Shimon Cohen	(3)	Rene Anisfeld	(4)
Bernard Fromson	(4)	Alexandra Davidson	(4)
David Grossman	(1)	Louise Norton	(3)
Martin Kaye	(5)	Jo Summerfield	(2)
Neil Levinson	(3)		
Gideon Smith	(2)		
Chair of Nashim: Michele Yamin-Joseph	(3)		
Chair of Security: Danny Green	(3)		
Chair of Children's Committee: Alex Bloom	(4)		
Chair of Youth Committee: Mark Summerfield	(4)		
Chair of Chesed Committee: Andrew Cohen	(1)		
Chair of ALC: Simon Maurice	(4)		

Representatives at the Board of Deputies of British Jews

Shimon Cohen, Vicki Harris, Elliot Jebreel, Flo Kaufmann and Vivian Wineman

In Memory of our Members who passed away this year

We are sad to report the deaths of the following members and wish their families long life.

Hettie Biber	Israel Goldstein	Jack Lass	Dorothea Nass
Manny Carter	Etka Green	Renee Lew	Sidney Rees
Moses Eker	Wallace Harris	Henry Lewis	Andrew Rosenfeld
Harvey Feldman	Willie Hommel	Anna Maimann	Freda Russell
Judith Fishman	Zoe Hommel	Joseph Mendleson	Allan Wells
Sonia Fox	Hannah Hurst	Sara Morein	

Overview

Chairman: Simon Johnson

It is with a somewhat heavy heart that I present my final report as the Chairman of the Board of Management before stepping down entirely after eight years as an Honorary Officer. First I was Vice-Chairman, then a Warden and, finally, I had the immense honour and privilege of serving as Chairman of the most vibrant, charitable, lively and vital of US Synagogue communities.

At the start of my term of office as Chairman, I was challenged by Rabbi Lord Sacks to explain to him my goals for my term. He rather stumped me with this question, but I set out to him two headline objectives which, as I report back on this term, I believe we have achieved together.

Welcoming

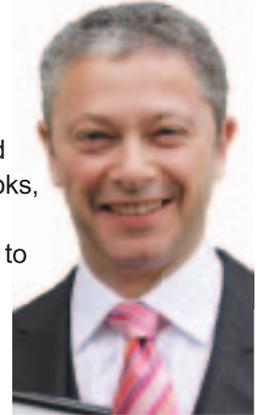
The first was to make the shul and the community more welcoming. We have achieved this in three main ways. Firstly, we have made significant and cost effective improvements to the fabric of the building, the interiors, common areas and the Max Weinbaum Hall. Under the expert coordination of Jessica Blair, with the financial support of our FR, Jeffrey Davidson (whom I will refrain from calling 'the Bursar' as he was mockingly referred to at Simchat Torah), and the expert professional guidance of David Sagal and, especially, Facilities Manager, Mark Gould, we have made the building brighter, more modern, more welcoming and the use more efficient.

New carpets were added throughout the shul, and a modern hearing loop system. The vestibules had new carpet, decoration and lighting making the entrance to the building more welcoming. The biggest change was to the Max Weinbaum Hall and the entrance to that part of the building. The Hall was completely renovated, and as a result is more functional, attractive, bright and useable. We can be all very proud of the refurbished hall, and we already have very positive feedback and an increase in inquiries to use the Max Weinbaum Hall. The Reception area has been extended by creating a flexible space for the Beit Hamedrash which can be removed to create extra reception space.

We chose to make a substantial financial investment in these improvements, knowing that they would significantly enhance the attractiveness of the building. That we were able to do so was due to the significant improvements to the finances of the community from better income collection and prudent financial planning. Jeffrey Davidson will report on this in more detail in his Finance Report.

The second way in which we have made the shul more welcoming is the Welcoming Rota on Shabbat

and Yom Tov, which ensures that everyone coming through the front door is greeted, helped to navigate their way around the building should they require it, and given prayer books, tallits and anything else they might require for the service. I have been to shuls all over the world and I can honestly say that very few other shuls do it this way. It is such a simple step, but it makes such a difference to arrive at a shul and be welcomed with a smile, a greeting and an offer of help. This could not succeed without the dedication of Louise Norton who coordinates the thirty or so volunteers who make up the rota. It is much appreciated by members and visitors alike and I am enormously grateful to Louise and all the volunteers for helping with this task. I hope they enjoy it – I know I do when it comes to my turn.



The third way that we have made the shul more welcoming is due to the tireless personal touches by Rabbi and Rebbetzen Kaplan. They have helped with making the services more accessible and ensuring that we all look out for and greet and help visitors and those who appear to be alone or unfamiliar.

Volunteers

The second objective which I told Lord Sacks that I had set was to broaden the number of people who volunteered around our Community.

The best embodiment of the success of this was to be found at Shabbat UK. That is dealt with elsewhere in this report in detail. But the Shabbat could not have been the success that it was without the months of hard work and expert preparation by a team of over 60 volunteers, brilliantly coordinated by Carolyn Bogush, Gideon Smith and Caroline Maurice, all energetically driven along by the enthusiasm of Rebbetzen Freda Kaplan. Many people who volunteered were doing so for the first time. The challenge now is to channel that enthusiasm and engagement towards all the many other activities and services going on around the community.

I was delighted to be invited to a dinner to thank those who volunteer for the Nefesh Network. It was only from attending that dinner that I realised quite how many people volunteer for the network. They do so quietly, without fanfare and with such confidentiality that the dinner was the first time that I, a non-user, knew who was involved. I know from my work that I do with the Jewish Leadership Council that the service provided by the Nefesh Network is exemplary in its breadth and professionalism.

I am very pleased with the fact that we have made the shul more welcoming and increased the number of people volunteering.

Services

Our services continue to be the main way that people engage with the community. The main service is our flagship, where the singing of Chazan Avromi Freilich is always a spiritually uplifting treat. The HO's this year have agreed that Avromi may have some more flexibility to be away from the shul on Shabbats so as to be able to attend family s'machot and occasionally daven out of town. We have agreed a cap on the number of weeks that Avromi can be away, and have ensured that, for those weeks, we are able to call upon Tzvi Kahn in a formal Chazan Sheni role.

We are blessed always with many many S'machot in the shul, and that will only increase in the years ahead. The HO's have worked hard and continue to do so with Baalei Simcha to ensure that the experience is equally special for their guests and for our regular attendees. This remains a challenge and we welcome all suggestions of how to continue to do this. We are forever grateful to all of our members and their visitors for ensuring that the services take place with decorum. Rabbi Kaplan, Chazan Avromi and Rabbi Levene have ensured that our services have been conducted in a spiritually meaningful way.

The Hashkama minyan now meets every week in the Landy Gallery, and its loyal and growing group of aficionados have enjoyed a wide range of speakers who, along with a sit down kiddush, make the early start even more worthwhile.

This year, we have built our relationship with the Sephardi minyan, which is fully integrated into the community through a closer working relationship between the HO's. The Sephardi Minyan has arranged their own events which we have been pleased to support. The highlight of this was a Friday night dinner in the presence of the Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis. There have also been Sephardi Communal Seder services to complement those offered in the Max Weinbaum Hall.

Friday night services continue to be the highlight of the week. Rabbi Kaplan ensures a warm and inclusive atmosphere, and the songs and melodies which Chazan Avromi leads for us have been rewarded with growing numbers of families who are attending the service and enjoying a wonderful experience. The Friday night services in the winter are followed by members of the community giving their individual Dvar Torahs, and, this year, we have been delighted to hear from a number of first-time speakers who have given us something meaningful to think about as we sit down to our Friday night dinner.

I would like to pay particular tribute and give grateful thanks to Rabbi and Rebbetzen Kaplan, Rabbi and Rebbetzen Levene and Chazan Avromi and Rochelle



Freilich for the service that they give to the community. They are working hard to make our Shul a warm, welcoming and inclusive place, and the sheer range of initiatives and the superb pastoral work, and care which all of our rabbinical team put into the community is something we should all be very proud of. Your Board continues to support our rabbinical team and is grateful for the tremendous efforts that they make to improve the atmosphere around the Shul and to bring Judaism to life for our members.

There are also many who work quietly and modestly behind the scenes ensuring our services continue to run smoothly and efficiently. Our sincere thanks to Michael Goldstein and his team who layn each week and also to Bernard Taub, Alan Cohen and Meyer Pearlman, who are our 'weekday wardens'.

Early this year, our Board also had a long discussion about the charity commitments of the Shul. We were conscious that a very large number of members of our shul are involved with Jewish communal organisations and give generously to many community institutions. But that philanthropic spirit does not find a focus around the shul and therefore we have decided to implement a new charitable initiative in which we will support, through all of the charitable activities around the shul, two charities in each year. Renee Anisfeld has overseen a process of selection of charities, after a public call for interest from Jewish charities that might be interested in being supported. She has worked diligently and we are very grateful to her for her dedication and enthusiasm. She agreed with the Board a shortlist of four charities and they will be presented to the Community at the AGM for the community to decide on which two will be supported. This is an ideal way of securing community endorsement for the charitable choices. I think this is a very worthwhile initiative and I thank my Board colleagues for their vision in taking this forward.

We are now in the second year of a three-year commitment to the HGSS Friends of Lvov, ensuring that the levy so generously contributed to by members from their shul bills will continue for a further year beyond this forthcoming AGM.

The Adult Education Committee organised a debate ahead of the Israeli elections



We have advised Rebbetzen Bald of this three-year commitment and are in discussions with her about how the school in Lvov might best be supported at the end of this period. The HO's are committed to continuing to support the Jewish community in Lvov which is experiencing such hardship, but wish to do so with the maximum transparency and confidence for donors. Accordingly, we are discussing with World Jewish Relief and the Joint Distribution Committee whether and how we might partner with them to provide the community's support to Lvov, to which, as a community, we are so dedicated.

The Lvov concert held in January 2015 attracted over 500 people. It was a very successful event, raising over £30k, and we are grateful to the chair of the committee, Jerry Goldstein and his many dedicated colleagues on the committee for putting on an accessible and truly enjoyable event.

Elsewhere in this annual report you will see a detailed report on our youth activities. Rabbi Levene has once again overseen a busy programme of youth activities. We have benefited from a second year from our youth workers, Rachel and Steven Kaye, who have brought a sense of energy and inspiration to the youth activity. I am grateful to them for all their efforts, thank them for their dedicated service and wish them the best of success in their future endeavours when their employment with us ends in Summer 2015.

The HO's are now exploring a new and different way of delivering our youth provision. We hope to be able to announce the outcome soon.

We have worked hard with Rabbi Levene to broaden his role this year, to increase his responsibilities and to help him in his development. We put together a programme for him to do more speaking from the pulpit, to give more shiurim, to run his own programmes, to write more for the community and to play a greater and more visible role in pastoral care and life cycle events. We have been delighted with how he has responded to this programme. He speaks with great aplomb and we believe he is continuing to develop into a most accomplished young rabbi. We will continue his development under the auspices of Rabbi Kaplan. We are very proud to have Rabbi Levene with us in the community.

One of the activities which has really taken off in 2015

has been Adult Education which Martin Kaye and his committee have driven forward with determination and skill. In addition to the professional programme already in place, Martin has put together a series of accessible lectures on a Shabbat morning, events around the Israeli General Election and a pre-Pesach educational programme, all of which has enhanced a vibrant and varied programme of adult education activities. However, now it needs our support – my warm thanks to Martin for this initiative.

One of the best supported events at the community was arranged by our Rabbinical team, and that was the talk by the 'Son of Hamas', Mosab Hassan Yousef, moderated by Dr Alan Mendoza of the Henry Jackson Society. It was very well attended, with over 400 people in the hall, and shows how our community will turn up for marquee events.

I want to thank Hilary and her *Norrice Leader* team for the many hours and dedication in putting together a fantastic Shul Magazine, of which we are so proud.

Of course our activities around the building could not take place without the dedication of our volunteers from the security team, headed by my colleague on the Board of management, Danny Green. This year has seen particular challenges and the tragedy in Copenhagen brought home to us the dedication of all of our volunteers. The Government's steadfast support for the Jewish Community has been very welcome and the HO's have supported the Security Committee's request for additional equipment to protect and support our volunteers. We have extended the hours when the community is professionally guarded. Again, I would encourage all members who are able to devote an hour once every 4 to 5 weeks to put themselves forward to ensure that the burden of ensuring a visible deterrent is shared as widely as possible.

I want to thank the many volunteers who help to deliver the services which are taken for granted. Those who organise the Kiddush, and who help to man the Nefesh Network are unsung heroes of our community, without whom much on which we depend would simply not happen.

We can be very proud of our Aleph Learning Centre. Under the directorship of Chayli Fehler, it has gone from strength to strength. The ALC is now full to capacity with over 270 children, which has unfortunately meant that we have a waiting list. We are able to offer preference to our members until after Pesach but beyond that they have to take their place on the waiting list. I am grateful to joint chairs Simon Maurice and Louise Bentata, for their dedicated lay support of the ALC. I would like to express the gratitude of the Board to Chayli, whom we are privileged to have as the director of the ALC, for the innovation, hard work and dedication that she puts into providing a class leading ALC of which the whole community can be very proud.

We have a number of vibrant children's services around

the building which once again have gone from strength to strength. All of our services are run by volunteers and we should be very grateful to all those who give their time and their experience to help our children have a meaningful experience of Shul. Alex Bloom and his committee work tirelessly and with tremendous insight and skill to ensure a wide and varied range of children's services. We are tremendously grateful to Alex and his team.

Kerem school, under Chair of Governors David Wolfson, has again been a jewel of our community. The new headteacher Miss Alyson Burns is working closely with the Shul to be more inclusive, and to ensure that there is as close a relationship as possible between us.

As ever the beating heart of the shul is provided by David Sagal and his hard-working office staff. They keep all of our numerous initiatives going on and ensure that all members who require shul services receive them as promptly and as effectively as possible. As Chairman, I have been working closely with the office team to ensure that they are working as efficiently and effectively as possible, and if at any time you have any questions or comments about our office service, David Sagal would be delighted to chat with you. I would like to thank David and all of the office team of Sharon Drucker, Harris Turgel, Gayle Kravitz and Shelley Castaldi for caring for our members and for working so hard to keep everything running smoothly.

Once again, I pay a special tribute to Mark Gould and his team of caretakers. We have put a greater burden on Mark and his team by the sheer breadth of usage of the building that we have on Shabbat morning and on the festivals. Mark and his team are always cheerful, always caring, and always efficient and it is something that never fails to impress me when I see just how quickly they are able to ensure that the Shul and all parts of the building are turned round as quickly as possible for the next use. Moving from Shul to kiddush to afternoon services to ALC to Kerem and back to Shul again requires dedication, cheerfulness

and hard work. I am delighted to be able to thank them on behalf of the entire Board for the work that they do. The refurbishment work provided an additional challenge but it was handled with consummate professionalism.

As I come to the end of my term, I want to thank the Board of Management for stepping forward to serve the community and conducting discussions about some important issues with confidentiality, care and concern. It has been a pleasure to be part of a team with you.

It has been a pleasure to serve alongside our HO's this year. Julian Lewis, the Vice Chairman and Jeffrey Davidson, the FR, have brought their many years of experience to bear on the roles and have worked with me as a real team on the many issues which have arisen through the year. The community should be very grateful to both of them that they have served the community with such care and dedication. I was also thrilled to be able to work with two new gabbaim, in Joel Greenwood and Robbie Kastner. They are new to the role but have brought a freshness of vision to the challenging role of being a warden and it has been wonderful to see a younger team serving the community in this way. I have really valued working in friendship and commonality with the HO's team, and I thank them all for their comradeship and support this year.

It has been my privilege to serve as your Chairman, and before that as Warden and Vice Chairman. It has been a pleasure. I have tried to be open, accessible, friendly, responsive and collaborative. If there have been errors, mistakes and underperformance, the fault lies with me and I accept responsibility. I have tried at all times to carry out my duties with commitment, care and good humour. I am pleased at what has been achieved and look back fondly at my time as an HO, at the friendships I have made and the experience I have gained. I step down with sadness, but wish my successor the best of success, and hope that they have as much satisfaction as I have leading this wonderful community from strength to strength.

Financial Report

Financial Representative: Jeffrey Davidson

I am delighted to be reporting on the financial position of our synagogue for the last time – I promise (*bli neder!*) – for the year ended 31 December 2014.

The accounts for 2014 show a current account surplus of £41,295, against a budget set to achieve a surplus of £12,000. A concerted effort to recover arrears in membership dues, together with a number of relatively small variances against budget in both revenues and costs which I shall be happy to explain in detail at the AGM, account for these better than expected results. This is a very satisfactory position, though I would also mention that the budget for 2015 indicates a deficit as the result of continuing refurbishment works.

In addition to the surplus on current account, we have benefited from the extraordinary generosity of

our member, Dr Moshe Kantor. Dr Kantor generously provided so much support for Shabbat UK that we made a £20,000 surplus rather than a large deficit. He has also endowed the community with a £64,000 educational and community fund. These two sums have been taken to reserves such that the community now has a fund of some £84,000 to use to engage in exciting and innovative educational, communal and social programming. The costs of normal programming, which include the expense of feeding the community (more than £130,000 was spent on food and drink in 2014), will continue to be met out of the current account. On behalf of the whole community, I extend most grateful thanks to Dr Kantor for his continued generosity towards HGSS.

The most notable financial issue for 2014 was the

extensive refurbishment of parts of the synagogue complex. Capital expenditure in this regard exceeded £300,000 but has left the community with a redecorated and re-carpeted sanctuary, a completely refurbished and modernised community hall, rewiring throughout, refurbished lobbies and a rebuilt Beth Hamedrash, now with removable partitioning so that the space can be used to increase the size of the lobby when needed. I believe this has been the most extensive refurbishment of the community's premises in 30 years and the building is now in a condition to take the community and its activities forward for many years to come. And although the purpose of redoing the hall is to provide the community with essential facilities, a pleasant bonus is the dramatic increase we are already seeing in hall bookings from members and non-members alike.

Thus, despite some inconvenience last summer while building works were in progress, the synagogue complex has continued to be used increasingly intensively for services and other activities. This underlying increase in community activity within the building is a cause for congratulation, although, inevitably, it places a heavy burden on manpower and resources to maintain our facilities to a high standard, and has led to a continuous rise in the cost of caretaking and cleaning staff.

Each year, in this column, I have thanked Mark Gould, our facilities manager, and his team for their hard work and enormous contribution to the smooth running of the community. As I ride off into the sunset, I wish to take this opportunity to express my particular gratitude to him for the enormous effort and work he puts into this community - ever willing, always smiling, always saying yes, and, in his quiet yet competent way, making everything happen smoothly, safely, and on time. It is true to say that without him and his care and thoughtfulness, very little of what goes on in and around and to do with our buildings would happen. His skill in this regard is such that not only do I not need to ask him to do anything before he has done it, but I didn't know it was even something I needed to ask him to do in the first place. So, for the last time, I thank Mark and his team for their tremendous work and performance throughout the year, and for making HGSS the envy of the US, making us the model all other communities aspire to copy in terms of building maintenance, Health and Safety and the general standard of upkeep.

While thanking our professional staff, I would again draw your attention to two areas of cost which continue to rise: security and communal activities. At least in part, these costs have risen because we are finding it increasingly difficult to find members willing to volunteer their time, with a few notable exceptions on whose shoulders the burden of communal work seems continually to fall. This has meant that we increasingly find ourselves paying for services which, traditionally, were provided by volunteering members. During recent months, there have been frequent appeals for members to volunteer just a few hours a year for these essential services, and I urge all members to approach the office or the HOs to find out where they can help out. Unsurprisingly, the costs of security continue to rise as

we necessarily respond to increased threat levels. That these threat levels have not touched us directly, and the community has been able to continue its activities peacefully and without alarm or interruption against the backdrop of even the most disturbing of news, is in no small measure the result of the tireless efforts and dedication of our security team led by Danny Green. I have enjoyed working with and taking advice from Danny over the past few years. I thank him and the whole security team for their constant care and watchfulness, and I hope he continues to look after us in peace and security for many years to come.

2014 has seen another period of quiet continuity in the shul office under David Sagal's management. Our Office Manager, Sharon Drucker, has continued to run the synagogue office efficiently, ably assisted by our bookkeeper and office assistant, Harris Turgel. The office now runs as a well-managed and integrated team of three, and we look forward to seeing their skills and energy enhance services to members into 2015. David, Sharon and Harris have each been a great support to me over the years in the different ways in which I rely on the office - without their support, patience and refusal to get irritated by me I could not have done my job and I offer them these public thanks in addition to the gratitude I have expressed to each of them in turn in private.

I have continued to enjoy and benefit from working closely with our ministerial team of Rabbi Kaplan, Rabbi Levene and Chazan Avromi and their wives. I have continually sought to empower them with the financial resources to carry out all the wonderful work they do on our behalf with the results which, I trust, are clear for all to see. My thanks to all of them for making my job both straightforward and rewarding, for making it easy for me to say "yes" and for allowing me to be a part of the great work they do.

The Finance Committee has continued to be a useful forum for discussing financial issues which arise, both in terms of policy and operations, and I am grateful to the members of the committee for their ideas and support. I continue to welcome new members to the Finance Committee, which meets four to six times a year, and I would be pleased to hear from members who feel they have the time and skills to make a positive contribution to our deliberations.

In order for us to progress through this year with as little stress in the office as possible, I would again ask members to help by paying their shul and cheder fees promptly, taking advantage of the direct debit scheme where possible, and to be as generous as possible when making any donations or other voluntary contributions.

As in previous years, many of our members made donations to the synagogue in 2014 to mark a special family simcha or in memory of loved ones who had passed away. This generosity is greatly appreciated and I do hope that we can continue to expect such contributions from members in 2015.

Despite the refurbishment of the Hall, the hire rates have not been increased. Yet. They now represent particularly good value for a hall of its size and quality and I hope that

members will regard the hall as an attractive and cost-effective venue for their events. I think you can expect the hire rates to increase later this year, so I would encourage anyone thinking about using the Hall to book soon before the cost of hire goes up.

So, now it is time to say goodbye. Dip into the tissue box and wipe those tears from your eyes. As a parting gift by which to remember me, I have put the fees up for 2015, but only by an average of 1.5%. I also leave the community in a very strong position financially - no

debt, money in the bank and a continual surplus year on year. Ours is a unique community, and I leave it with an unique financial strength which I have been pleased to nurture and help grow. It has been my pleasure to serve the community as FR over the past eight years. You're an argumentative, cantankerous, opinionated lot, difficult to satisfy, with many of you belonging to weird and wonderful schools of financial thought, but I do love you.

Children's Services

Chairman: Alex Bloom

This has been another busy year, with over 100 children attending one of four Children's Services on a typical Shabbat.

We want as many children within our community as possible to enjoy attending the services which take place every Shabbat and throughout the year. If your child does not attend one of the Children's Services or Squads, please encourage them to do so. If the reason they do not attend is because they do not enjoy the services available, then please let me know which area(s) you think could be improved.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have helped with services and events this year. Without them, and the great support from the Shul Office, none of this would be possible. We are always looking for more volunteers, not just to take the services, but to help plan and organise events, so, if you would like to help or have any ideas for improvements, please contact me (alex-bloom@hotmail.co.uk)

Group 1: Nursery (11.15 to 11.45)

This service provides a wonderful introduction to Shul for the youngest children in our community (and their parents). Led by parent volunteers, this service aims to incorporate as much singing and fun as possible, so that the children really enjoy their first experience of Shul. We are always looking for new people to lead this service and will be running a training session for anyone who is interested. Please contact me if you are interested.

Group 2: Reception & Year 1 (11.15 to 11.45)

This service builds on the songs and tunes of Group 1 and starts to introduce the children to the format of the Shabbat morning service. Because children of this age are used to being at school, parents are encouraged to leave them while they enjoy becoming familiar with prayers like the Shema and Shul tunes while also learning about the Parsha of the week.

Group 3: Years 2 & 3 (10.45 to 11.45)

The emphasis of this service is on learning about content and how to pray together, with weekly discussions and a quiz on the Parsha. The service is run by Benny Lemer with support from other volunteers.

Group 4: Years 4 to 6 (10.45 to 11.45)

This is a shortened version of the normal Shabbat morning service. The service has been led by Tanya and Jacob Waxman who will be 'retiring' after Pesach. I would like to thank them for their hard work and wish Adam Ellis well as he takes charge of this service.

Squads

With the assistance of Rabbi Levene and a team of volunteers, we have recently re-initiated the following Anim Zemirot Squad (Years 2 & 3). For further details on timings please contact the Shul Office.

Events

In addition to the Services, special events are organised to enhance children's enjoyment and make Shul fun.

For **Shavuot**, everyone came together for a Singalong Service with Rabbi Kaplan and Rabbi Levene. This was followed by our popular ice-cream kiddush.

For **Rosh Hashanah**, all the services were packed out. The leaders worked hard to keep the children excited – and the parents quiet! There was also an amazing Family Tashlich Party, with Treasure Hunt, in the park, organised by Rabbi Kaplan and Rabbi Levene. There was a fantastic turnout with over 200 children and parents learning, participating in the Tashlich Service and, of course, socialising.

On **Yom Kippur** following packed services there was a magnificent performance of *Jonah and the Whale* – with lunch! This initiative enabled parents to remain at Shul and daven while 150 kids were entertained and enjoyed a packed lunch – a massive thank you to Rebbetzen Freda, Michael Freedman, Donna Davidson, James Monty and the volunteers.



On **Succot**, the services were followed by kiddush in the Succah. On Simchat Torah evening, the main Shul was again dedicated to families for the early part of the evening. This allowed children and their parents to enjoy the festivities in a safe and calm environment, singing and dancing with the Sefer Torah, led by Rabbi Kaplan. The highlight of this evening is the visualisation of a real Sefer Torah, unrolled and displayed around the bimah, for the children to see and touch.

On **Chanukah** we had a doughnut Kiddush and the lighting of the Giant Chanukiah on Sunday Evening.

On **Purim** there was a family Megilla reading in the hall, attended by over 450 children and their parents. Once again, Rabbi and Freda Kaplan joined a number

of talented young adults to perform a superb Shadow Theatre of the Purim story while the Megilla was being read.

Volunteers

The children's services and events are organised by a dedicated team of volunteers. As any parent who has attended any of the youngest two services will know, this is a far from easy task. I would very much like to thank everyone who has helped during the year for their hard work, support and commitment. We are always looking for more volunteers, not just to take the services, but to help plan, research and organise events. Please contact Gayle in the Shul office, or Alex Bloom on Shabbat.

Community Programmes

Reviewed by David Sagal and Gayle Kravitz

In a community as diverse as Hampstead Garden Suburb, it is important to provide a wide variety of educational programmes catering for all levels and interests. The superb Shiurim that have taken place for a number of years continue to find appeal within the congregation.

Every morning, at the end of the morning service, Rabbi Kaplan gives a short Halacha insight.

On Mondays, our ever popular Beit Midrash programme continues with a Parasha Shiur with Victor Amar, a Gemara shiur with Joseph Lavi and one-to-one learning under Rabbi Levene's supervision. A new initiative this year has been Rabbi Kaplan's *Its never to late to learn* Talmud series.

Rabbi Kaplan's Tuesday Lunchtime *Soup and Sedra* programme has grown in popularity over the last year. On Tuesday evening there is Rabbi Kaplan's Talmud Shiur, Professor Sacha Stern's Shiur, *Modern Approaches to Talmud Avoda Zara*, and Rabbi Schischa's Shiur on Tehillim.

On Wednesday, Freda Kaplan hosts *Lunch and Learn* for women and, in the evening, Rabbi Hammer delivers his advanced Gemara Shiur.

A Ladies' Tehillim Group takes place for half an hour on alternate Friday mornings to pray for those who need our support.

On Shabbat morning, before the service, Rabbi Kaplan gives a Sedra Shiur. In the afternoon, he, and a number of guest speakers, have given shiurim on a variety of halachic and philosophical topics which are open to those at all levels of learning.

As in previous years, the community enjoyed a bi-weekly summer Seuda Shlishit programme. The series focused on Torah Learning, Divine Service and Acts of Kindness. Speakers included Elana Chesler, Dayan Abrahams, Cass Pennant (ex West Ham street fighter), Vivian Wineman,

Rabbi Danny Kirsch, Niklas Frank (Son of a Nazi), Rabbi Malcolm Herman, Josh Bennett. Rabbi Daniel Roselaar, Rebbetzen Lauren Levin and Dr Tamra Wright.

The Education Committee, chaired by Martin Kaye, organised a wide variety of events. Our Shabbat Dialogue series featured a series of interesting topics and speakers. In response to popular demand, these will continue in May. An Israeli Election awareness evening featured campaign videos and speakers from the main Israeli parties. Pre-Pesach events informed our audiences with a wide variety of topics, including how to entertain children on Seder Night, tasting and understanding the nuances of a variety of Israeli wines, understanding the development of Haggadot and seeing the four sons in each of us. Our day trip to Jewish York was enjoyed by all. Future events include a Jewish Film Club, a Charity Bike Ride, a course in 20th Century Jewish fiction and a child-centred trip to the British Museum.

Martin writes: *"I take this opportunity of thanking my committee and the synagogue staff, in particular Gayle, for their efforts in not only putting up with my demands but ensuring that all our events are enthusiastically promoted and executed."*

Throughout the year, we ran a Medical Ethics Series for Doctors and Medical professionals. The programme included presentations from Dr Robyn Cohen, Dr Clive Onnie, Dr Joanna Franks, Dr Benjamin Abramov, Professor Naomi Chayen and Dr Jeremy Pffeffer, with halachic commentary and discussion from Rabbi Chaim Rappaport. Thanks go to Drs Jeremy and Jacqui Marshall for organising the series.

During the winter, we continued the popular Friday night Divrei Torah from our members young and old. These have included; Rabbi Kaplan, Michael Freedman, Hilary Halter, Sami Birnbaum, Jeffrey Davidson, Jason Pearlman, Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen, James Kaufmann, Simon Johnson, Victor Amar, Adam Taub, Harris



There was a very special Havdalah Service on Shabbat UK



Sidelsky, Dan Rickman, Rabbi Dr Matt Greenwood, Jonathan Waxman, Alexandra Davidson, Aviva Kaufmann and Ian Carno.

We are very fortunate that Nitza and Robin Spiro of the Spiro Ark Education Foundation provide us with interesting and diverse lectures. Including: *Medical Issues of Medieval Society* by Professor Lev, *Woman at War – Correspondent Coral Gould*, *Iraq's Looted Treasures* by Lyn Julias, *Jews in Arab Lands* by George Ben Sosen, *Under the Kal of Bushido* by Martin Sugarmann and many more film events.

The Rabbis have been able to enlist some high profile speakers, to address the community in a packed Hall. Niklas Franks a son of a Nazi gave a fascinating talk on his father and anti-Semitism in Germany today, and Mosab Hassan Yousef, son of a prominent Hamas leader, on his life and the journey he made to a higher truth.

Social Activities

This last year has seen much exciting social activity for all ages from singles to young families to the more senior members of the community.

Shabbat UK. On the Weekend of 24/25 October, The Chief Rabbi called on Jews across the UK, regardless of their level of Religious observance, to celebrate a Shabbat together. At HGSS over 700 people participated in an amazing Friday night dinner across five different spaces in the shul complex. In addition, nearly 100 families opened up their homes to over 1500 of their neighbours for Shabbat Lunch. Finally over 200 people shared a magical Havdalah service. Along the way, there were puppet shows and plays, shiurim and speakers, not to mention packed services for Kaballat Services and Shabbat Morning. Over 60 volunteers were involved in creating this weekend, They worked tirelessly to conceive the idea, design and structure the events and implement the whole programme. Our volunteers ranged from our youth, our young adults, those with young families, those with teenagers and older members of the shul – a real example of working together across the whole spectrum of the community.

A huge thank you to Caroline Maurice, Carolyn Bogush, Gideon Smith, Freda Kaplan and all the team for creating Shabbat UK at HGSS.



Following our previous successful **Baby Blessing** Ceremonies for those families celebrating the arrival of a newborn, Rabbis Kaplan and Levene invited new parents to bring their babies to the front of the shul at the end of a Shabbat Service in May for a blessing and presentation of certificates. Every new baby in the community receives a beautiful babygro featuring a picture of a baby and the words *Born to be active in HGSS*.

The Rabbinical team continue to offer hospitality on Shabbat and festivals.

The JBD dinner for Young Professionals was so successful and enjoyable, that we are hosting this event again this year in June. Thanks to our member Adam Zeitlin for catering this event.

Another new initiative by Rabbi Kaplan and Freda is the regular Sunday Breakfast talks at their home. We have been extremely lucky to have been addressed by many High ranking Israeli officials including Colonel Bentzi Gruber (IDF Vice Commander), Jeremy Mindell (First World War controversies and Jewish participation), David Harris (Director of Research & Content for the Israel Project) and MK Dov Lipman (Yesh Atid party).

Our Rebbetzins have been very busy organising a series of events for the Bat Mitzvah programme. There have also been Ladies' evenings for learning and socialising, including a learning programme during Hakafot on Simchat Torah and a Purim Champagne Breakfast at Freda's home.

For senior members, we organised opportunities for them to hone their computer skills. Instructor Brian Eisenberg led two sessions – basic instruction

MK Dov Lipman spoke at Sunday morning breakfast at 8 Norrice Lea



for beginners in the morning and one for the more advanced in the afternoon, There was also a session on Genealogy. Our regular Senior Teas have grown from strength to strength.

There have been “New Members” Evenings at 8 Norrice Lea, when the Rabbinic Team were able to get to know and welcome our new families. This included an evening for those who have joined the community in the past five years to meet and share their experiences since joining HGSS and let us know what other programmes or events they would like to see.

Our annual Whisky Tasting Evening was judged a great success with no fewer than six knowledgeable speakers sharing their experiences to over 25 eager participants. Thanks go to It was organisers Bernard Fromson, Dan Rickman, Louise Felder for the catering. The evening raised £800 for Chai Cancer Care.

For our Pre-Purim Education Programme we held another Rabbinic Roadshow, where three members of the community opened up their homes to participants who were all visited by and Rabbi Kaplan & Freda, Rabbi Levene and Chazan Avromi who brought insights into the Purim story.

On Pesach, over 150 people sat down to a second night Communal Seder with Rabbi Kaplan and Freda, Rabbi Levene and Lisa. It was an evening for members of all ages. The Sephardi Minyan held a second night Communal Seder for 60 in the Landy Gallery.

We also played host to US Women, a roadshow discus-



Chazan Avromi speaks at the Pre-Pesach Rabbinic Roadshow

sing “The Female Jew: options for the 21st Century”.

Chesed

This year, in addition to the Nefesh Network, our community has embarked on a number of initiatives to promote kindness and giving to others. In conjunction with the United Synagogue’s Project Chesed, we have been collecting clothes and warm hats in a large collection box in the hall foyer.

For the sixth year running, Sarah Callman and her excellent team organised a fantastic Mitzvah Day event in the Max Weinbaum Hall. We also hosted a full day blood donation session from a mobile unit parked on the premises. A committee, under the chairmanship of Laura Mandel, organised the bookings and the session was fully booked by the time the day arrived. Thirty-eight pints



Thirty-eight pints of blood and plasma were collected on Mitzvah Day

of blood and plasma were collected on the day.

The Rabbinic team with Jeremy and Jacqui Marshall organised the preparation of the largest fruit salad for Tu B’Shvat, with whole families involved in preparing and distributing 1500 portions to homeless shelters across London.

The Norrice Leader continues to keep the community in touch with events. It covers news of personalities and communal events, as well as educational, cultural and youth activities. It features a Social and Personal section in which we are delighted to publish photographs of those who have recently enjoyed a significant celebration. Under the dedicated editorship of Hilary Halter, supported by an editorial team, always seeks to broaden the scope of this publication and goes from strength to strength. Hilary welcomes comments, news and articles and can be contacted via the shul office. We wish to thank her and her team for the many hours and dedication in putting together a Shul Magazine of which we are all so proud.

Youth

Rabbi Marc Levene Chairman: Mark Summerfield Youth Workers: Rachel & Steven Kaye

Youth Service

The Youth Service has, on the whole, been well attended with a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and we look forward to welcoming more participants in the future. The Youth Service is self-sufficient, with the youth leading almost all the leining and davening. Fitting the practice into their busy schedules is not an easy task and we are very proud of them for all their hard work and support. We have created a *Daven like a Mensch* programme in order to improve davening/leining/reading confidence and gain more Ba'al Korechim. We have also had many themed kiddushim, including, sushi, baked goods, chocolate and ice cream.

Over the Yamim Noraim and Succot, there were successful Youth Services, with all davening by youth. They did a fantastic job, as always. On Simchat Torah we had two Chatanim, Hugo Davidson and Jacob Summerfield and two Nishei Chayil, Yona Greenwood and Sara Goldstein. The annual Simchat Torah Barbecue was enjoyed by over 100 people, and was the first big event of the year. There was a great atmosphere and lots of meat.

We have continued a Shabbat 'Breakfast and Musaf Service,' which takes place at the beginning and end of each term. It starts at 10.45 am and is followed by Musaf at 11.30 am. These take place about five or six times a year.

Regular Programming

Learn2Lead (L2L) is a two-year leadership programme for Years 9 and 10. We have put a lot of effort into the structuring of the programme and have had positive feedback. We have had an impressive array of speakers and sessions including First Aid, Krav Maga (self-defence), disability awareness, Israel advocacy

and team building (through the Happy Puzzle Company). Our Learn2Lead has gone from strength to strength with 37 participants in our Year 9 programme compared with 15-20 last year. L2L is also linked with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards as we offer the opportunity to do the expedition in a



kosher-friendly way with JLGB.

Bnei Mitzvah (Years 7 and 8) Dads and Lads – This is an old idea with a new perspective. Every Sunday morning we invite boys in Year 8 with their fathers for a Shacharit minyan and breakfast. This is a wonderful opportunity to teach putting on tefillin and navigating the morning service. Topped off with a lovely breakfast of waffles, cake, biscuits and cereal.

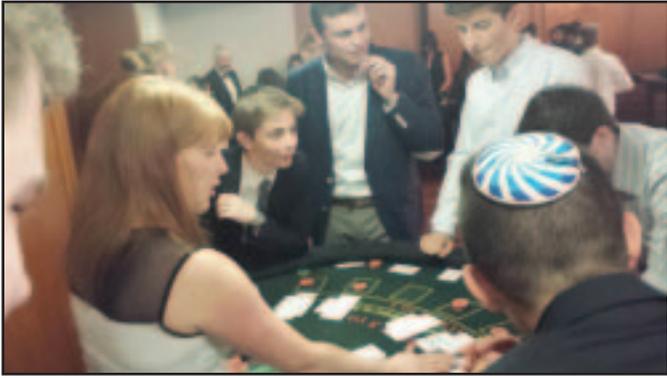
Movie Night – We have hosted movie nights in the youth flat after Shabbat for Years 7 and 8. We have an array of films for them to pick, plus non-stop homemade popcorn. We use the flat instead of the youth centre to provide a warm, homely feel plus a chance to relax.

Bowling Night – we decided that Years 7 and 8 needed a change of scenery from the flat, so we planned a bowling evening which was well attended. As Hollywood Bowl is around the corner, it was easy to coordinate. We had 24 youth attend compared to 8 last year.

Cupcake Decorating Evening – We feel that previously we have catered for their the whole youth or just the boys so we wanted to change that. We had a girl's night in for years 7, 8 and 9 where we decorated and ate many cupcakes!

Shevet Shabbat – headed by Rachel, Steven and a group of fantastic Madrichim. Shevet Shabbat (for Years 2-10) takes place every Shabbat afternoon. The aim of Shevet is to provide a fun-filled afternoon for youth without imposing a particular ideology but still inspiring. On 14 March, a Shevet Shabbat lunch, catered by Jasmine, attracted 50 youth.





Big Events

- **End of year Casino Evening** in the Max Weinbaum Hall. We had professional tables and croupiers, a black-tie James Bond theme, a photobooth, and yummy food from K Grill.
- On **Succot** we took a group of kids in Years 7 to 9 for an amazing and fun day out at Stubbers Adventure Centre.
- On **Chanukah** we had a wonderful evening with around 100 youth laughing the night away with comedian Mark Maier.
- **Year 12 Poland Trip** – during the October Half Term

Rabbi Levene accompanied a group of teenagers to Poland with Tribe. The trip was wonderful and Rabbi Levene described it as an honour to guide these young people on an important journey for history and of self.

• **Youth Dinner** in commemoration of the Holocaust – on Friday night 23 January we hosted 100+ youth along with local Holocaust survivor Bertha for a lovely meal (catered by Jasmine) in the Max Weinbaum Hall.

• At **Purim**, besides a youth Megillah attended in fabulous fancy dress, years 11-13 were invited to seudah and a hypnotist performance, whilst years 7-10 went Go-Karting on the following Sunday.



Our Biggest Obstacles

One of our biggest obstacles is lack of commitment from our Youth either to attend the Youth service as it starts at 9.45am or sign up to an event on time. Most teens will not go to something unless their friends also do so which often leads to a deadlock where no-one will make the first move and agree to come. This creates uncertainty on whether our events can go ahead with lack of numbers. Despite this obstacle, it has been a busy year with areas of growth and success.

In addition to the activities outlined above, Bar and Bat Mitzvah students have been offered:

Bat Mitzvah Programme

with Rebbetzen Freda Kaplan

This programme is for pre-Bat Mitzvah girls and we are extremely fortunate to have a wonderful Rebbetzen who has spearheaded her own programme targeting girls in Year 6 and their mothers. This amazing series continues throughout the year and has been extremely well attended.

Bar Mitzvah Programme

with Rabbi Marc Levene

Much like the Bat Mitzvah programme above, although for the post-Bar Mitzvah age group, this programme runs for boys in Year 7 together with their parents. We have tried to develop this to enhance their pre-Bar Mitzvah experience, as well as continuing to develop their relationship with the Rabbis.



Youth Leaders, Rachel and Steven, enjoy some Pre-Pesach fun

Kerem School

Head Teacher: Miss Alyson Burns

Chairman: David Wolfson QC

Kerem School continues to be a shining beacon within the heart of the HGSS community. This was highlighted by the recent outstanding ISI inspection report in which Kerem excelled in all eight areas – a commendable feat. The inspectors noted that the school was ‘at the heart of the community’ and that there was a ‘distinctive atmosphere’ of belonging to a family. They praised the children’s ‘strong understanding of their own and other cultures’ and their pride in identity. The inspection report also commented on the excellent



Camp Simcha toy drive

academic achievement ‘within and beyond the curriculum’. This can be attributed both to both the ‘energetic, careful and caring leadership’ and the ‘excellent governance’ as well as the ‘excellent strategies that strongly support pupils where appropriate.’ The whole Kerem community is proud of this accolade and will continue to focus on maintaining a first class education for all pupils.

Head Teacher, Miss Burns, continues to lead the school from strength to strength with the support of her new senior management team. The new Head of JS, Mrs Hill, and the new Deputies, Mrs Fisher and Mrs Kent (covering for Mrs Redhouse who is on maternity leave), bring with them decades of experience which they will use to help the school continue to thrive.

The year has seen many highlights. Following the success of the iPad project in Year 6 last year, the school has expanded it to include Y3 and Y4. The children continue to participate in a wide range of sporting activities including regular PE, swimming and gym lessons. Kerem excels in netball, swimming, football and chess and has won many tournaments during the year.

This year the children have raised significant amounts of tzedakah for both Jewish and non-Jewish charities. The children raised more than £3000 for CST, Chai,

Poppy Day, the Lvov community, Noah’s Ark and Jami. The classes have also participated in a number of social welfare initiatives; classes have visited Hammerson House and Rubens House; pupils packed and delivered mishloach manot parcels for the elderly and Year 6 have visited the GIFT warehouse to pack parcels of food. Kerem School offers a huge range of extra-curricular clubs. This year the children are enjoying Dancing with Louise, Big Thinkers, Netball, Football, Chess, Life Skills, Coding, Singing, Orchestra, Books at Breakfast, Art, Lamda Speech and Language, Knitting and Cooking. There have also been a few new clubs introduced including French, Playball and Yoga.

There have been a number of exciting activities in the school throughout the year. The Chanukah show was a resounding success with excellent performances from all classes and the Chagigat Siddur and Chagigat Chumash



The choir sang at Jewish Care for Purim

were a delight to watch. Newsday saw Year 6 become journalists for the day, creating their own newspaper, and other themed events include Arts and Science Week, Friendship Week, Geography Day, Shabbat UK Week and Book Week. Purim saw the children show off their talent in a special talent show and we were touched by the moving Yom Hazikaron ceremony put on by Year 6.

The Jewish ethos of the HGSS community runs through the veins of the school and the heart of the school beats to the tune of the Jewish calendar. As well as celebrating the Chagim, Tefillah, Kabbalat Shabbat and Jewish learning are central to Kerem. The annual family Friday night Shabbaton was another highlight of the year with a record number of families participating. Rabbi Kaplan and Rabbi Levene both have close links to the school and participate in many school events. Rabbi Kaplan regularly does tefillah with Year 5, teaches the Year 6 students once a week and comes to each and every Kabbalat Shabbat.

The Kerem School continues to be at the centre of the HGSS community and the ongoing close relationship between the school and Shul is highly valued.

The Aleph Learning Centre

Director: Chayli Fehler

Co-Chairs: Louise Bentata and Simon Maurice

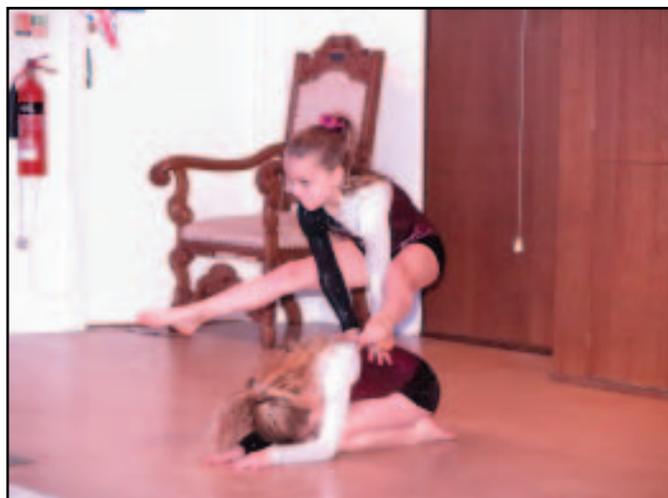
The Aleph Learning Centre brings a fresh approach to traditional Sunday morning Cheder with engaging methods and exciting, hands-on activities. It aims to ensure that every child gains a strong sense of Jewish identity, a high level of Jewish Education and enjoys a positive experience in building a foundation for Jewish learning. The Aleph Learning Centre prides itself on having a team of dedicated and hardworking teachers and staff under the directorship of Chayli Fehler.

Curriculum

The ALC uses an innovative, engaging curriculum, incorporating interactive study and extra-curricular activities. All teachers provide weekly lesson plans with clear, structured learning objectives for their class, building on knowledge and content each year. Chayli oversees the lesson plans and encourages the use of a variety of teaching methods and styles, incorporating multimedia and hands-on experiential activities where possible. She has created a website for teachers to easily search and download a variety of high quality teaching materials and multimedia presentations for their classes.

Jewish Festivals

At the ALC, each festival is celebrated with creative, hands-on and exciting activities. For **Chanukah** there was a *Britain's got Talent* Chanukah event. Students displayed a range of talents, showcasing boy bands, gymnastics, musical instruments and solo performances. Our panel of four teacher-judges entertained the audience with their impressive



Gymnastics at the *Britain's Got Talent* event



ALC pupils enjoy the Purim skit put on by teachers

impersonations of Simon, David, Amanda and Alisha. The event concluded with a 'sing-along' led by Jonny Shine and with doughnut decorating.

Tu B'Shvat was celebrated in the classrooms, where pupils enjoyed fruit parties, fruit shakes and creating exotic fruit crafts. Pupils learnt the Brachot for fruit and the importance of not wasting food as well as environmental responsibility.

Purim was another memorable event. Each class came dressed in a different colour and teachers put on an impressive skit of the Purim story, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all the pupils.

For **Pesach**, the ALC embarked on an unprecedented project to produce its own customised *Haggadah* featuring photos, text and artworks by all the pupils. Each child received their own complimentary copy.

For **Yom Ha'atzmaut**, the ALC held an *Israel Funday* where children enjoyed an Israel Cinema experience, complete with refreshments and popcorn. The films depicted how a little start-up nation, after only 67 years, became one of the most advanced nations of the world with many amazing achievements. To conclude, the children shared what Israel meant to each them and it ended with Hatikvah led by Rabbi Kaplan.

For **Shavuot**, our older classes participated in an educational, hands-on Torah workshop, learning the process of how the Torah is made, while pupils and parents in the younger years were treated to a Cheese Cake 'Make n' Taste' workshop with Chef Fabienne Viner.

Special Events

Aleph Learning Centre pupils and staff rolled up their sleeves and joined in **Mitzvah Day** on 16 November. They packed lunches for homeless shelters, wrote cards for the Israeli Armed forces, wrapped gifts for sick children in hospitals, donated food and clothes to poor families and much more. Year 6 took a trip to Hammerson House, where they enjoyed the opportunity to converse with people from quite a different era and find out what they have in common.

Shabbat UK brought communities across the UK together like never before. Ahead of the weekend, the children of the ALC produced a special promotional video clip showcasing their anticipation of the event. On the Sunday preceding the event, there was a special Shabbat concert and, since the Parsha coincided with the Torah reading of Noah, the children came dressed up as animals for a special Noah's Ark experience, with Rabbi and Rebbetzen Kaplan.

As part of their Kosher project, Year 1 went on an educational trip to a farm while Year 4 went on a scavenger hunt and attended a workshop in Kay's, the local kosher supermarket.

Year 6 has had a particularly eventful year with special guest speakers including a Kindertransport survivor, a trip to the Jewish Museum to launch their *A Piece of My History* research project, and an American-themed Friday

Night dinner with Rabbi and Rebbetzen Kaplan. They have been learning from the Etgar Jewish Knowledge book, culminating in the Inter-Cheder quiz, and participated in an educational iPad workshop with Jewish Interactive where they got to combine learning about ancient Jewish traditions with the latest modern technology.

Hebrew Reading Scheme

There has been continued progress in the children's Hebrew reading, due to the popular Aleph Champ reading programme. Based on the martial arts motivational philosophy of colour-coded levels and testing, pupils are encouraged to rise to the challenge of Hebrew reading at their own pace. It awards pupils with certificates as they progress up each level. The ALC offers one-to-one reading tuition for 25 minutes each Sunday with our team of Hebrew reading assistants. The aim is for every student to read Hebrew fluently and acquire a basic understanding of the prayers. New homework books have been introduced and this has improved Hebrew Reading levels. Gitty Aronovits, Head of Hebrew Reading since September 2014, brings several years of reading and teaching experience with her.

As always we look forward to continuing to develop and enhance our centre every year.

www.alephlearningcentre.com



Nefesh Network

Chairman: Geoffrey Levy

We are pleased to continue our excellent relationship with our professional team, under Rabbi Kaplan and Rebbetzen Freda, whose tireless work and commitment to pastoral matters continue to benefit the community.

Together with Chazan Avromi and Rabbi Levene, they enhance the confidential work of Nefesh Network and help to ensure that we continue to reach as many people in our kehilla as possible, sharing happy moments as well as sad ones.

Our volunteer force, which has yet again grown in numbers, report, again, how much they enjoy the

relationships that they have made with fellow Shul members. Similarly, we are constantly asked by those who have used the Nefesh Network to pass on their appreciation for the support, warmth and companionship that has been extended to them by our volunteers.

We aspire to ensure that all members of the community can access a range of options – from the purely practical to, hopefully, providing comfort in the face of difficulty and sadness.

We are greatly encouraged by the fact that, year on year, more of you are ringing us when you feel that we might be able to help in some way.

Security

Chairman: Danny Green

The conflict between Israel and Hamas spanned a period of approximately 50 days in July and August. It sparked the worst wave of anti-Semitic incidents ever recorded by CST, with over 300 reported in July and over 150 reported in August. By comparison, CST recorded 304 incidents for January to June 2014. The annual total for the year was 1168 incidents – more than double the number recorded for the whole of 2013.

I can report that the last year passed without serious incident at HGSS – we have been spared anything serious (other than a little verbal abuse). The Government and Police services advise us that the terrorist threat level remains on 'severe'. This means that it is a case of 'when' not 'if' there will be an attack on UK mainland. We must do everything we can to maintain a strong visible presence, to deter any potential attackers or "information collecting" at our premises.

The operation for the High Holy Days ran well and passed peacefully, despite our concerns over the aforementioned spike in anti-Semitic incidents. We were able to complete the majority of our time slots, with a good response from the wider membership. We do, however, continue to have difficulty with our Shabbat rota. Simon Johnson and the Board have supported a move towards a compulsory system. With the assistance of the Wardens, we are now adding a list of parents who have booked a future Bar/ Bat Mitzvah at the shul. We are contacting and allocating security shifts directly to these families. This has a two-fold benefit as it is a boost to the rota, and will hopefully introduce the next generation of members to regular security assistance.

The tragic events this January in Paris have triggered a massive reaction throughout Europe. It has left our community in an unprecedented state of shock and concern, and highlights our vulnerability to a planned attack. Questions and anxiety about our level of protection have been brought to the highest levels of examination. CST has recommended vigilance and strict adherence to its guidelines, but have NOT advised us to increase our security measures. Despite this, and with reassurance of the community being of paramount concern, we have implemented an increase in procedures and extra cover where appropriate.

This includes an additional security guard for Kerem School, Aleph Learning Centre and Friday night service rosters, respectively. We have held two successful CST briefings for School, ALC and Shabbat rota volunteers. Where required, we are supplying protective clothing and further training for all volunteers. We have also carried out a CST survey of all access points to the building. Locks, alarms and access have been upgraded where required. We continue to liaise with the local Police and CST to underwrite our procedures.

The recent tragic murder of our CST colleague, Dan Uzan, in Copenhagen has made us all only too aware of the risk and vulnerability of the work we do. His bravery resulted in him paying the ultimate price to protect his community. There is no doubt that if he had not been on duty that night, there would have been greater loss of life at the Copenhagen synagogue. On behalf of HGSS, we pay tribute to him and all other 'mezzuzahs' around the world that stand and protect our 'doorways', our families and friends.

This has been an extremely demanding time for everyone involved with the security of our building. Sam Lipton has worked tirelessly with Kerem staff, parents and Governors to ensure that there is calm and understanding of what we are doing. In the last year, Paul Hanison has taken control of the ALC security rota and arrangements and has carried this out in his usual thorough and efficient manner. I thank both Sam and Paul for all of their hard work and support.

In January, Jeff Kagan stood down from the security committee after 12 years of service. His behind-the-scenes work coordinating the Shabbat rota, plus general support and management, will be missed by us all. At the same time, we have invited Adam Arnold (who recently completed the CST cadet course) to join the Security Committee. We look forward to working with him – his fresh ideas and enthusiasm will be an asset to the team. Special thanks, too, to my Deputy Norman Roback, the unsung hero of the team, who is wherever he needs to be, come rain or shine.

Finally, I would like to thank David Sagal and his office, Mark Gould and team, Simon Johnson, HO's, Board Members, the Rabbonim and Chazan for their continued support throughout the past year.

More scenes from the many events which have taken place during the year . . .



Shadow Theatre in a packed Max Weinbaum Hall at Purim



Connect Four and Goal Scoring and Face Painting at the Pre-Pesach Fun Day



Families prepare fruit salad for the homeless at Tu B'Shvat

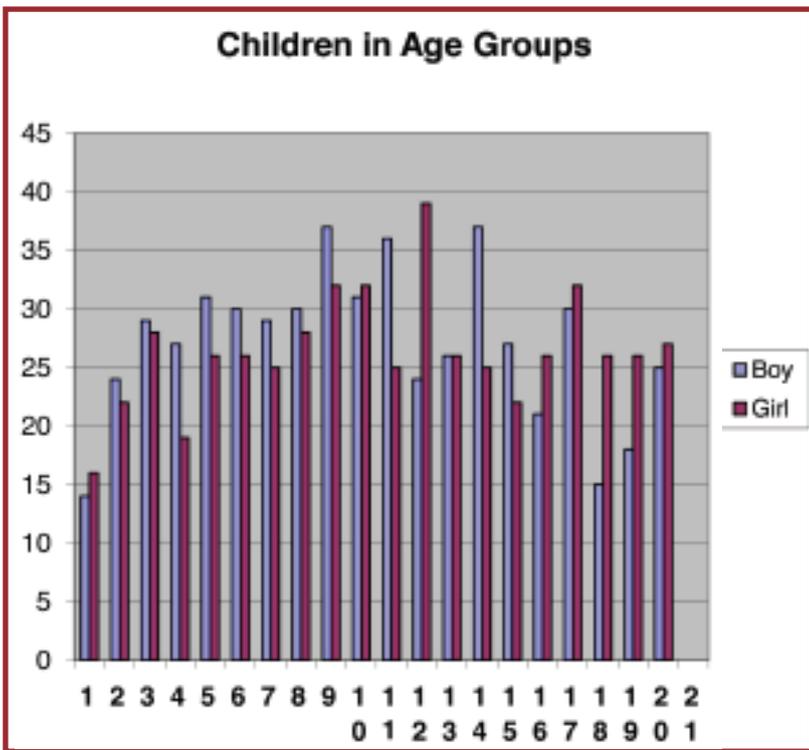
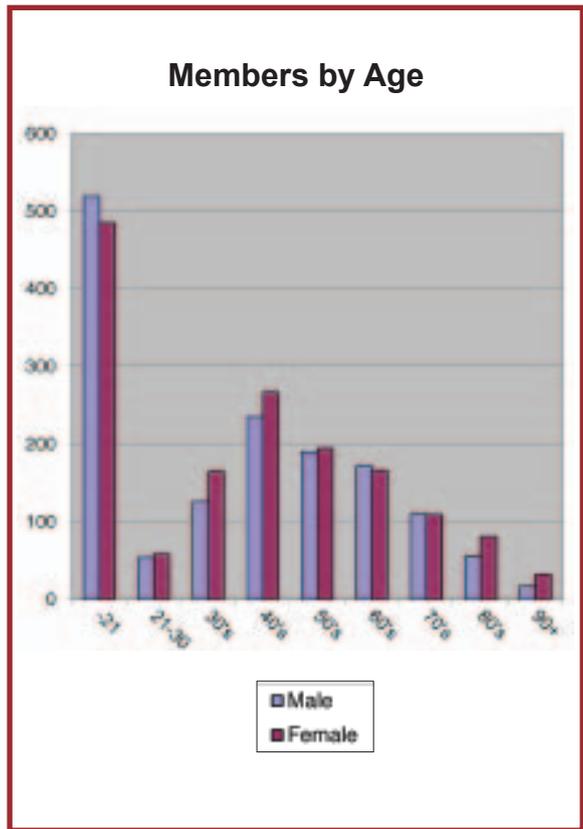
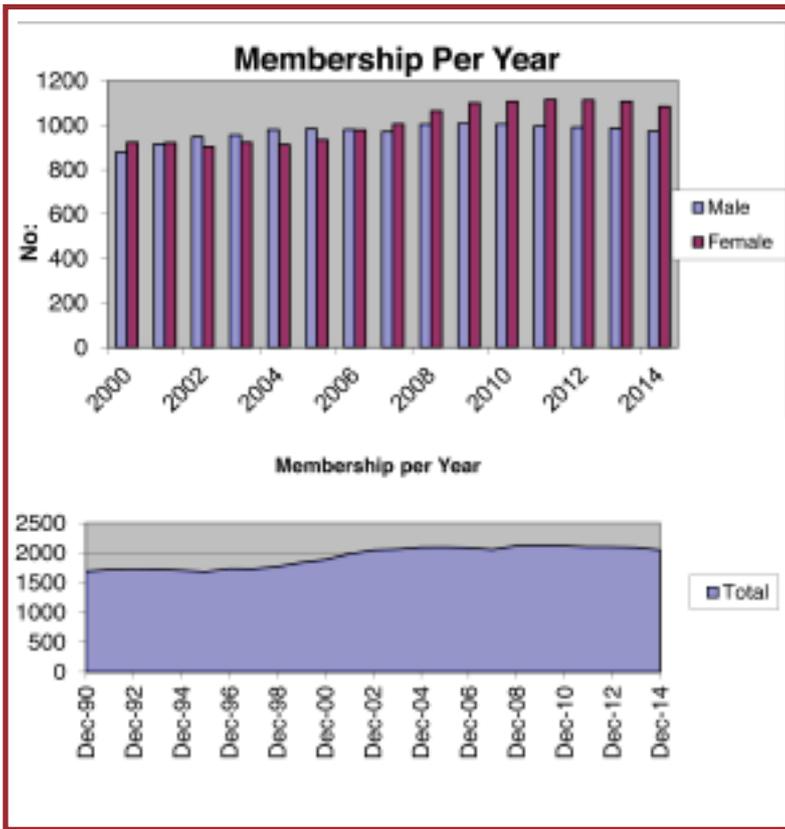


Members of the Israeli Army Choir sang at Sunday breakfast at 8 Norrice Lea



The oldest and the youngest members enjoy the Sukkah: Norrice Seniors and Shabbat Tots

Membership Statistics



The United Synagogue's Five Largest Communities (by Adult Membership)

- Stanmore
- Borehamwood
- Edgware
- HGSS
- Kinloss

- Also – did you know that**
- 80% of HGSS members live within a square mile of the Shul
 - The biggest adult age group is 40 to 50 year olds The average age is 45
 - The number of Households has been static for the last 20 years
 - Four members are aged over 100