Ikey Solomons - The Real Fagin?
Licoricia of Winchester
The Early Jews of Oxford
The Burning of Books
Westminster Welcomes its New Members

Lauren Hurwitz & Timothee de Mierry
Dar Utnik
Yael Selfin
Olivia Cohen
Louise Lisztman
Andrea Killick
Gary & Robyn Mond
Tally Koren
Justine Nahum & Simon Nicholls
Julie Wilson

Births
Albert Rowe – a son for Anne & Barnaby on 13th June
Eliora Baroukh – a daughter for Eleanor & Benjamin on 13th July

Infant Blessings
Iris Clarfelt-Gaynor on 25th June
Jack Clarfelt on 10th July
Balthazar Isaac Hurwitz de Mierry on 27th July

B’nei Mitzvah
Sophie Singer on 8th June
Tesa Getter on 6th July
Sophia Matthewson on 13th July

Marriages & Blessings
Melisa Schindler & Jake Kahane on 26th May
Sam Feller & Andrea Carta on 2nd June
Johnny Quinn & Laura Rowland on 30th June - in Majorca

Deaths
Reggie Gourgey on 4th July
Margrit Stern on 21st August
Georgina Rhodes on 10th September

Condolences
*We offer sincere condolences to*
Gabrielle Feldman and family on the death of her father
Kurt Stern on the death of his wife and to Evelyn Stern Chipperfield on the death of her mother
Mark Clarfelt on the death of his sister and to Matthew, James & Emily on the death of their mother
We are developing a project at Westminster Synagogue, working persistently towards a shared vision. There is a great quality to what is sometimes called ‘a ministry of presence’, in which the ultimate role of a minister is to turn up and be with people, and I do appreciate as invaluable, the bread and butter aspect of my role in our community - supporting, guiding and listening to people at all times and stages of life. However, I know that this community will have a much greater impact on people’s lives if we work together towards an ambitious vision involving cultural and systemic change.

From the start of my time here, two years ago, it has been important to me to hear from you and work with you towards what you want, rather than just imposing programmes as a professional team. Consequently, I have had quality conversations, one-on-one and in groups, with more than 150 people to get to know you and your desires for our community. Last March, many of us gathered together and heard from members who wanted to lead in these areas, about why they’re so important. As an unnecessary reminder, we are building:

1. A community of educational excellence, standing out in the progressive Jewish world as a centre of intellectual and discursive inspiration, a place which people of all ages need in order to navigate the moral, intellectual and spiritual challenges of today.

2. A community of participatory spiritual services, with a diversity of musical styles.

3. A community of care, in which the sacred responsibilities of calling and visiting the sick and the lonely are shared by all who want to step up, and in which no member is left alone.

4. A community of relationships, in which everything we do is geared towards each of us having the chance to form life-long relationships.

‘I can tell from the newsletters that it’s been a very busy time here’, I have heard this a few times recently. It has been a busy time, as we have taken steps - volunteers and professional leaders together - to fulfil these four communal aspirations.

To build a community of participatory spiritual services we have moved towards a diversity of professional singing voices. Anchoring our singing for these High Holy Days are Yoav and Sara.

Yoav Oved has now been beautifully and conscientiously singing with us for a year and a half, invigorating our Friday Night Shabbat Unplugged, and joining our Saturday morning singing panel. Yoav, in case you don’t already know him, moved to England from Israel in 2012 to study music at Royal Holloway University. Upon graduating, his interests turned to Mizrakhi and Ashkenazi music, both secular and religious. He works closely with the Jewish Music Institute to educate through performance.

Sara Feldmann-Brummer trained at Trinity College of Music London, and has sung as a chorister and soloist at West London Synagogue. She has also performed at major venues including the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and St. Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York City.

As well as refreshing our professional input, lay leaders have formed a Singing Team. They brought the community together last August, to get to know and enjoy Friday night and Saturday morning songs. They will continue with such initiatives and will also make recommendations as to how to make our services ever more participatory.

To build a community of educational excellence we have created a major new appointment in the expanded role of Director of Community and Education. Yoav Roberts is a leader who is passionate about both Judaism and people, and who will bring both to the fore in our community, through careful listening and committed conversations. Yael took over from me as the Young Adult Organiser and Educator for Reform Judaism, working with people in their twenties and thirties, when I left for Westminster Synagogue. I have been pleased over the last two years to see her, in many ways, doing a better job than I did! She improved the way that young adult work was communicated and celebrated; she developed the engagement of high-level stake-holders in projects that I cherished, as she developed a Board where there had previously been none. I have learnt with and from Yael over the years, both Jewishly and professionally. She will help us to develop and drive forward a Synagogue strategy. She will lead in aspects of community beyond education, and she is passionate about social justice and action. With a special focus on ages nought to eighteen, she will help us as a community to do, what some say Progressive Judaism has struggled to do for a number of years - take on education and inspiration.

Every Rosh Hashanah we celebrate the creation of the world and reflect that we can create and innovate too. Work has also begun in developing the other two areas, building a community of care and relationships, but, as there are no new appointments to introduce yet in those areas, I will save those updates for now.

If you want to help us to achieve this important and emerging vision, in any of the four areas, either with time or with money, please don’t hesitate to get in touch for a conversation. Our ancient teaching, the Mishnah, asks, ‘Why was there initially just a single human being?’ It answers: ‘To teach that someone who upholds a single life it is as if they have upheld the whole world’. This is the work we are doing. Together we are enriching and sustaining lives, through the nourishment of learning and song, and the need for company and care.

Rabbi Benji Stanley
One of the oldest known Jewish communities in England is that of Oxford. Records show that there were Jews living in Oxford shortly after William of Normandy came to this country, bringing with him the Jews from Rouen who had served his court there. There is no clear date of foundation for the University of Oxford - the oldest university in the English-speaking world - but teaching existed at Oxford in some form in 1096 and developed rapidly from 1167, when Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris. The Jewish community has been linked with the University almost from that time.

These medieval Jews settled in the area around St. Aldate’s, once known as Great Jewry Street; they numbered some eighty to one hundred families, making their living as merchants and moneylenders. It was a pious, educated group, worshipping in freedom with its own rabbis and learned leaders.

As the number of students at the University increased, the Jews began offering property for rent, with some ten per cent of student lodgings owned by the Jewish community. It also provided finance for some of the poor clerics attached to the University. The Jews themselves were forbidden to attend, though they did offer Hebrew teaching to the largely religious curriculum.

Early in its history the University was not a collegiate establishment. The earliest colleges to be founded were University College, Balliol and Merton. Merton College, the first fully self-governing college in the University, was founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton, sometime Chancellor of England and later Bishop of Rochester. He bought part of the land for the college (Halegod’s House) from a man known as ‘Jacob the Jew, the son of Moses the Jew’; the deed of sale is the oldest surviving document in Oxford and is written in Hebrew and Latin.

All Jews living in England had at first to be buried in the only Jewish cemetery in London, but the first cemetery for Oxford Jews (founded in about 1901) was established on vacant low-lying land beside the west bank of the River Cherwell, outside the East Gate of the town, following the tradition that a Jewish cemetery should be outside the walls of a walled town. The Jewish community lost this site in 1231 when the King gave it to the nearby Hospital of St. John. In compensation, the Hospital gave them a smaller site opposite, an area which is now the memorial rose garden at the front of the Botanic Gardens. It is possible that the south-east ‘garden’ corner of the site contained a mikveh (ritual bath) for bathing the dead (a common medieval practice) and perhaps even the living. An excavation in 1987 revealed a remarkable spring-fed stone culvert in the old St. John’s Hospital Chapel, which according to one interpretation and dating of the mason’s chisel marks, could be from the time of the cemetery rather than the hospital and the chapel that superseded the cemetery.

In 1222 a scandal arose within the community

In 1228 the houses of two prominent Jews (David of Oxford and Isaac ben Moses) were confiscated. In their stead, a new town hall and court house were built; the houses were erroneously believed to be a domus conversorum (house of converts) for Jewish converts to Christianity. The householders, however, did pay an annual sum to the London domus though there was never such a building in Oxford. The modern town hall is still on the site.

Investigation into the location of a medieval synagogue in Oxford indicates a site on the right of St. Aldate’s, opposite Pembroke Street, where the north-west corner tower of Christ Church’s famous Tom Quad is now. It may have been on the site of the modern Canon’s Lodgings on the north side of Tom Quad. The synagogue was founded circa 1228 by Copin of Worcester, a wealthy benefactor, probably an existing town house adapted for the purpose. However, in a document of 1367, Balliol claimed ownership of a certain wall next to the ‘Broadegates’ formerly called the Synagogue of the Jews’, in the parish of St. Aldates. The former synagogue was completely demolished, when Cardinal Wolsey and his men took it and its site from Balliol, to make space for his Cardinal’s College. Otherwise, the only relic of the synagogue is the stained glass given to Balliol in informal compensation for the site.

Although the Jews of Oxford were left in relative peace to go about their religious and commercial affairs, there were outbreaks of violence from time to time. In 1244, a group of Oxford students ran wild, attacking Jews in the streets and ransacking Jewish-owned houses. The Jews begged the Constable for help, and he arrested forty-five students, imprisoning them in Oxford Castle. However in the country as a whole anti-Jewish fervour was increasing, particularly during Christian festivals. On Ascension Day 1268 an Oxford Jew was accused of attacking a religious parade and destroying a crucifix. The whole Jewish community was arrested and imprisoned. The King (Henry III) forced the Jews to pay for a huge marble and gold cross to be erected outside the synagogue. It was later transferred to Merton College and finally disappeared, though traces of marble have been found in the College grounds.

In 1222 a scandal arose within the community which has since intrigued historians of Oxford’s Jews. A deacon of the Christian church, living in Oxford, fell in love with a Jewish woman. We do not have the names of either, but the deacon decided to convert to the Jewish faith in order to marry. He was arraigned before Archbishop Stephen Langton at a specially convened council on 17th April and charged with heresy. The punishment for heresy was death by burning and was duly carried out. The importance of the case was its legal implications. For as far as is known this was the first case of heresy
being punished by burning in England and it set a precedent for the later religious retribution against those who turned against the official religion in Tudor times.

In 1290 under Edward I the Jews of Oxford, like those of the rest of England, were banished from the kingdom. Gradually many had already found sanctuary abroad or in other cities in the country and only some ten families were left. Most of their property passed to Balliol College. But one Jew at least remained in Oxford teaching at the University, though he had to convert to Christianity to do so. This was a learned Jew called Jacob (later James) Wolfgang who taught Hebrew at the University. He was followed by another, one Jacob Barnett (see Westminster Quarterly, January 2013) who escaped on the eve of his conversion and fled to France. Others are known to have participated in academic pursuits, always having to convert to do so.

As early as 1667 an edition of the Mishnah was printed at Oxford by the Clarendon Press, followed by other Biblical treatises and a Hebrew book on chess. However, when they were readmitted to England in 1665 the Jews once again were able to contribute more fully to the University though they were not admitted as undergraduates until the passing of the University Test Act of 1871. The first Jew to be elected a fellow was Samuel Alexander at Lincoln College in 1882. The University owes much to its connection with Jewish scholars and its fellow townsfolk.

The few members of the Jewish community left in Oxford after the expulsion kept a low profile. Those who did remain either converted to Christianity or were careful to show little trace of their religion. After the readmission some returned, but the hold that Christianity had over the University prevented much openly Jewish activity. By the twentieth century however, with university places open to all, the community began to flourish. In 1932 Sir Isaiah Berlin was awarded a fellowship at All Souls College, and in 1939 Cecil Roth became a Reader in Jewish Studies. He was responsible for allowing examinations to be taken on a Sunday instead of Saturday and Jewish students spent the Sabbath at the Roth family home so that they could enjoy no advantage over their fellows by asking what the questions had been. Public schools were encouraging Jews to apply for student places, and several moved on to higher degrees and posts within the University.

...allowing examinations to be taken on a Sunday

The years leading up to World War II brought European scholars and students to Oxford (among them Albert Einstein) and when the war was over, many coming out of the forces turned to Oxford to continue their education or to begin it anew. In 1966 a new college was founded in Oxford by a Jewish philanthropist, Sir Israel Wolfson, and named after him. Its first President was Sir Isaiah Berlin.

The Jewish community in Oxford was not slow to offer both a religious life and a social one to students and to those making their home in Oxford. The old synagogue, not in good shape, offered services catering to most different aspects of Jewish religious life, and the community offered kosher food to students and to any others who wanted it. There is no rabbi but services are held on a regular basis with the help of both students and lay leaders. The B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation bought a site next to the synagogue which by now was in a very poor state. Funds were raised for a new building on the same site and a company trust was formed to administer the Oxford Jewish Congregation. A crucial additional decision was to insert an unalterable clause in the Memorandum of Association of the Company stating that the building must be made available for ‘all forms of Jewish worship’. The ‘default’ services are Orthodox, run by a ‘religious services committee’ in accordance with halachic principles and long-standing local custom. The synagogue was rebuilt in 2005 with a new wing for classrooms and a student lounge for the Oxford University Jewish Society.

The Oxford Chabad House opened in Cowley Road in 2001, with a new student centre in George Street. The first mikveh since medieval times was built in 2006, not far from the original one at Magdalen College. Jewish life in Oxford is thriving with many young Jews attending the University who need a Jewish ‘home’ during their studies, and the ancient traditions of university life and of Judaism itself are being enthusiastically upheld.

The memorial stone laid to commemorate the remains

The story of Oxford and its Jews does not end here. In June of this year members of Oxford University’s Magdalen College attended a ceremony to reinter Jewish remains believed to date to 1190, when part of the site on which the college was built was a Jewish burial ground.

The remains were discovered at the college during recent building works and, after some investigating, the College established they belonged to members of the Oxford Jewish community. A short ceremony was led by Rabbi Norman Solomons and representatives of the Oxford Heritage Committee and the Oxford Jewish Congregation. Kaddish was said and there is now a commemorative plaque to mark the first Jewish cemetery in Oxford.
The statue of a prominent thirteenth century Jewish businesswoman is to be erected in Winchester to commemorate a ‘woman of national significance’ and celebrate the city’s Jewish roots. The *maquette* was unveiled in April of this year. The statue of Licoricia of Winchester will be erected on Jewry Street near where she lived. It will be a life-size bronze sculpture depicting the businesswoman with her youngest son Asher, at the age of four, holding her hand. As twenty-first century women are fighting for equal pay, the discovery that in the thirteenth century there were Jewish women in England who were running their own businesses, has come as a revelation.

In 1200, there were about 5,000 Jews living in England. They were considered to be chattels of the King, forbidden to leave the country without permission. However, they were free to travel around England and to live wherever they chose. There is evidence that there may even have been Jews here in the fourth century, as an oil lamp with the design of a Menorah was discovered in a gravel pit.

Some Jews chose to settle in Bedfordshire, and it was there, sometime towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, that Licoricia of Winchester (what a delicious name!) was born. There are no records of her early life other than the fact that her father’s name was Isaac. Her story illustrates the extent of the wealth and influence that a Jewish woman was able to acquire at that time as a moneylender.

The couple settled in Oxford and they had a son, Asher. Although the two continued to conduct their affairs separately, their marriage effectively created a thirteenth-century power couple. However, two years after this, in 1244, David died. Immediately, all the official records of the debts owed to him were sealed and taken to the Jewish Exchequer for assessment. In order to prevent any attempt at interference and, as strange as it may now seem, by standard procedure the King sent Licoricia to the Tower of London while his accountants assessed David’s estate and exacted the King’s official one-third tranche.

Licoricia endured her time in the Tower with patience and on her release later that year, received her dowry back, plus the amount specified as her inheritance in the *Ketubah* of her marriage to David. The price of her repurchase of all the debts owed to David was set at five thousand marks, of which four thousand was to go to the special exchequer established at Westminster Abbey for the building of a chapel to house a new shrine to Edward the Confessor. Despite the huge fine that she had paid to the King for David’s chattels, Licoricia had been left in control of enough wealth - both her own and David’s - to enable her to engage in substantial and widespread business activities. She remained an active moneylender for the next thirty years or more. Many of her clients were members of the royal family, the aristocracy, and the Church. She also lent to other Jews, local landowners, and small farmers. Licoricia’s name consistently appears in the financial records of the time, often with one of her sons, in disputes over business matters. These disputes appear in the Calendar of Rolls of the Jewish Exchequer and in other official records. Her business dealings extended over southern and southwestern England and, until her later years, she moved regularly around the country managing her assets.

To Licoricia’s dismay, Muriel, as part of her divorce settlement, had received a house very near to the home in which David and Licoricia had been living. This is probably why she returned to Winchester, the place where she had grown up. There, she began to carry on with David’s business enterprises and start new ones of her own. She frequented King Henry’s court whenever he was in Winchester. She dealt with members of his court as well as with the King himself.

The most notable English Jewish woman of her time, Licoricia married twice. Her first husband was one Abraham, son of Isaac of Kent, and all we know of the marriage is that it produced three sons and that she was widowed in about 1234. After Abraham’s death, she continued to accrue wealth and influence. The first documented evidence of her lending, however, is in the early 1230s. Her clients included the King’s brother-in-law, Simon de Montfort. She also financed farmers and lesser barons, as well as providing informal pawn-broking and household lending to local gentlewomen.

Eventually, she met one of the wealthiest of all English Jews at that time, David of Oxford. They married in 1242 - perhaps to consolidate their two businesses. David had to divorce his wife Muriel in order to wed Licoricia. There was a complicated and protracted battle over the divorce which involved Muriel and her supporters, the English Beit Din, the Paris Beit Din, King Henry III, and the Archbishop of York! Although the Paris Beit Din declined David’s petition for divorce, King Henry intervened. He denounced the French rabbi’s veto and decreed that no-one should interfere with the divorce.

She dealt with members of his court as well as with the King himself. The couple settled in Oxford and they had a son, Asher. Although the two continued to conduct their affairs separately, their marriage effectively created a thirteenth-century power couple. However, two years after this, in 1244, David died. Immediately, all the official records of the debts owed to him were sealed and taken to the Jewish Exchequer for assessment. In order to prevent any attempt at interference and, as strange as it may now seem, by standard procedure the King sent Licoricia to the Tower of London while his accountants assessed David’s estate and exacted the King’s official one-third tranche.

Licoricia endured her time in the Tower with patience and on her release later that year, received her dowry back, plus the amount specified as her inheritance in the *Ketubah* of her marriage to David. The price of her repurchase of all the debts owed to David was set at five thousand marks, of which four thousand was to go to the special exchequer established at Westminster Abbey for the building of a chapel to house a new shrine to Edward the Confessor. Despite the huge fine that she had paid to the King for David’s chattels, Licoricia had been left in control of enough wealth - both her own and David’s - to enable her to engage in substantial and widespread business activities. She remained an active moneylender for the next thirty years or more. Many of her clients were members of the royal family, the aristocracy, and the Church. She also lent to other Jews, local landowners, and small farmers. Licoricia’s name consistently appears in the financial records of the time, often with one of her sons, in disputes over business matters. These disputes appear in the Calendar of Rolls of the Jewish Exchequer and in other official records. Her business dealings extended over southern and southwestern England and, until her later years, she moved regularly around the country managing her assets.

To Licoricia’s dismay, Muriel, as part of her divorce settlement, had received a house very near to the home in which David and Licoricia had been living. This is probably why she returned to Winchester, the place where she had grown up. There, she began to carry on with David’s business enterprises and start new ones of her own. She frequented King Henry’s court whenever he was in Winchester. She dealt with members of his court as well as with the King himself who, is it said, aided her in some of her more questionable activities. One of these cases occurred in 1253 when she was taken to court by the heir of Sir Thomas of Charlecote, for retaining custody of his late father’s estate which had been pledged to her. Because the King had given her permission to occupy it for three times longer than the normal permitted period, he attempted to remove her from the jurisdiction of the court but was not completely successful. Although likely to have been guilty of at least one of the allegations, Licoricia parried by publicly
accusing the younger Thomas of murdering his own father and forging the deed. Once again, the King himself came to Licoricia’s aid. It was, after all, in his interest to enhance the royal incomes. Eventually, Licoricia was found guilty, but before the court could arrive at its own penalty, the King interceded and limited her fine to half a mark.

Licoricia’s ease of access to the King was an asset to the Jewish community and individual Jews often turned to her to intercede for them. In 1258, Belia of Bedford, another Jewish moneylender who had been a partner of Licoricia’s in a Winchester deal in 1234, sent Licoricia a precious gold ring as a gift to the King. The ring was mislaid and Ivetta, a neighbour, accused Licoricia of stealing it. Licoricia was again sent to the Tower while the accusation was investigated. She was released when Ivetta herself was found to have been the thief.

Despite her success, Licoricia’s end was tragic. In 1277, thirteen years before the Jews’ final expulsion from England under Edward I, she was found dead in her home, stabbed in the chest, beside the body of her devoted female Christian servant, Alice. Locks of coffers and strongboxes had been broken off, and goods were missing, making the crime appear to be motivated by greed. Three men were eventually indicted, but none of them was convicted, and the murder was never solved.

A couple of years after her death, Licoricia’s eldest son, Benedict, who had accumulated a sizable fortune in his own right before inheriting the bulk of his mother’s estate, was accused and convicted of coin clipping (illegally shaving metal from gold and silver coins) and summarily hanged. Lumbard, the youngest of her sons by Abraham of Kent, was, by comparison, somewhat of a ne’er-do-well. We know little about him, but he seems to have drifted from bad debts to petty crime before disappearing in the record.

Asher, Licoricia’s son with David, became a financier like his illustrious parents and did very well, but he was driven from England in the expulsion of 1290.

Simon Waley

(1827-1875)

The Waley family is one of the ancient Anglo-Jewish aristocratic families who could date their ancestry, though not their name, back almost to the readmission of the Jews to England in 1656. Simon Waley’s father, Solomon Jacob Waley, seems to have changed his name from Levi in the nineteenth century. Solomon Jacob Levi of Stockwell, Surrey ‘was granted on the 8th September, 1834, a licence for him and his issue by Rachael, his wife, second daughter of Nahum Hart of Goodman Fields, Middlesex, by Jane, his wife, eldest daughter of Samuel Waley of the same place, to take and use the surname of Waley in lieu of Levi and to bear the arms of Waley’.

Both Simon and his elder brother Jacob studied at University College London, though Simon did not take a degree. Jacob was a distinguished lawyer, one of the first Jews to be called to the Bar, and a prominent member of the Jewish community. In conjunction with Lionel Louis Cohen he organised the London synagogues into a corporate congregational alliance, known as the United Synagogue. On the formation of the Anglo-Jewish Association he was chosen as the first president.

Simon became a prominent member of the Stock Exchange where he was elected to the committee, and took a leading part in the emancipation of the Jews from civil disabilities.

One of Simon’s absorbing interests was in international travel. He was only sixteen when he had a letter on the subject published in the Railway Times. He continued to be an inveterate letter-writer to the press, with several letters to The Times, under the name W. London. He advocated Boulogne as the postal route between England and Europe. Boulogne was a favourite French town of Simon and his family where he spent much time on holiday and in his retirement. From 1843 he was the official correspondent for England of the chamber of commerce there.

In 1858 Simon Waley contributed a series of letters on A Tour in Auvergne which was afterwards included in Murray’s Handbook to France. For nearly a quarter of a century he was honorary secretary of the Jews’ Free School, and conducted the entire correspondence between the school and the government’s Board of Education.

Simon Waley was a fine musician and composer. He received instruction in piano from Moscheles, Sir William Sterndale Bennett, and G. Alexander Osborne, and in theory and composition from William Horsley and Molique. The first musical work published by Waley was L’Arpeggio, a study for piano, composed when he was twenty-one. His other compositions include a piano concerto, two piano trios, many other piano pieces and songs, and some orchestral pieces. He also composed hymns for Jewish Sabbaths and festivals, several of which were sung at the West London Synagogue - the first Synagogue in Britain to have an organ - where he and his family had long been members. His son Philip became the Synagogue’s chairman and was responsible for bringing Rabbi Harold Reinhart to England from America in 1929 as the Synagogue’s Senior Minister. Waley’s songs include Sing on, Ye Little Birds, The Home of Early Love, and Alpine Shepherds’ Song. His setting of Psalms 117 and 118 for the Hallel is still used today by many synagogues, as is his setting of Adon Olam.

Simon Waley married Anna Salomons, the daughter of P.J. Salomons, and they had eight children. Simon died at his home in Devonshire Place, and is buried in the West London Synagogue cemetery in Dalston.

Claire Connick

Philippa Bernard
The Real Fagin?

When Charles Dickens sold his London house to a Jewish family, Mr. and Mrs. Davis, he was asked by them why he had made Fagin, the villain of the novel *Oliver Twist*, a Jew. He replied that unfortunately a vile London criminal of that sort frequently was a Jew. He certainly had no anti-Semitic feelings towards the Davis’s themselves, remarking, ‘I must say that in all things the purchaser has behaved thoroughly well, and that I cannot call to mind any occasion when I have had money dealings with anyone that has been so satisfactory, considerate and trusting’. Dickens later became quite friendly with the family. But the question remained unanswered.

While working as a boy of twelve in the blacking factory, Dickens became friendly with a young fellow-worker by the name of Bob Fagin, and took the name for his depiction of one of the greatest blackguards in English fiction. So much for the name. But the character of the Jewish criminal in *Oliver Twist* may have come from quite a different source. In 1785 a boy was born to a Jewish family in Houndsditch named Solomons. The boy, one of nine children, was called Isaac, known always as Ikey, who turned out to be one of the most notorious criminals of his time - fence, robber and pickpocket. He probably learned his trade from his father Henry who went to prison for his misdeeds and most of London was aware of his activities. He was kept at large, untroubled by the law. What the officers didn’t know was that Fagin, the villain of the novel, was Ikey’s father-in-law, who chose a detour via Petticoat Lane as his route, where, at a prearranged spot, he was powerfully overpowered and Ikey made good his escape.

The police immediately arrested Ann, Ikey’s wife, and found in the house enough stolen goods to warrant her arrest and conviction. She was found guilty and transported to Tasmania, taking her younger children with her. She became a servant to a police officer. Meanwhile her husband found a ship bound for Rio de Janeiro and then travelled on, under the name of Sloman, to Tasmania to rejoin his wife. They had several friends among the criminal fraternity there, but he took a small shop to be returned to prison and a hackney cab was called to take him there, accompanied by several prison officers. What the officers didn’t know was that the cab was driven by Ikey’s father-in-law, who chose a detour via Petticoat Lane as his route, where, at a prearranged spot, the guards were overpowered and Ikey made good his escape.

It wasn’t long before this inveterate criminal resumed his career as a fence and pawnbroker, until in 1827 he was again arrested for stealing ‘six watches, three and a half yards of woollen cloth, seventeen shawls, twelve pieces of Valentina cloth, lace, bobbinet, caps and other articles’. By this time he was well known, not only to the police and judiciary but to the public at large. Pamphlets were published recounting his misdeeds and most of London was aware of his activities. He was kept at Newgate until the time of his trial at the Court of King’s Bench. He was ordered in Hobart, untroubled by the law. However the Governor of Tasmania, who had no reason to arrest him, wrote to request a warrant from England. The warrant finally arrived after some twelve months and Ikey was rearrested. His solicitor brought him to court under a writ of *habeas corpus*, and due to an error on the original writ he was released. The judge fixed bail at £2,000 with four sureties of £500, enormous sums at that time. Ikey and his friends found difficulty in raising such sums, and the Governor exercised his own warrant, defying the writ, and sent Ikey...
...to a ship bound for England, escorted, as a special prisoner, by the Chief Constable.

The third trial took place in 1830 to great publicity. The title of one broadsheet read: *Adventures, memoirs, former trial, transportation & escapes of that notorious fence and receiver of stolen goods, Isaac Solomons, better known to the public by the cognomen of Ikey Solomons: together with the apprehension, trial and subsequent transportation of Mrs Solomons and her husband’s ultimate re-apprehension in New South Wales.* While the identity of its author is unknown, it is claimed the writer was ‘a former police officer in New South Wales’.

It may have been this that attracted Dickens’s attention as there are resemblances between the trial of Ikey Solomons and that of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. Fagin’s final appearance before he is hanged is described minutely. Referred to merely as ‘the Jew’, he seems to have no personality left, only his race is mentioned. We are told that ‘he seemed to stand surrounded by a firmament, all bright with gleaming eyes’ - he is no longer the hunter, but the victim. Ikey was again found guilty of receiving stolen goods and transported back to Tasmania. Here he served time, first of all in Richmond and then in the prison colony in Port Arthur. Upon his release he tried to contact his family but by this time his relationship with his wife and some of his children was irretrievably broken. Ann was sent to a House of Correction but released on the plea of her daughter, but she and Ikey never again resumed any sort of family life. He eventually received his certificate of freedom in 1844. He died in 1850 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Hobart. This burial ground, the oldest Jewish cemetery in Australia, was closed in 1872 and finally bulldozed in 2002. Some of the graves, including perhaps that of Ikey Solomons as there is a memorial, were moved to the Cornelian Bay Cemetery in Hobart.

********

Dickens’s delineation of the Jew Fagin, and the origin of the character, has been much discussed. The first film of *Oliver Twist* was due to be distributed in America in 1948, but was delayed due to the fear of public condemnation and for a time cancelled altogether. In an essay in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 2013, the author draws attention to the fact that the showing of David Lean’s version, with Alex Guinness as Fagin (perhaps the best) coincided with the formation of the State of Israel, when world opinion of Jews was at a critical point. The film itself was, however, of such brilliant quality and the acting so perfect, that critics were forced to explain that it was Dickens’s own virtuosity that had brought it into being.

In a medieval palace, the astrologer - who was Jewish - told the King that his mistress would soon die.

She did.

The King was furious, certain that it was the astrologer’s prophecy that had caused her death.

He summoned the man and said ‘prophesy the date when you will die.’

His astrologer thought quickly, realizing that whatever he said the King intended to have him killed.

After a second, he said, ‘I can see no date, Sire, but according to the charts...whenever I die, your Majesty will pass away three days later.’

Memorial to Isaac Solomons in the Jewish section of the Cornelian Bay Cemetery in Hobart Tasmania

The telephone rings in the Rabbi’s office:

‘Hello, is this Rabbi Lieberman?’

‘It is’

‘This is the Charity Commission, could you please help us?’

‘I’ll try’

‘Do you know Sam Moss?’

‘I do’

‘Is he a member of your congregation?’

‘He is’

‘Did he donate ten thousand pounds?’

‘He will’

Philippa Bernard

Ron Moody as Fagin

Nevertheless when *Oliver!* the musical, hit the London stage in 1960 a new slant on the debate was brought to bear. Fagin had acquired a charm and warmth he had never had before. Ron Moody gave Fagin a heart. The old Jew saved Oliver from degradation and showed him affection, even love. The *Chronicle* article says, ‘With irresistible tunes, the musical provides a lyrical redemption that makes him lovable.’

Philippa Bernard
A Brief History of Jewish Calligraphy

As I walked round the British Library’s fascinating exhibition WRITING – Making Your Mark, I was surprised to find no mention of Jewish writing or Hebrew calligraphy. There were hieroglyphs, cuneiform, samples from China and Japan, Africa and South America but it was not until I reached almost the end of the display that I came across a magnificent Ashkenazi Haggadah from Southern Germany dated to 1430–70, beautifully written and illuminated in gold and silver; it had been placed open at the point where the four questions are asked, with a tiny picture of a child being honoured with the task. But there was little to tell the story of how the Jewish people came to communicate by means of written documents, though clearly the countries of the Middle East were among the first to put pen to paper – or perhaps one should say stylus to clay.

Just as printing succeeded handwriting, so handwriting succeeded pictography and pictography succeeded verbal communication. We can trace back the earliest forms of writing in pictures to the Sumerian scribes, using long vertical tablets of wet clay, the letters or pictures read from top to bottom and right to left. Just as left-handed children today find ‘normal’ handwriting difficult, often smudging the letters, so right-handed scribes in ancient times found the same problem with the wet clay. The earliest forms of such cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing date from about 3000 BCE, to be followed by the Egyptian hieroglyphs in about 2800 BCE, and Chinese Kanji (logograms) a thousand years later.

It was from the Phoenician invention of the alphabet that their neighbours, the early Jews, started to form the Hebrew script. It is interesting to note that the word alphabet – in everyday use today – comes from the first two letters of the Hebrew form of script. Hundreds of years before the invention of printing Hebrew scribes were trained in the use of calligraphy, the word coming from the Greek, beautiful writing. If you ask a sofer (Hebrew scribe) how he came to follow his calling, he will usually say, ‘I was born a sofer.’ And indeed this highly specialised and much revered trade does often run in families. For it is one for which much training is needed, the same instruction, method and equipment that today still follows a very ancient tradition. The minute and carefully-drawn lettering, as well as the beautiful, intricate, highly coloured illustrations were used for Bibles, prayer books, Haggadot, Ketubbot and other sacred documents. The micrography, literally small-writing, is a Jewish form of calligrams developed in the ninth century, with parallels in Christianity and Islam, using minute Hebrew letters to form representational, geometric and abstract designs.

The calligraphers of the Middle Ages, and even later ones, were trained soferim; their script style was that of the sofer, but they were commissioned for their skills in decorating sacred books with illuminations, enlarged and decorated letters, and micrography, minute script written in geometrical, flower and figurative shapes. From the late ninth to the twelfth centuries, frontispieces were decorated with carpet pages (full-page decorations resembling oriental carpets).

A sofer works to very strict rules. A kosher letter is written in ink only, not engraved, applied nor printed. Each letter has to be solid and have no splits. A split seen with the naked eye makes the whole letter and text non-kosher. Letters mustn’t touch themselves, mustn’t touch one another or the parchment edge. The letters are written from right to left just as the text is read. A missed letter cannot be written in later. There are some mistakes which are allowed to be corrected and others which are not. A scribe must study the rules of correction.

Occasionally the sofer signed his work, but usually it is anonymous. One eminent sofer, Jehuda Machabeu, of the seventeenth century, worked in Amsterdam. One of his books was the last in a large conservation project of over 30,000 books carried out for the Ets Haim Library in Amsterdam (see the Westminster Quarterly January 2018). The project took more than ten years and consisted of damage assessment, condition reports, setting up a conservation plan and the carrying out of that plan by Elizabeth Nijhoff Asser and a group of thirty freelance conservators.

Since the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, more beautiful work has emerged from soferim all over the world. We are fortunate at Westminster to hold a fine modern Haggadah illustrated by Yaelli Vogel, a reminder that the art of calligraphy and illustration is still alive and well.

Philippa Bernard
The Jewish Music Institute

In 1974, Geraldine Auerbach founded the Jewish Music Institute – although it was originally called the Jewish Music Heritage Trust. She was subsequently awarded an MBE for her contribution to music education. Since then the organisation, which has charitable status, has developed into a far-reaching concern whose activities include inter-faith work. Probably the most high-profile of its events is the annual Klezmer in the Park festival, which takes place in Regent’s Park. However the main thrust is education, which covers a lot of ground.

The Jewish Music Institute is an independent Arts organisation. Its aims are to bring Jewish musical culture – historical and modern – to the mainstream of British cultural, academic and social life. It also aims to make the study of Jewish music open to the widest possible participation through evening classes, workshops and summer schools.

The current Chairman is Jennifer Jankel, daughter of the late bandleader Joe Loss. In 1991 Jennifer and her mother founded a Joe Loss Lectureship in Jewish Music. This was first held at City University and then, in 1999 it became a branch of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The position of the first full-time Jewish Music Lecturer in a mainstream university anywhere in the world was taken by world-renowned Bloch scholar – our very own Music Director, Alexander Knapp.

In that same year, JMI International Centre for Suppressed Music was also convened at SOAS. This brought together a group of academics, producers and journalists whose work focuses on the impact that Nazism and the banning, exile and murder of Jewish composers had on the development of music in the twentieth century. The team of experts of the ICSM are dedicated to pursuing and promoting any initiatives that keep this music alive, from recordings and broadcasts to exhibitions, publications and performances. In 2003, a Jewish Music Institute library was established at SOAS comprising printed books and recorded Jewish music from all over the world, as well as special collections of British interest.

Today the JMI at SOAS is recognised as a world centre for Jewish music scholarship and, with its second incumbent Dr. Abigail Wood as Joe Loss Lecturer in Jewish Music, the JMI is able to help scholars from all over the world to study Jewish music at degree level with its programme of bursaries and scholarships.

Working closely with the Department of Music at SOAS, JMI has also established a series of summer schools and conferences and inspired a large-scale World Music Summer School at SOAS.

As part of the national Millennium celebrations, the JMI organised a biennial month-long Jewish Music Festival at some of London’s most prestigious venues. Other highlights in almost thirty years of the JMI have included new commissions and many UK premieres, such as a world premiere of a Holocaust Oratorio at Canterbury Cathedral, a Rothschild Soirée at one of the family’s stately homes, a whole weekend commemorating the 800th anniversary of the massacre of Jews in York, and Yehudi Menuhin conducting Bloch’s Hebrew Sacred Service, in St Paul’s Cathedral.

To return to Klezmer in the Park, this festival brings together top klezmer players from all over the world and invites musicians from other cultures to join in. It has seen klezmer combine with African drums, Gospel singing and youngsters from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds making music together.

Everyone experiences the festival in their own way. Some young people stay near the bandstand and dance. Others sit on deckchairs or rugs to listen and watch. It is open to everyone - Jew and non-Jew, religious and non-religious. And the musicians are not all Jewish either. What a splendid way to promote Jewish culture!

Jennifer Jankel says that the organisation is hoping to branch out into the Judeo-Spanish world and eventually to have links with the Middle Eastern world of the Mizrachi as well.

We wish them continued success.

Claire Connick

Klezmer in the Park

A JMI Summer School Session

The JMI offers financial support for the study, creation and performance of Jewish music. Since 2000 JMI has granted fifty-eight National Lottery funded Millennium Awards for projects in Jewish music throughout the UK. JMI also awards scholarship places on JMI Jewish music summer schools, courses and conferences and, over the years, has helped to support and nurture the careers of many UK-based musicians and bands working in the area of Jewish music.
Deborah Lipstadt is the American historian and specialist in Holocaust Studies, who famously prevailed in the English High Court in 2000 in a libel suit brought by the Holocaust denier, David Irving - a trial that was the subject of the 2016 film Denial. In her new book, Antisemitism: Here and Now, Professor Lipstadt shifts from the history of attacks on Jews to the current undeniable surge in anti-Semitism. As she explains in her opening notes, 'I try to unpack what we are witnessing. Is today’s antisemitism the same or different from what we have seen before? Where is it coming from: the right or the left? Is it, as some would contend, all about Israel? Are we seeing antisemitism where it is not? Are others refusing to see antisemitism where it clearly is?'

(By the way, the spelling used by Professor Lipstadt - antisemitism - is with purpose. She rejects using a hyphen because that would suggest that the bigots are ‘anti’ all Semitic peoples, when in fact they are anti-Jews. And she rejects using an upper case A because antisemitism ‘doesn’t deserve the dignity of capitalization’.)

In a recent talk that I heard Professor Lipstadt give in Chicago, she explained that this was a hard book for her to write and an even harder book to finish. It was hard to write because, while there was so much she wanted to say, she struggled to find a way to make the book interesting and accessible. She finally solved this problem - and very effectively - by structuring the book as a series of letters in which a hypothetical Jewish student of hers and a hypothetical non-Jewish faculty colleague pose questions to her about antisemitism, to which Professor Lipstadt then responds.

It was hard to finish because, regrettably, every time she thought she was finished, there would be some other antisemitic event that she felt she needed to address. Eventually, because of deadlines from her publisher, she had to draw a line in the summer of 2018. But, in doing so, she observed: ‘Sadly, given the unending saga that is antisemitism, I feel comfortable predicting that by the time this book appears there will have been new examples of antisemitism that should have been part of this narrative.’ And of course she was right - as the attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in October 2018 and numerous other more recent incidents confirm.

After beginning with a discussion of how antisemitism should be defined, Professor Lipstadt then describes different types of antisemites – the hard-core extremist; the antisemitic enabler; the dinner party antisemite; and the clueless antisemite. Readers in the UK will be especially interested in her discussion of antisemitic enablers - a category she defines as people who may not harbour personal contempt for Jews but who, by their statements and actions, ‘are directly responsible for the legitimization of explicit hostility towards Jews’. She begins with President Trump - which is an ugly story in which she documents that his refusal to condemn the neo-Nazis who marched in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 is, alas, not the only example of his willingness to tolerate and even cater to antisemites when it suits his political purposes.

She then turns to Jeremy Corbyn. Understandably, she does not speculate about his personal views. Professor Lipstadt instead concentrates on his behaviour – in particular the antisemites he has defended and been associated with. Her view is that Corbyn starts with ‘an automatic – critics might call it knee-jerk – sympathy for anyone who is or appears to be oppressed or an underdog’. In the context of the Middle East, this ‘good guys versus bad guys’ view of the world leads him to complete and total sympathy for the Palestinian position. If he encounters someone who agrees with his analysis, that is all that matters – ‘their Jew-hatred is irrelevant as long as their other positions - on class, capitalism, the role of the state, and Israel/Palestine - are to his liking’.

She concludes forcefully on Corbyn as follows: ‘Is Jeremy Corbyn an antisemite? My response would be that that’s the wrong question. The right questions to ask are: Has he facilitated and amplified expressions of antisemitism? Has he been consistently reluctant to acknowledge expressions of antisemitism unless they come from white supremacists and neo-Nazis? Will his actions facilitate the institutionalization of antisemitism among other progressives? Sadly, my answer to all of this is an unequivocal yes.’

Professor Lipstadt is equally direct throughout the book. She sees no point in denying ‘that attacks on European Jews, particularly physical assaults, come in the main from radicalized Muslims’. On Ken Livingstone’s claim that Hitler would have been satisfied if the Jews of Europe had moved to Palestine and that he worked with Zionists in the 1930s to try to achieve this outcome, she first refutes Livingstone’s reading of the historical record and then concludes: ‘Critics such as Livingstone who claim there was a collaboration between Nazis and Zionists do so for one repugnant reason only: to imply that the Jews themselves were complicit in the Nazis’ horrendous crimes.’ She also comes down firmly against the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. She does so, not because she believes that the actions of the Israeli government are beyond reproach. She does so because - even if there are BDS supporters who love Israel but believe its government’s policies need to change and see the BDS as a necessary means to this end – in her view the real objective of BDS is ‘the dissolution of Israel as a Jewish state.’

This is a book that will probably make you feel more depressed than you already are, and which does not provide much guidance about what you should do in response to the rise in antisemitism. Even so, it is a book you should read.

Robert Stillman
Anti-Semitism in Britain today

On July 10 the BBC ran a programme on anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. Prior to that, on June 20 there was a long debate in the House of Lords in which Westminster Synagogue President, Lord (Howard) Leigh, was among the notable speakers. All who spoke congratulated Lady Berridge on securing the debate: ‘That this House takes note of the incidence of anti-Semitism worldwide’.

Howard began by saying that he was ‘somewhat involved in the Jewish community and was constantly deeply moved by, and in awe of, those people from outside that community who clearly care about and are prepared to fight anti-Semitism, as opposed to others who just walk away.’

He continued: ‘What is anti-Semitism? When I was fifteen, Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen, a former Lord Mayor of London, told me that it was disgusting Jews more than was strictly necessary. I speak as president of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. The Anti Defamation League interviewed 53,000 people in ninety-six languages in 100 countries. Sadly, it found anti-Semitic attitudes in around a quarter to a third of all global citizens, even though twenty-seven percent of people had never met a Jewish person.

Somewhat reassuringly, it found that ninety-nine percent of people in the UK had heard about the Holocaust, although this dropped to under ten percent in certain other countries. Perhaps not surprisingly, seventy percent of people in the Middle East had heard about the Holocaust but chose to dismiss it as a myth, or as having been greatly exaggerated. It is, of course, not surprising that we see such anti-Semitism in the Middle East. Most Arab countries expelled their Jewish populations without notice or compensation some sixty years ago. It is estimated that some 800,000 people were simply expelled from the countries in which they had lived - not for decades but for millennia - simply because they were Jewish.

All the surveys consistently show that the UK is one of the world leaders in its abhorrence of anti-Semitism because citizens in the UK are tolerant, open, and welcoming, so how has this been completely reversed by some political leaders? Has left-wing anti-Semitism risen because antagonism to Israel has made it a rallying cause? I am aware that I speak in the presence of the noble Lord, Lord Sacks, but do not forget that my ancestors left the slavery of Egypt - seeking to live in peace in Israel - well before they became Jews. Tragically, the slur that Zionism is racism has taken hold.

I have not the time to examine the depressing path down which otherwise good people were led by lies and misinformation about Israel and who, like Mr Abdullah Patel recently, may have allowed this misplaced hatred of Israel to morph into anti-Semitism. But no one can deny that it exists, and it is left to the bravery of speakers such as those in today’s debate to try to change this flow. Even more parochially to this House, I am sorry to say that many members of the Jewish community were hugely disappointed in the Chakrabarti report, which missed a golden opportunity when it could so easily have changed the attitudes and direction of the Labour Party. The worldwide fight against anti-Semitism is a very noble one, but for us it must start in this country. Let us hope that it is reinforced by this debate today.’

Other Jewish speakers included Lord Finkelstein who said ‘I declare my interests as a member of Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, a columnist on the JC and a consumer of the products of B&K deli in Hatch End. I thank many noble Lords for wonderful speeches: the noble Baroness, Lady Berridge, the super-magnificent noble Lord, Lord Pickles -- that is his official title - the noble Lord, Lord Harris, for his superb speech and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Chester. On one occasion, I ran into the Peers’ Writing Room, smashed my leg on the table and, I am rather ashamed to say, exclaimed, ‘Jesus!’ very loudly. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Chester looked up and said, ‘Can I help you?’ Today, he did exactly that.

Lord Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi said: ‘Within living memory of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism has returned, exactly as it did in the nineteenth century, just when people had begun to feel that they had finally vanquished the hatreds of the past.

Today, there is hardly a country in the world, certainly not a single one in Europe, where Jews feel safe. It is hard to emphasise how serious that is, not just for Jews but for our shared humanity, and not just for what it represents now, but for the danger that it signals for the future. A society, or for that matter a political party, that tolerates anti-Semitism - that tolerates any hate - has forfeited all moral credibility. You cannot build a future on the malign myths of the past. You cannot sustain freedom on the basis of hostility and hate.’

Concluding the debate, Lady Berridge thanked the Lords for their contributions and went on to say ‘There are of course too many speakers to mention everyone individually, but I am sure that all your Lordships wish the special envoys all the best for their meeting on Monday. I hope that theirs will be a meeting of the super-magnificents, as my noble friend Lord Polak described them. I draw attention briefly to my noble friend Lady Warsi’s comment that we should speak on behalf of others; many people in today’s debate have exhibited that quality. I was very inspired by the comment of the noble Lord, Lord Sacks, that freedom cannot be built on the basis of hostility and hate.

The theme throughout has been, that if our citizens, or European citizens, are listening to this debate and have problems, their problems may be the fault of their Government or of the EU; their problems, perish the thought, may even be their own fault. But what they are not is the fault of the Jews.’

The motion was carried.
Solomon J. Solomon was a founding member of the New English Art Club and a respected member of the Royal Academy. Solomon studied at various art schools; first at Heatherley School of Fine Art, then the Royal Academy Schools, the Munich Academy, and the École des Beaux-Arts. Solomon also studied Hebrew under Rev. S. Singer (of Prayer Book fame). He exhibited his first works when he was only twenty-one, and showed at the Royal Academy, the New Gallery, and the Society of British Artists. In 1896, he became an associate of the Royal Academy, with full membership following in 1906, one of the few Jewish painters to do so. He joined, and became president of, the Royal Society of British Artists in 1919. In 1921 ‘Col. S.J. Solomon, RA, PRBA’ was listed as one of the early members of the newly-formed Society of Graphic Art.

Solomon’s painting was greatly influenced by his teacher at the École des Beaux-Arts, Alexandre Cabanel, but Frederic Leighton and Lawrence Alma-Tadema also made a great impression on him. Solomon painted mainly portraits to earn a living, but also painted dramatic, theatrical scenes from mythology and the Bible on large canvasses. These scenes include some of his more popular paintings. In 1897 he painted a mural for the Royal Exchange, London - Charles I demanding the Five Members at the Guildhall, 1641–42.

One of Solomon’s most popular works was Samson (1887), depicting a scene from the biblical story of Samson and Delilah. This painting is one of few Solomon paintings on regular display, at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. Some other Solomon paintings that have received significant attention include Ajax and Cassandra (1886), and The Birth of Love (1896). An innovative portrait artist, he painted Mrs Patrick Campbell as ‘Paula Tanqueray’ (1894), her role in Arthur Wing Pinero’s The Second Mrs Tanqueray, and went on to paint a number of portraits of well-known people, including the architect Sir Aston Webb, and later in life, King George V, Queen Mary, and the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII). Solomon was also in demand as a book illustrator, particularly adventure books. In 1914, he wrote The Practice of Oil Painting and Drawing.

The Solomon family

There was another side to this man’s prodigious talent. He made an important contribution to the development of camouflage in the First World War, working in particular on tree observation posts and arguing tirelessly for camouflage netting. Having originally signed-up at the start of the war as a private in The Artists Rifles, a home defence corps, he promoted his ideas on camouflage, initially in the press and then directly to senior army officers. In December 1915, General Herbert Plumer arranged for Solomon to visit the front lines and investigate techniques in use by the French. His ideas were accepted, and he was asked to set up a team to start the production of camouflage materials in France. On 31 December 1915, General Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in France, instructed that Solomon be given the temporary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel to enable him to carry out his new duties.

The new unit’s first task was the design of armoured observation posts disguised as trees, following the pioneering work of the French Section de Camouflage led by Lucien-Victor Guirand de Scévola. The first British tree observation post was put up on 22 March 1916. Solomon was effective at the artistic and technical tasks of designing trees and nets, but not as a commander. He was replaced in March 1916, instead becoming a technical advisor, a role that suited him better. In May 1916, he was sent to England to help to develop tank camouflage. Solomon doubted that tanks could be effectively camouflaged since they cast a large shadow. Instead, he argued for the use of camouflage netting, with which he gradually became obsessed, claiming that the Germans were hiding huge armies under immense nets. Camouflage netting was at first considered unimportant by the army; it was not manufactured in large quantities until 1917. Eventually, in 1920, he published a book, Strategic Camouflage, arguing this case, to critical derision in England but with some support from German newspapers. In December 1916, Solomon established a camouflage school in Hyde Park, which was eventually taken over by the army.

Solomon’s parents were Joseph, who was born in London, and Helena, who was born in Bohemia. In 1897 Solomon married Hyman Montagu’s daughter, Ella, who was just twenty-one. They lived in Hyde Park Gate, just down the road from Kent House and they had three children; Mary who married Ronald Rubinstein, Iris, who married Ewan Montagu (a cousin?) and a son Dorian. In 1927, Solomon died, at the young age of sixty-six, in Birchington, Kent and is buried in Willesden Cemetery. His widow, Ella, died in 1957.

Claire Connick
My children’s first concert experience began with the Robert Mayer Concerts. These were full-blown orchestral concerts held in the Royal Festival Hall and were a total delight for children and their accompanying adults. Generations of English youngsters became acquainted with classical music through the concerts. Queen Elizabeth - then Princess Elizabeth - went to her first Robert Mayer concert at the age of six and Prince Charles attended his first at the age of four with his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. However, after twenty minutes, his fidgeting became so conspicuous that the Queen Mother had to take him home!

Sir Robert and his first wife, the former Dorothy Moulton, started these concerts in 1923. The first of what came to be called the Robert Mayer Children’s Concerts was held in Central Hall, Westminster, with ‘no adult admitted except in charge of children’, as the programme put it. The idea for the concerts grew out of a visit which the Mayers paid to New York in 1919. While there, he had what he later described as ‘the experience that changed my life’, when he and his wife attended one of a series of Saturday-morning children’s concerts conducted by Walter Damrosch. Sir Robert and his wife returned to England determined to make the same sort of thing available in this country.

The Mayers asked Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Malcolm Sargent to conduct these concerts and to explain each piece in advance. Each child was charged a shilling admission because, as Sir Robert explained in an interview years later, ‘they wouldn’t appreciate it otherwise.’

Over the next sixty years, the music offered at the concerts was of a very high standard and educational at the same time - Beethoven’s *Rondino in E-Flat*, to show how the woodwinds work, for example, and Mozart’s *Serenade*, to demonstrate the strings. ‘You give children good music, well performed, and explain it, and they can’t help but like it’, Sir Robert said.

Robert Mayer was born in Mannheim, Germany, his father was a brewer. The very young Robert possessed an amazing musical talent. At the age of eight, after two years of study under Felix Weingartner at the Mannheim Konservatorium, he gave his first public piano recital. Three years later he was introduced as a rising young artist to Johannes Brahms. Music was to remain one of the great loves of his life. Nonetheless, his parents insisted he go into business and in 1896, at the age of seventeen, he was sent to London to join the prominent banking firm of the Seligman family. He became a British citizen in 1902 and joined the British army in the First World War. Ultimately, he became a very prosperous merchant of industrial metals, which enabled his philanthropic works.

In 1932, Mayer was one of the founders of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and he also helped found the London Schools Symphony Orchestra in 1951. Additionally, he was involved, with Egon Wellesz, in the founding of the International Society of Contemporary Music. He was created a Knight Bachelor in 1939, and a Companion of Honour (CH) in 1973. He was made a KCVO by the Queen in 1979. Sir Robert had a son, Adrian - a professor of anthropology at the University of London - a daughter Pauline Samuelson, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. His wife, Dorothy, died in 1974.

I remember seeing him regularly in the stalls at the Royal Opera House even when he was very old. I was also lucky enough to be at his 100th birthday celebration in 1979 - a gala concert at the Royal Festival Hall which was attended by Queen Elizabeth II. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Bernard Keeffe played music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Benjamin Britten, Malcolm Arnold and Jean Sibelius - the most requested works as the result of a poll. After the concert Sir Robert made a speech of thanks from the Royal Box, in a clear voice, without any notes, standing to deliver it.

In 1980, he married Jacqueline Noble. Rumours circulating at the time centred on the fact that she would not allow his family to see him. He died at his London home at the age of 105. Although Chaim Weizmann referred to him as ‘an assimilated Jew’, Mayer stated ‘I am a man, not a Jew or a non-Jew.’

Claire Connick
The Dorking Refugee Committee

One of the last and youngest children to arrive in England on the Kindertransport in 1939 was Erich (later Sir Erich) Reich, aged four. The tiny boy, all alone, was taken to London, to the refugee committee at Bloomsbury House. The committee was considering what to do with him, when in walked the distinguished composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams. He was the Chairman of the Dorking Refugee Committee and agreed to take the little German boy to Dorking to the home for refugees at Burchett House.

Sir Erich Reich

Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams, through his mother’s family, was descended from two distinguished families, the Wedgwoods and the Darwins, notable in the domains of craft, manufacturing, and science; the composer’s maternal grandparents were Josiah Wedgwood, grandson of the potter, and Caroline Darwin, sister of Charles Darwin. From these eminent philanthropists he inherited a feeling for his fellow man which led to his working on behalf of German musician refugees, assisting many to safety, including the distinguished composer Robert Müller-Hartmann and his family. This seems to have led in 1939 to his music being banned by the Nazi regime, his opposition to which he had made quite plain when accepting - after some soul-searching - the Hamburg prize two years earlier. He attempted fruitlessly to give the prize money to the Quaker Relief Agency for refugees.

Vaughan Williams’ ancestor, Francis Wedgwood, had been interested in the Jewish people, stemming perhaps from his service in the First World War, when as naval commander in the Dardanelles Campaign, he encountered the Zion Mule Corps, from which time he became an active Zionist. Ralph Vaughan Williams eventually directed the work of the Home Office Committee for the Release of Interned Alien Musicians. He was well aware of the price he would pay for such activities if the Nazis succeeded in conquering Britain. He was actually supplied by the British government with pills of a quick acting poison to be taken if the Germans crossed the channel. Vaughan Williams was also on the committee that helped Myra Hess inaugurate the National Gallery lunchtime concerts.

In 1938 the Duke of Newcastle offered Burchett House on the outskirts of Dorking as a hostal, rent-free, for the use of refugees coming from Europe. Here they received financial assistance, medical care and help with finding work and somewhere to live. When they arrived in the Surrey town they were greeted by members of the Dorking Women’s Voluntary Service, given a medical examination and a paper bag with rations for two days: condensed milk, tinned beef, biscuits and chocolate. The Dorking Congregational Church also helped to find homes for Londoners whose homes had been destroyed. Burchett House was specially designated for child refugees from Nazi Germany. Almost all were Jewish but one family, the Kreibichs from Sudeteland, was not and it was this family which agreed to foster little Erich Reich. He said later, ‘The Kreibichs really loved me and looked after me. At the age of five I felt safe with them. They were practising Christians. My first memories were of going to church and Sunday school. They didn’t tell me I was Jewish, nor that I was adopted.’ When Erich was about ten or eleven, a young man in Dorking asked him where the Kreibichs lived. Erich recalled, ‘My foster mother called me. It was my brother Jacques. He didn’t recognise me and I didn’t recognise him . . . I later discovered that he had tried to get me out of there through the social workers in Dorking, who said that I was very happy where I was. Why should I be taken to a Jewish orphanage? They were right.’ But in spite of his Christian surroundings at Dorking, Erich left a few years later to go to Hasmonean School in London, before joining relatives in Israel. He eventually went into the travel trade in England and was knighted for services to tourism.

Another distinguished member of the Dorking Committee was the writer E.M. Forster. He knew the village of Abinger (a few miles from Dorking) well, having stayed there in childhood with an aunt, though he was unsympathetic to the class distinctions of village life and at odds with the local gentry whom he felt had too much power. But he was friendly with many of the local artistic community and in 1934 he wrote the Abinger Pageant, with Ralph Vaughan Williams providing the music. Although an important member of the Bloomsbury Group, whose attitude to Jews was often questionable, Forster hated anti-Semitism. In an essay of 1939 - Jew Consciousness - he wrote that anti-Semitism was the worst and most shocking evil of all. ‘It was the one no-one had foreseen at the end of the First World War.’

Some 3,000 non-Jewish refugee children from South London arrived at Dorking Station in 1939. Local schools struggled to absorb the influx. Some worked double shifts, others took lessons outside. The children were inspected. Some from poorer areas were infested with lice: ‘disgusting – you have my sympathy’ wrote the chairman of South Holmwood School to the Head. But the evacuees also had complaints: one girl was billeted with a woman of eighty, others had to sleep on the floor. Mothers with young children were often required to leave host houses in the morning, roaming the streets until they were allowed to return at night. The
The regime was consecrated by Sir Basil Henriques, established in Hayes End, Middlesex and motor engineering and tailoring. It was the School included cabinet forty boys and the industrial training at Industrial Schools. It accommodated up to the existing system of Reformatories and Children and Young Persons Act to replace institutions introduced by the 1933 trade and to prevent them from re
House School was to equip the lads with a fourteen to eighteen, the purpose of Park
Founded in 1923 as an approved school for delinquent Jewish boys from the ages of fourteen to eighteen, the purpose of Park House School was to equip the lads with a trade and to prevent them from reoffending. Later, it became one of the new institutions introduced by the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act to replace the existing system of Reformatories and Industrial Schools. It accommodated up to forty boys and the industrial training at the School included cabinet-making, motor engineering and tailoring. It was established in Hayes End, Middlesex and was consecrated by Sir Basil Henriquez, who was one of the Managers. It was managed by a board, whose first Chairman was Sir Meyer Spielman, a school inspector and a member of a committee dealing with child welfare and the after-care of children. He was knighted in 1928.
In May 1950, the School moved to a former mansion house at Peper Harrow, near Godalming, and continued to be known as Park House School. The mansion was transformed. A new sick bay was added and the old conservatory was converted to a gymnasium. The school was now able to accommodate a greater number of pupils. From its commencement there, and until 1955, it had a Jewish Headmaster, Albert Gould, whose wife, Martha, was the Matron. Albert served as President of the Association of Head Teachers of Approved Schools.
He was also a member of the Board of Deputies, and sat on the council of the United Synagogue. In 1957, on behalf of the British Council for Aid to Refugees, he was made Official-in-Charge of a camp for Hungarian Refugees at Tidworth, in Wiltshire.
The regime was progressive and enlightened
The regime at Peper Harrow was progressive and enlightened and, when the school’s intake dropped below the agreed number, the Home Office requested that some non-Jews be accepted as a temporary measure. This arrangement became permanent and after World War II, the average number of Jewish boys steadily declined to single figures. For instance, in 1965 there were only eight Jewish boys out of 206 pupils.
When the Goulds retired, despite the fact that non-Jews now comprised the majority of pupils, Jews remained predominant on the board, which was chaired by Godfrey Isaacs, who died in 1980. There was still one Jewish staff member, Mr. Popeck. Mr Popeck taught tailoring and also led the Jewish boys in religious services in the School synagogue which had once been a private chapel.

Dorking Nursery School in Junction Road was set up by the Women’s Voluntary Service in early October 1939 to provide a place for evacuee children to go during the day when many pre-school age children, who were accompanied by their mothers, were required to leave.

Many of the Jewish refugee families sheltered in Dorking during the war stayed on there when hostilities ceased. The Dorking Museum holds many records of their life there, and the town is proud today to continue its work for refugees from all over the oppressed world.

Park House School

The house itself has an interesting history. One owner, Sir Bernard Brocas, was beheaded on Tower Hill in January 1400 for plotting against King Henry IV. The estates were forfeited to the Crown but later restored to Sir Bernard’s son and remained in the Brocas family for a further 170 years.
Passing through the hands of Ralph Peckshall, Master of the Buckhounds to Edward IV, thence to his son and various other owners, the estate came into the possession of John, Earl of Clare, who had to have a special Act of Parliament passed to authorise its sale to Philip Frowde, postmaster-general in the reign of Queen Anne. From him it was bought, in 1713, by Brodrick - afterwards created Viscount Midleton and Speaker of the Irish House of Commons.
The house was completely rebuilt by the third Viscount, though the work was not completed until after his death in 1765.
The estate remained in the Brodrick family in unbroken succession to the ninth Viscount Midleton, who was responsible for additions to the house in 1930. A large part of the planning for the Dieppe raid and the Normandy invasion took place here. After the Second World War, it was the headquarters of the Canadian Ordnance Corps.
On the death of the ninth Viscount Midleton, by then raised to the title of Earl, the house was sold by his son to the managers of Park House School. However, the farm and largest part of the lands were sold to a Mr Fuller.
In 1998 the house was again sold - this time to a developer - and was subsequently split into nine flats.
When we bought Kent House in 1960 it was obvious that the congregation would need a resident caretaker. This would not be an easy job; the house was large and in poor condition. The candidate would have to live in it alone, and it was not suitable for a family man. In fact it was not at that time suitable for any resident. We advertised for a single man, one who could act as handyman, cleaner, receptionist, telephonist, secretary, and shammas. We found the answer to our prayers - Mr. Cecil Bradley.

Mr. Bradley - never Cecil - had previously worked at Norwood. Not a Jew, he was a confirmed bachelor, a church-going Christian and a man of integrity, with a sense of humour, a love of Jews and Jewish life and able to turn his hand to anything. He and Rabbi Reinhart became close friends. They respected each other’s calling and their work at the Synagogue dovetailed like perfectly fitting pieces of fine mahogany. They became friends at once.

The first thing was to make a good home within the Synagogue premises for Mr. Bradley, where he could be part of the congregation and yet have his own domestic arrangements. It was not long before the area at the far end of the ground floor, beside the kitchen, was turned into a comfortable furnished flat. Few were admitted to Mr. Bradley’s private sanctum, and the congregation respected his solitary though contented existence.

It was not long before Mr. Bradley became an essential part of Synagogue life. He was always immaculately dressed even when wearing his baize apron, as efficient when scrubbing the marble floor as when greeting congregants on a Saturday morning. He knew every member by name, though not all who visited Kent House met his high standards of behaviour. When asked, on occasion, how an event had been, he was wont to say that some of the visitors ‘were not our sort of people’.

He took great pride in his Kent House kingdom; the floors shone, the silver sparkled, the table linen was always spotless. If one could liken him to any professional, it might be that he played the part of ‘a gentleman’s gentleman’. No job was too much for him. He would undertake dangerous climbing of ladders to change light bulbs or to clean windows, much to the concern of the congregants. On one occasion, over the age of seventy, he was found sixty feet up in a large tree in the front garden, pruning it.

Mr. Bradley kept ‘his’ kitchen like that of Downton Abbey. There were huge wooden plate racks over the enormous porcelain sinks. The cupboards were all lined with green baize and above the door there was one of those boxes with little bells to summon staff to various quarters of this former stately home. And then there was the safe! Mr. Bradley was very strong, in spite of his small stature. He was the only one who could open and close those extremely heavy doors. All the synagogue’s beautiful silver was kept in the safe, always shut except when the contents were needed. No biscuits or lemonade in the safe in those days!

Mr. Bradley’s private life was something of a mystery. He seldom had visitors to his flat, and he revealed little of what he did outside of ‘office hours’. He was once heard singing Some day my prince will come, and he was believed at one time to have a cat - though it never had the run of the house. He was closely associated with St. Paul’s Cathedral and seemed perfectly at ease sharing his affections between Cathedral and Synagogue.

Cecil Bradley served Westminster Synagogue for nearly thirty years before retiring to Eastbourne. He died on 23rd April 1992, the birthday of William Shakespeare and St. George’s Day. He would have found that appropriate.
OVID AND TIME

Time that was ahead is now behind - Ovid

Time that was ahead is now behind... me
I, the human being aware that time is ahead and behind
I, for whom Time progresses in relation to my life
I, unaware of progressing as progressing with Time
I, who exist in Time and through whom Time exists
I, who divide Time into Past, Present, Future
Divisions to measure my progress from birth to death
Time and Life locked in a cycle of destructions and renewals

And I think about man through Time
Man who is not just another aspect of nature
Man through whom life acquires a spiritual dimension
Man who evolves on several conscious levels
Man who transforms sounds into words
Meaningful words encapsulating life
Life communicated through sounds/words
Sounds, words, images committed to man’s memory
Transcends, outlives, immortalises

Colette Littman
The Burning of Books

One of the earliest known incidents of the destruction of books by fire was that of the library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh in 612 BCE (see Westminster Quarterly, January 2019). In the Hebrew Bible the book of Jeremiah tells the story of the burning of the scroll written by the scribe Baruch ben Neriah at the dictation of the prophet, by king Jehoiakim in the seventh century BCE. Visitors to the exhibition of the Terracotta Army, the collection of terracotta sculptures depicting the armies of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China, marvelled at this form of funerary art buried with the Emperor in 210–209 BCE with the purpose of protecting him in his afterlife. But they may not have known that the Emperor is also renowned for being the destroyer, by burning, of a magnificent library of books. He ordained that the scholars who wrote the books should also lose their lives. His purpose, it is believed, was to prevent historical references to his predecessors who may have been more illustrious than himself. Qin Shi Huang was only an early example of many state-inspired destructions of libraries from ancient times to the present day.

Jewish writings have been the subject of book burning throughout the ages. Josephus tells the story of a Roman soldier seizing a Torah Scroll and, ‘with abusive and mocking language’, burning it in public. This incident almost brought on a general Jewish revolt against Roman rule, such as broke out two decades later. However, the Roman Procurator, Cumanus, appeased the Jewish populace by beheading the culprit.

In 168 BCE, the Seleucid monarch Antioch IV, ordered Jewish 'Books of the Law' found in Jerusalem to be 'rent in pieces' and burned - part of the series of persecutions which precipitated the revolt of the Maccabees.

Under the Emperor Hadrian, the teaching of Judaism was forbidden, as, in the wake of the Bar Kochba Rebellion, the Roman authorities regarded such teaching as seditious and tending towards revolt. Haninah ben Teradion, one of the Ten Jewish Martyrs executed for having defied that ban, is reported to have been burned at the stake, together with the forbidden Torah Scroll from which he had been teaching. According to Jewish tradition, when the flame started to burn himself and the Scroll he still managed to say to his pupils, ‘I see the Scrolls burning but the letters fly up in the air’ – a saying considered to prove the superiority of ideas over brute force.

This symbolic censorship of written works to eliminate ideas, unacceptable to a political or religious power, is therefore a very ancient system of censorship, existing long before the invention of printing, when ‘books’ were scrolls or tablets and multiple copies had to be written by hand. Destruction by burning carries with it the notion of purification, an attempt to banish evil by fire in order to replace it with another unsullied system of thought. The same search for redemption was the punishment meted out to those whose way of life conflicted with the state or the church in command at the time, such as the battles between Catholics and Protestants, or the Spanish Inquisition.

Some religions, such as Zoroastrianism, claim fire to be a part of their belief. As time went on the same treatment was handed out to other precious collections of books in many parts of the world, such as the burning of the Library of Alexandria in about 49 CE, one of the greatest collections of written material ever assembled; during the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258, the House of Wisdom was destroyed along with all other libraries in Baghdad. It was said that the waters of the Tigris ran black for six months with ink from the enormous quantities of books flung into the river.

Another interesting early account of Jewish books being burned was the story of Rabbi Nachmanides, who in 1263 held a disputation with the Dominican monk Pablo Christiani who had himself converted from Judaism. It was held before the King, James I of Aragon, who declared he had never heard ‘an unjust cause so nobly defended’ and awarded the Rabbi a prize. However, the Dominicans claimed the victory, and Nachmanides felt compelled to publish the controversy. The Dominicans asserted that this account was a blasphemy against Christianity. Nachmanides admitted that he had stated many things against Christianity, but he had written nothing which he had not used in his disputation in the presence of the King, who had granted him freedom of speech. The justice of his defence was recognized by the King and the commission, but to satisfy the Dominicans Nachmanides was exiled and his pamphlet was condemned to be burned.

The Spanish Inquisition too, better known perhaps for the burning of Jews, needed to eradicate the writings which tended towards heresy. In 1490 a number of Hebrew Bibles and other Jewish books were burned. In about 1500 some 5,000 Arabic manuscripts, including a school library, were consumed by flames in a public square in Granada, on the orders of Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros, Archbishop of Toledo, excepting those on medicine, which are conserved in the library of El Escorial.

In England, in the sixteenth century, the nation was embroiled in the newly established Protestant religion. Even before Henry VIII’s divorce provoked the
break with Rome, a law passed by the English Parliament under King Henry IV in 1401 - *De Heretico Comburendo* - was intended to stamp out heresy and in particular the Lollard movement, followers of John Wycliffe. The law stated that ‘...divers false and perverse people of a certain new sect ... make and write books, [and] do wickedly instruct and inform people’. The law’s purpose was to utterly destroy all ‘preachings, doctrines, and opinions of this wicked sect. Therefore, all persons in possession of books or writings of such wicked doctrine and opinions’ were ordered to deliver them to the diocesan authorities, within forty days of the law being enacted, to let them be destroyed. Those failing to give up their heretical books would face the prospect of being arrested and having their bodies as well as their books burned.

The first public burning of books in this country is believed to be the destruction of Martin Luther’s writings. The London merchant Thomas Sommers was caught with some banned books in 1513 when it was illegal to own an English translation of the Gospels and he was made to take part in their destruction. A few years later Bishop Tunstall of London ordered the burning of William Tyndale’s English translation of the New Testament; the Bishop claimed that Tyndale's version was filled with lies and errors. The dissolution of the monasteries was also responsible for the destruction of some of the magnificent libraries they contained.

The poet John Milton, whose books were publicly burned in England and France, explained why authorities down the centuries have seen danger in certain books: ‘Books are not absolutely dead things,’ he wrote in his attack on censorship, *Areopagitica*, in 1644, ‘but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are.’ Anyone who kills a man, Milton said, kills ‘a reasonable creature, God’s image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself.

The Jews themselves were not entirely innocent of the practice of burning books, despite their claim to be The People of the Book. The 1624 book *An Examination of the Traditions of the Pharisees*, written by the dissident Jewish intellectual Uriel da Costa, was burned in public by joint action of the Amsterdam Jewish Community and the city’s Protestant-dominated City Council. The book, which questioned the fundamental idea of the immortality of the soul, was considered heretical by the Jewish community, which excommunicated him, and he was arrested by the Dutch authorities as a public enemy to religion.

**A public burning of books in Berlin, in front of the University on May 10, 1933**

However, it is perhaps the burning of books by the Nazi regime that is most memorable in view of the treatment of the Jews that followed. On April 8, 1933, the Main Office for Press and Propaganda of the German Student Union proclaimed a nationwide ‘Action against the Un-German Spirit’, which was to climax in a literary purge or cleansing by fire. Among the authors whose works were burned included Einstein, Herman Hesse, Karl Marx, Heine, Kafka, and even the Kaiser. On May 10, 1933, the students burned more than 25,000 volumes of ‘un-German books’ in the square at the State Opera, Berlin; it was treated as a joyous occasion, accompanied by music and dancing, and some 40,000 people heard Joseph Goebbels deliver a fiery address, ‘No, to decadence and moral corruption. Yes, to decency and morality in family and state!’ he said. A long list of the types of books destined for the flames was issued. Among them were the following types of literature, as described by the Nazis: the works of traitors, emigrants and authors from foreign countries who believe they can attack and denigrate the new Germany; the literature of Marxism, Communism and Bolshevism; literature with liberal, democratic tendencies and attitudes; all historical writings whose purpose is to denigrate the origin, the spirit and the culture of the German Volk; books that advocate art which is decadent; writings on sexuality and sexual education; literature by Jewish authors, regardless of the field; popular entertainment literature that depicts life and life’s goals in a superficial, unrealistic and sickly sweet manner, based on a bourgeois or upper class view of life; pornography and explicit literature by Jewish authors; all books degrading German purity. This was a comprehensive assessment of much of the literature written before the Nazis came to power.

The blind writer Helen Keller published an *Open Letter to German Students*: ‘You may burn my books and the books of the best minds in Europe, but the ideas those books contain have passed through millions of channels and will go on.’ This vast destruction of books has come to represent an important feature of the Holocaust. Few can have imagined in the 1930s that Germany’s book burning would precede the wholesale slaughter of human life.

The practice of the burning of books by those who disagree with their content goes on to this day. In 1984 orthodox Jews in Jerusalem burned copies of the New Testament; Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* was ceremonially burned in Bolton and Bradford in 1988; even Harry Potter books have been burned in the US on various occasions since their first publication; and in Rome they burned *The Da Vinci Code*. It is a matter of debate as to whether, when books appear only in digital form, the eradication of written works will end. One thing is certain: no destruction of books, in whatever form they may appear, will bring to an end man’s infinite capacity for expressing his ideas.

**Philippa Bernard**
Philippa Bernard’s book *Out of the Midst of the Fire* - the story of the Czech Scrolls – is being reprinted. It will in fact be a new edition as it now some fifteen years since the book was first published and the Scrolls Trust says that much has happened in that time. An entirely new database has enabled the Trust to maintain contact with the present guardians of the individual Scrolls, and to receive news of local events concerning them from all around the World. Modern research in the Czech Republic and from America has shed fresh light on the subject and this second edition contains a new foreword and additional photographs.

At this year’s Shavuot Supper the contribution of the younger members of the congregation was noticeable and greatly appreciated. They happily helped with the serving (and clearing away!) and generally added to the success of the evening. Judging from their attendance on Friday evenings as well as Saturday Services, we are delighted to sense that the future of Westminster Synagogue is safe.

On 18th August the BBC ran two stories, one of which was on the Jews of Majorca - which had appeared in our July issue (we got there first!) the other was a fascinating note about Prague. This concerned Leo Pavlat, ‘the owlish bearded director’ of the Prague Jewish Museum, who has visited Westminster Synagogue. Pavlat told the BBC reporter how he found a pile of cobblestones ‘something about them caught his eye and he bent down for a closer look. They were fragments of Jewish tombstones that had been cut into perfect cubes of granite’. One bore fragments of a date, 1895. Another bore three letters of the Hebrew alphabet - *He, Vav, Bet,* - the gold paint which lined the chiselled inscriptions blinking in the winter sun. Pavlat was asked what he wanted the City to do. ‘The gravestones can never be put back together’, he said. He’d like the City to put up a small plaque, that would remind people of the once-vibrant Jewish life here.

In case anyone thinks that the preparation of a new Prayer Book is always a serious business we quote some extracts from correspondence on the subject:-

**Valery:** In the preparation of the new *Machzor* for Yom Kippur, those of us who worked on it learned a tremendous amount. For example, would the use of ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ re-open an old can of worms? Among many conundrums is a puzzle of the English language. What is the defining distinction between ‘thou dost’ and ‘thou dost’? *For any pedants, both ‘conundrums’ and ‘conundra’ are correct plurals.

**Philippa:** I don’t think Jews can open cans of worms – they are certainly not kosher, however Progressive we are. Regarding the pedantry qualification for being on the committee, is anyone on the committee under the age of 35? If not, why not? Where are our future pedants?

**Chris:** Can anyone on the committee not be a pedant? I thought that was a basic requirement of the job specification.

**Valery:** As Philippa suggests, we need to start recruiting the pedants of the future! Lunch & learn may be the place to start.
We welcome **Yael Roberts** - our new Director of Community Education

Yael has a hugely impressive educational background and has shown great commitment in her career both to Jewish Education and to driving community engagement across all age groups. She joins us from the Movement for Reform Judaism where she was the Young Adults Community Organiser (the role that Rabbi Benji held prior to joining us) and has previously been the Lead Educator and Hebrew Co-ordinator at the North Western Reform Synagogue. Yael has a degree in Judaic Studies from Yeshiva University and has studied at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. She also has an MA from the University of the Arts, London.

Here is Yael’s first message.

I am very excited to join the team at Westminster Synagogue as Director of Community and Education. I’m looking forward to working with and meeting all of you in the coming months. I offer a few reflections for this time of year, connected to the High Holidays period.

Judaism is a religion focused on the derech, or path, whatever denomination you affiliate with. Growing up Orthodox in America, we talked often about those who left Orthodoxy as ‘off the derech’ (off the path) of strictly following halachah (Jewish law).

As Progressive Jews, the path we are on might be a path towards improving ourselves, our community, and the world. Yet at this time of year, we conduct this course of improvement by following the path of teshuvah. The word teshuvah, often translated as repentance, actually means ‘return’. Paradoxically, we achieve this progression by moving backwards, by returning to something.

During the Torah service, we evoke this path, when we sing the words of etz chaim hi - It is a tree of life. We talk about how the Torah - our books of Jewish wisdom - are paths of pleasantness.

As Tractate Ta’anit points out, ways - habits - are actually improved not through the surface work of path-walking, but through the deep work of reaching backwards to the root of who we are, and asking the difficult questions. The Maggid of Mezritch, an eighteenth century Hasidic Rabbi, even writes about looking closely at every thought we have and asking where it is coming from, or as he calls it ‘returning it to its root’.

What is really driving us, our thoughts, our habitual modes of being?

The idea of returning to a root takes us back to the etz chaim prayer - it is a tree of life - and its ways are ways of pleasantness. But what lies at the root of the tree, the root of our Jewish practice and lives? What brings us back again and again, to this building and to this community?

The word derech is composed of three letters - dalet, resh, and chaf. When we pronounce this word (try it now), we can feel the dalet at the tip of the tongue, the resh at the back of the teeth, and the chaf at the back of the throat. Derech, while being forward looking, is also a backwards movement - from the outside in. It is a progression back in time, towards our ancestral roots, and a movement from the external world into our internal selves.

At the end of the Torah portion Beshalach, we learn that God takes the Israelites the longer way, instead of the shorter one. Some read this as a practical and historical decision to avoid conflict with the Philistines. Others see it from a spiritual perspective. The Jewish people do not take shortcuts. They do not go directly to the land of Israel, to redemption. They do not go for the easy fix. Instead, the path is circuitous. Progress takes time. Progress sometimes moves backwards.

When we put ourselves on this path, we are putting ourselves on a course, not towards forward motion, per se, but towards change, that both evokes our tradition and builds to a brighter future.

In Reboot: Leadership and the Art of Growing Up, Jerry Colonna describes purchasing a pair of shoes with his daughter. When they are at the car park on the way home, she realises that she actually wanted a different pair. And he takes her back to get that other pair. They return the first pair.

This story struck me, because as a child, my parents didn’t allow us to ‘return the shoes’. We were asked to continue onwards without regretting previous decisions, without returning to the key moments where more than just a pair of shoes were at stake. ‘Returning’ is the art of not just returning a purchase, or returning to a previous decision in reflection, but the ability to take back what we’ve done wrong, to re-credit our accounts with new habits, to seek out alternative models and makes of being, to take our heaviest baggage back to where we found it, and own up to it.

Which leaves me with a few questions, which I invite you to reflect on as well for this season of teshuva:

In what ways am I progressing? In what ways am I moving backwards?

What do I return to? What do I not return to?

When do I take shortcuts, when actually, the long and challenging path is what’s needed?

I am looking forward to continuing to ask questions together and to learning from each one of you - students, teachers, friends. I hope that the coming months of working together will bring change and growth, built on deep tradition and rooted in our truest selves.
Planning Your Diary

Kol Nidre
Tuesday 8th October

Yom Kippur
Wednesday 9th October

Erev Succot
Sunday 13th October

Succot
Monday 14th October

Erev Simchat Torah
Wednesday 20th October

Simchat Torah
Thursday 21st October

Hanukkah first night
Sunday 22nd December

Hanukkah last night
Sunday 29th December

Contacting the Synagogue

RABBI
Rabbi Benji Stanley
rabbibenji@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7052 9712

CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE
Jeffrey Ohrenstein
chairman@westminstersynagogue.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Gary Sakol
gary@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7052 9713

EDUCATION
Yael Roberts
yael@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7052 9714

EVENTS & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Jon Zecharia
jon@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7052 9711

KIDDUSHIM
Hilary Ashleigh
hilary@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7052 9717

MITZVOT
Hilary Ashleigh
mitzvot@westminstersynagogue.org

MEMBERSHIP
Darcy Goldstein
membership@westminstersynagogue.org

LIFECYCLE ENQUIRIES
Ben Shaw - PA to the Rabbinic Team
ben@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7052 9701

CZECH SCROLLS MUSEUM
Jeffrey Ohrenstein
info@memorialscrollstrust.org
T: 020 7584 3740

GENERAL ENQUIRIES
Nivi Chatterjee Duari
admin@westminstersynagogue.org
T: 020 7584 3933/020 7052 9700

EMERGENCIES
Monday to Friday:
In the first instance, please call
the Synagogue Office: 020 7052 9710

Evenings and weekends:
please call +4420 7052 9710. Leave a message and a member of staff will promptly return your call.

Please send letters, articles, photographs or other items of interest for publication in the Westminster Synagogue Quarterly directly to the Synagogue office or e-mail to editor@westminstersynagogue.org

WESTMINSTER SYNAGOGUE Kent House Rutland Gardens London SW7 1BX