ETZ CHAIN The movement for REFORM JUDAISM



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Rabbi Cliff Cohen

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President

Godfrey Fischer

Mazeltov!

It's the Thanet & District Reform Jewish Community's birthday in 2015. For 30 years we have been the voice of Reform Judaism in East Kent and we look forward to many more years as your synagogue. There will be a special civic service to commemorate the anniversary, which is not listed as yet. Full details will be sent to all members in due course.

With the busy High Holy Days just passed and a well attended Chanukah party we look forward to events all the the way through to Pesach as well as Remembrance and Independence Days. With much more in between it is worth keeping an eye on the diary as well as the What's On.

With this being our 30th year, the involvement of our community is never more important and we thank all who have supported us over the years and keep it alive and relevant today.

Shabbat



Join us for Shabbat.
The atmosphere is relaxed with familiar prayers using traditional and modern melodies. We use both Hebrew and English and the Hebrew is also transliterated. Kiddush and refreshments follow each service.

There couldn't be a better way to connect with your Jewish heritage - no strings attached!

However, phone the synagogue beforehand in case of a change of times.

Contact

warden@tdrs.org.uk or 01843 851164 for further information

Synagogue Calendar

Shabbat services are held every Friday evening at 7.30 and on the first and third Saturday mornings at 10.30. Festival evening services commence at 7pm and morning services at 10am, unless otherwise noted below or in the monthly *What's On*

JANUARY 2015

Fri 23 Jan, 3 Tevet Shabbat Supper, 6.30pm for 6.45pm followed by a shorter service at 8pm

Tue 27 Jan, 7 Tevet, 11.30am National Holocaust Memorial Day service Albion Gardens, Ramsgate followed by a film presentation at the King's Theatre, Ramsgate

FEBRUARY

Tue 3 Feb, 14 Tevet 5774, 7pm

Erev Tu Bish'vat

Our annual Tu Bish'vat Seder for the New Year for Trees
will be held, as usual, in the synagogue

Sat 21 Feb, 25 Shevat Torah Breakfast 9.15am Service 10.30am

MARCH

Thu 5 Mar, 13 Adar, 7pm

Erev Purim service and Masquerade

Fri 6 Mar, 14 Adar, 10am Purim service

APRIL

Fri 3 Apr, 14 Nisan Seder

Sat 4 Apr, 15 Nisan, 10am Shabbat/Pesach service

Wed 15 Apr, 25 Nisan, 7pm Erev Yom Hashoah service

Wed 22 Apr, 3 Iyar, 7pm

Yom Hazikaron/ Erev Yom Ha'atzma'ut

Remembrance Day and Israel Independence

Day service and celebration

A message from Rabbi Cliff Cohen

As we look back at Chanucah we remember, from our position of relative comfort, the oppression and persecution of our people in 164 BCE. Oppression and persecution have not ceased, but though antisemitism is by no means dead, we Jews are no longer the principal target of it. Across the world there are horrific things happening to innocent people every day, and if Chanucah has any meaning for us it should prompt us to ask what Jews can do to help.

Some of you will know that earlier this year I ceased to be a Chaplain in the Prison Service and started to work at Migrant Help, tasked with setting up a Chaplaincy facility across the organisation. This has generated some surprising responses within TDRS. I have been told that I should not be helping those who are the cause of all our problems, that it is scandalous how taxpayers money is spent on those who sit all day doing nothing, that Britain has no room or jobs to spare and that what we should really be doing is sending them all home.

I find this staggering for two reasons. The first is that most of us had parents, grandparents or great-grandparents who arrived in the UK seeking safety and that should make a difference to how we view others who are doing so now, but for some of us it apparently does not. The second is the degree of ignorance and misunderstanding about the realities of immigration.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work, so the suggestion that "they are taking our jobs" is absurd. Neither do they take all our money in benefits - the current allowance for an asylum seeker is just over £5 per day. To keep costs down, many of them are housed in bed & breakfast accommodation, which means that during the day they have to be out.

Council Vacancies

There are currently vacancies on the Synagogue Council, open for members only. There are 6 formal meetings a year, held on Sunday mornings and are a great way to get involved and contribute, be it large or small.

If you would like more information or to get involved please contact lan Smiler

Newsletter

If you have anything you would like to put into the newsletter please contact Tim Spurrier at:

Post -

c/o 293a Margate Road, Ramsgate CT12 6TE **Telephone** -01843 851164 **Email** newletter@tdrs.org.uk

The editor reserves the right to edit, refuse, or postpone any material submitted for publication.

The articles, letters, advertising, and content do not necessarily reflect the views of the TDRS or the Movement for Reform Judaism.

Kosher Food in Thanet



Sainsbury's Thanet has now completed their move to the new larger store at Westwood Cross and have re-introduced kosher frozen foods in addition to the existing range of dried and chilled goods.

This is great news and I hope all will support so that the range is stocked long term.



Nor are all immigrants asylum seekers. There are important legal differences between asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, economic migrants, EU and non-EU migrants, illegal immigrants and visa overstayers, but the media seems to lump them all together, somewhat impossibly, as the benefit scroungers who are also taking our jobs and costing us lots of money, and some of our members appear to be persuaded by this.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter are some facts. Please read them. The website they came from gives all the sources, which provide official evidence for what is said. You can also find out more about Migrant Help at their website, www.migranthelp.org

Let us not celebrate Chanucah with the same attitudes of those who oppressed us all those centuries ago!

Visit by Movement Rabbi

Movement Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner made a welcome visit to our synagogue on 15th November. Despite feeling unwell she joined an interesting and well attended service. Her thoughts on the Haftarah portion of Shabbat morning service using a broader range of biblical and modern texts was an interesting one and something to think about.



Thanet & District Reform Synagogue, 293A Margate Rd, Ramsgate, CT12 6TE Tel. 01843 851164 A constituent member of the Movement for Reform Judaism - website: www.tdrs.org.uk

Message From the Chairman

Hello everyone and welcome to this Chanukah edition of our community newsletter. A few weeks ago I met an old friend and after we exchanged our hellos we got chatting about old times and how we were faring today. This brought back to me memories of what was good in our friendship, we had been part of a community, where we supported each other through times good and bad.

Here at TDRS we are a community, sharing our social and spiritual lives, celebrating when it's good and supporting when difficult times come along. This is what a community does well. Welcome.

Ian Smiler - Chairman



Congratulations to Tom and Rivka on their grand daughter Phoebe, who has just started at the University in Amsterdam to study for a degree in Liberal Arts. This degree comprises language, history, anthropology and European politics.



MRJ Movement Updates

For the latest news and events from the Movement for Reform Judaism and Reform communities across the country, sign up for the MRJ Movement Update.

This newsletter email goes out fortnightly and MRJ won't use your email address for anything other than this.

To subscribe, go to: http://subscriptions.reformjudaism.org.uk/mailing-lists/ or email Martin Dix at:

martin.dix@reformjudaism.org.uk

Care in the Community Vacancy

We have a vacancy for a Care in the Community Co-Ordinator. The role includes keeping in touch with members by telephone, and other tasks as appropriate. It is a voluntary role, part time and very suitable for someone retired or to fit in with a work/life balance. Full support will be offered and no computer skills are required!

If you are interested in applying or just for more details please contact lan Smiler.

Notes from the Editor

Welcome back to Etz Chaim and another interesting mix of articles, events and thoughts. Thank you for all those who have contributed and I urge our community to keep sending me things that can help keep the newsletter a lively and contemporary publication.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlev said "God made man because he loves stories", and never is this more true of the Jewish community. As someone who is relatively new to the community, I am constantly surprised by the depth of experiences and backgrounds of our members and friends. To be able to share just a little of this is always a joy. In this issue alone a chance encounter and trip to Africa make for interesting reading.

The next issue will be out just before Pesach and so I would love to receive articles and stories that reflect that. I already know that there are some great Pesach stories out there and wouldn't it be nice to have an issue that brought a lot of those stories together.

Something to think about.

Tim Spurrier

An Interesting Encounter

Rivka Dodds

Tom and I went to church service recently at the invitation of out daughter-in-law to hear a recital of choral music. Whilst there, we noticed a Jewish gentleman in

the congregation, praying.

After the recital and service ended, we went over and introduced ourselves. It transpired that he was in church saying Kaddish for a dear Christian friend who had passed away recently. He then told us of some of the family history.

He was German, from Berlin, and had escaped with his family to England and sought refuge here. In the 60's, on a visit back to Berlin, he had become ill with a serious heart complaint, had an open heart operation and eventually recovered fully. His surgeon mentioned how grateful he was to know that his patient was Jewish and that as a penniless youngster he, a Muslim, had been invited to study at a Yeshiva and to pass the necessary examinations.

He later went to University, read medicine and became the foremost heart specialist in Germany.



Jewish boy discovered at Hogwarts

In response to a question from a Jewish fan on 16 December about whether there were any Jewish residents at Hogwarts, Harry Potter author J K Rowling responded on Twitter, "Anthony Goldstein, Ravenclaw, Jewish wizard". For those fans of Potter, Anthony appears in 2 of the books: the Order the Phoenix and the Deathly Hallows.

My work in Gonder, Ethiopia

Sam Cohen

I have now been in Gonder for around a week and a half and have settled into the rhythm of the city. It takes a bit of getting used to as everything seems to run in an informal manner. One day you may wake up with the sun shining, leave for work at 8, get there for 8:30 (when class should start)

to find 15 children waiting for you and have a smooth morning. The next day you may wake up to find there is hail, thunder and lightning. You walk uphill with water pouring over your feet as you go to get the bus only to find it full. After a 15 minute wait in the rain, followed by a bus journey full of unexplained stops, you get to work half an hour late and resoaked through to find that only two of the participants have arrived so far. The day ends behind schedule after an hour of football in the mud. This informality, lack of structure and efficiency, whilst frustrating at times, is what makes Gonder such an interesting place to live and work. However you plan and prepare for a day, you never really know how it will play out, where you might end up or you may meet. Every day is another exciting step into the unknown.

The work at Hatikvah is interesting and engaging, though not without its challenges. The most obvious of these being language. Currently there are three classes which run:



Grades 1 & 2, with an age range of around 5 to 13; Grades 3 & 4, with an age range of around 9-14; Grades 5 - 8, with an age range of around 12-23. The disparate age ranges is due to how often the participants go to school. Some have missed years of education as they have been needed for work and so are

returning to education with large gaps. Others have started at 5 and never left. All three classes though have very distinct identities, despite their age ranges.

For Grades 1 & 2 there is almost no English although one of the participants has some basic Hebrew. We get up to around 30 children for this class so Getachu (the club coordinator/teacher) and I take half each. I get the participant who speaks a little Hebrew and communicate to the class through him. Primarily we are playing games, doing jigsaw puzzles and singing songs. The biggest challenge is getting the children to play together. To illustrate, if I get them in a circle and the put a jigsaw puzzle down in front of them, 30 tiny hands will all grab as many pieces as possible and then try to force the pieces together with total disregard to the picture on the box. It takes a long time before I can get them to work together and share the puzzle. On one occasion, a girl had taken four pieces into a corner and point blank refused to share them with the rest of the group. As we couldn't understand each other, the issue was only resolved after I picked her up, carried her out of the room and put her down outside. Needless to say, she is now sharing and caring with everyone else.



With Grades 3 & 4 we are focusing on learning Hebrew. They are an engaging group and it is really enjoyable to teach them. They have been learning how to introduce themselves, explain how old they are and a little about their families. We had a particularly fun session on Monday where they drew pictures of Gonder, their house

and their families and labelled them in Hebrew. They made some beautiful posters which will go up on the wall and help decorate the clubhouse and make it their own. Tomorrow we will learn how to ask how much something costs in Hebrew and how to haggle. I am going to bring in some food and run a shop where they can buy things for fake money.



Grades 5 - 8 are learning English. Communication is easiest with them although still a challenge. This last week has been about the past tense and I have made them worksheets to help them practise their spellings. On Friday though we had a break from English and instead I ran a session on Shabbat. We read the creation story straight from Genesis and Getachu translated into Amharic. After reading the story we had a discussion about Shabbat and why it is so important. We looked at why God, who surely doesn't himself get tired, had a day of rest and what we can do in our own lives to make sure it is distinct from the rest of the week. By and large the discussion was a lot of fun although tensions ran high after I suggested that playing football on Shabbat is acceptable as a way of relaxation. Apparently that goes against the teachings of the local Rabbi although what is the point of Jewish study without a good argument! I toldthem the joke about the two Jews stranded on an island who build three synagogues but it fell flat. Lost in translation perhaps. Two days a week, Gatachu brings in his laptop for this group and teaches them basic computer skills. Whilst he is working with small groups, I practice reading with the rest. They really care about their

education and make a huge effort in lessons. As a group they are good at helping each other out and working as a team.

With all classes, we learn for between an hour and a half to two hours and then play football for the remaining time. Due to the high altitude (Gondar is over 2000 metres above sea level) it took a long time for my body to adjust and in the first week I was out of breath after minutes. I am now well adjusted though and scoring plenty of goals helping to further our reputation as a footballing nation.

The summer school is a real success which is genuinely improving the lives of its students. Whilst it faces challenges, it is easy to see how it can continue throughout the year helping the Jewish community of Gonder to grow and prosper.

Sam Cohen is the son of Cliff and Hélène Cohen. He was sent to Ethiopia by Meketa, a British based organisation which runs a number of projects with Ethiopia's Jewish community. They give micro loans, have set up a weaving cooperative and a bakery along with their after school programme (which is what he was helping them with). He went there as a youth worker having worked for 2 years running LJY-NETZER, the youth movement of Liberal Judaism. Liberal Judaism funded the placement but he was out there on his own working with leaders of the Ethiopian Jewish community.

CST and Jewish life

CST is the Community Security
Trust, a charity that provides
security for Jewish communities
throughout Britain so as we may
lead our Jewish lives safely and in
confidence. CST is also available,
24-hours a day, for those of us who
are unfortunate enough to suffer, or
witness, antisemitism.

CST draws upon a proud tradition of British Jewish self-defence, in which British Jews come together to play their part in defending their community. Before and after World War Two, the threats came from far right sources. Today, those threats remain: but have been joined by more modern forces, including Jihadist terrorism, such as that by Al-Qaeda and others.

CST protects British Jews from hatred and extremism, but this needs close partnerships between CST, local communities and synagogues, and the Police.

We are extremely fortunate to have had these partnerships in place for

many years now. Nevertheless, it requires everyone to participate. Please contact your local CST security team and volunteer to join us in our work.

CST is only as strong as the communities we serve. We need to share responsibility, together. This means understanding why we do security and cooperating with our local teams.

PLEASE PLAY YOUR PART BY:

- reporting information to us
- joining our local teams
- helping to fund our work

Sharing responsibility also means keeping a healthy sense of perspective. Physical and political threats do exist, but that should not stop any of us from appreciating and celebrating the overall excellence of Jewish life in Britain today.

We thank you for playing your part.



AGM Date

The 2015 AGM will be held, as usual, on the last Sunday in March. In 2015 it will be Sunday the 29th of March. The meeting will commence at 11am BST. All are welcome to attend; members will receive formal notification and other relevant papers by post or email in due course.

Sarah Thorne Theatre Comes Calling!

Last month we received a very unusual request from the Sarah Thorne Theatre in Broadstairs. Please can we borrow a menorah!

They were putting on a production of 'The Cemetery Club', a play set in New York and as some of the scenes are set in the living room of a Jewish home they wanted to borrow a menorah as a prop. We were very happy to oblige, and the play was a roaring success.



How times change, or do they?

Tim Spurrier

With this issue looking at some of the current discussion about immigration, it is perhaps interesting to find a couple of newspaper headlines that reflect a view on Jewish immigration. Of course, there were then and are now, a wide variety of views, some positive and others less so. However it is always worth being mindful of how things are reported and the language that is being used. Sometimes personal and family experience as well as a better understanding of a situation over history enables us to reflect on the truth behind the headlines. In the meantime it is worth reflecting on how the 2 snippets of newspaper articles below mirror much of today's discussions on immigration.

"There landed yesterday at Southampton from the transport *Cheshire* over 600 so-called refugees, their passages having been paid out of the Lord Mayor's Fund. . .There was scarce a hundred of them that had, by right, deserved such help, and these were the Englishmen of the party. The rest were Jews. . .They fought and jostled for the foremost places at the gangways. . .When the Relief Committee passed by they hid their gold and fawned and whined, and, in broken English,

asked for money for their train fare." Daily Mail, February 1900

"'The way stateless Jews from Germany are pouring in from every port of this country is becoming an outrage . . .' In these words, Mr Herbert Metcalfe, the Old Street magistrate, yesterday referred to the number of aliens entering the country through the 'back door' -a problem to which the Daily Mail has repeatedly pointed." Daily Mail, August 1938

TDRS Halves Postage Costs

If you live in Thanet you may have noticed that this newsletter was delivered to you by a local Birchington company called UPOST. We are also using this service for all non-email 'What's On' deliveries and other group postal mailings. UPOST say that it was born out of an idea to help youngsters & unemployed people back into work, creating a service for local businesses to send post around Thanet to other businesses and private end users, at a cost and a service which will be exceptional, easy, convenient, and safe & secure.

They are keen to also help towards environmental issues, – cycles will be used wherever possible for collections and deliveries and, they say, "we also would like to make some profit!" Future plans are to provide local collection points for members of the public. One is now operating in Birchington. For more information see http://www.upost.org.uk/ or telephone 0800 862 0195.



Advertising

Do you have something to advertise? Why not place an advert is this newsletter? The rates are very competitive and you can be sure the community will see it!

Full Page Advert - £50.00 per annum Half Page Advert - £30.00 per annum Quarter Page Advert - £20.00 per annum

Prices are for four editions a year, colour or B&W. Please contact—the editor for more details or to place an advert.

Message from the Treasurer

I want to thank members for paying the voluntary element of the membership fee, your contribution is much valued and constitutes a significant support to our community's finances.

As we draw to the end of 2014 it will soon be time for the 2015 membership bills to be issued. In order to minimise costs where possible I will be sending the 2015 membership packs out by email. Don't worry, if you don't use email or have requested a paper copy these will still be sent via post.

Many members are benefitting from the facility to pay their membership fees direct into the community's bank account. This may be done in one payment, quarterly or monthly instalments (over 10 months, February - November). If you would like to do so then contact the treasurer for the relevant bank account numbers, or if don't use internet banking, for a standing order mandate form for you to send to your bank to set up the payments. The sum payable remains the same irrespective of your method of payment, and of course we are still very happy to receive payments by cash / cheque too!

- 1. Asylum seekers and refugees do not get large bandouts from the state
- Asylum seekers do not come to the UK to claim benefits. In fact, most know nothing about welfare benefits before they arrive and had no expectation that they would receive financial support.

The Facts About Asylum Seekers

Cliff Cohen

- Most asylum seekers are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger. Many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, powdered milk and nappies.
- Almost all asylum seekers are **not allowed to work** and are forced to rely on state support **this can be as little as £5 a day to live on**.
- Asylum seekers do not jump the queue for council housing and they cannot choose
 where they live. The accommodation allocated to them is not paid for by the local
 council. It is nearly always 'hard to let' properties, where other people do not want to
 live.
- Asylum Seekers do not receive more benefits than pensioners in UK.
- 2. Asylum seekers and refugees are law-abiding citizens
- The vast majority of people seeking asylum are law abiding people.
- Many destitute refused asylum seekers fear approaching the police to report incidents of sexual harassment and assaults, avoiding contact for fear of being picked up, put in detention and deported.
- In international and national law, distinctions are made between refugees, asylum seekers, legal and illegal economic migrants, minority citizens, travellers and others.
 These distinctions are all too easily lost by the media, and most particularly in the tabloid press.
- Immigration officers have the power to detain asylum seekers, even if they have not committed any crime.
- 3. Refugees make a huge contribution to the UK
- Immigrants, including refugees, pay more into the public purse compared to their UK born counterparts
- An estimated 30,000 jobs have been created in Leicester by Ugandan Asian refugees since 1972.
- About 1,200 medically qualified refugees are recorded on the British Medical
 Association's database. It is estimated that it costs around £25,000 to support a refugee
 doctor to practise in the UK. Training a new doctor is estimated to cost between
 £200,000 and £250,000
- Asylum-seeking children contribute **very positively** to schools across the country. This in turn enables more **successful integration** of families into local communities.
- 4. Asylum seekers are looking for a place of safety
- There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker. Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country that has signed the 1951 Convention and to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim.

• There is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach.

- It is recognised in the 1951 Convention that people fleeing persecution may have to use irregular means in order to escape and claim asylum in another country there is no legal way to travel to the UK for the specific purpose of seeking asylum.
- The top ten refugee producing countries in 2011 all have poor human rights records or ongoing conflict. Asylum seekers are fleeing from these conflicts and abuses, looking for safety.
 - In 2011, worldwide, 17,700 children applied for asylum having arrived in the country of refuge alone, with no parent or guardian. 1,277 of these applications were made in the UK. Many of them come from Afghanistan, which was described by UNICEF in 2010 as "the world's most dangerous place to be a child".
- Many refugees and asylum seekers hope to return home at some point in the future, if the situation in their country has improved.
- The 1951 Refugee Convention guarantees everybody the right to apply for asylum. **It** has saved millions of lives. No country has ever withdrawn from it.

5. Britain's asylum system is very tough

- The UK asylum system is strictly controlled and complex. It is very difficult to get asylum. The decision-making process is extremely tough and many people's claims are rejected.
- Initial Home Office decision-making remains poor. In 2011, the courts overturned Home Office decisions in 26% of asylum appeals.
- There is a particular problem with decisions on women's claims. A 2011 study found
 50% of negative decisions were overturned by the courts.
- There were 19,804 asylum applications to the UK in 2011. **This the second lowest level** in 10 years.
- Since 2005 most people recognised as refugees are only given permission to stay in the
 UK for five years and can have their case reviewed at any time. This makes it difficult for
 them to make decisions about their future, to find work and make definite plans for their
 life in the UK.

6. Poor countries - not the UK - look after most of the world's refugees

- The UK is home to less than 2% of the world's refugees out of more than 15 million worldwide.
- About 80% of the world's refugees are living in developing countries, often in camps. Africa and Asia between them host more than three quarters of the world's refugees. Europe looks after just 15%.
- Over 490,000 refugees have fled the conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo, including about 15,000 in 2011, Only 188 of these people applied for asylum in the UK in 2011.
- The likelihood that a refugee will be recognised as having protection needs and granted status depends on the country where they apply for asylum. In the UK in 2010, 25% of the people who applied for asylum were granted it. In some countries, such as Switzerland and Finland, over 70% of applications succeed.

Source: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum/facts_about_asylum__page_1

TDRS Chanukah Party

Sunday 21st December saw a busy synagogue with a well attended Chanukah party. With the lighting of the 6th candle, the community celebrated Chanukah



in style with an interesting array of Chanukiyot. The elephant (pictured left) drew particular attention!

A wonderful spread of food was appreciated by the 30+ (number not age - ed) attendees with the traditional latkes and doughnuts being a firm favourite.

Lest we forget the handing out of the chocolate gelt to the children, which was, of course, not something they were slow in coming forward for.



Another successful TDRS event and thanks to everyone's hard work in putting it on. Definitely a Happy Chanukah!

Klatovy Mincha

by Godfrey Fischer

It's not very often that we are able to hold a *Shabbat Mincha* (afternoon) service other than for festival and commemorative days; but on Saturday 29 November the

congregation found something else that was a little different for a synagogue service - a screen and projector.

The reason was the culmination of research into the history of our Sefer Torah, one of the rescued Czech scrolls which came from the small town of Klatovy, Bohemia. We have been custodians of this scroll since 1986. There are two others from Klatovy used by English communities; Weybridge & District Reform Synagogue and the

Gloucestershire Liberal Community in Cheltenham. Six others are with communities in the USA.

Some of you may recall a visit from Milan Strnad, a teacher from Klatovy. He discovered that the school he is teaching at was once used as the assembly point for Jews from Klatovy & environs prior to deportation to Terezin. About 1100 Jews were deported, on two dates, 26th and 30th



November. He has collated many documents from this period, including the list of members of the Jewish community who were deported. His work may been seen in a book he wrote shortly after his visit here. We have a copy in the synagogue for anyone to peruse which, at the moment, is away for translation into English. He and the other teachers at the school paid for a memorial plaque to be placed in the schools.

But the research story continues! We were able to take advantage of a paid internship scheme, run by Canterbury Christ Church University, to further explore the history of the scroll. The research covered 200 hours of work by a student and mentored by an academic at the institution. This bonus came by way of Dr Maria Diemling, who has been a friend of the community since she joined Canterbury Christ Church in 2006 as Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies. She had previously been Lecturer in Jewish

Studies at Trinity College, Dublin and Research Fellow at the Franz Rosenzweig Centre in Jerusalem. She appointed a Second Year History and Politics Student, Andrew Miller, to take on the task. Andrew was already familiar with the subject as he had worked as a Regional Ambassador for the Holocaust Educational Trust.

What better venue to give the community an insight into Andrew's research than the synagogue. It gave us the opportunity to hold an additional Shabbat service in a five-week month in which we could remember in our prayers the 287 members of the Klatovy community who perished in the *Shoah*. And by choosing the afternoon, it meant we could conclude Shabbat with TDRS' own 'traditional' Havdallah ceremony and then put the screen, projector, Maria and Andrew to work after Shabbat had gone out.

The amount of work by Andrew was clear to see from his visual presentation which included a filmed interview with Evelyn Friedlander, Chair of the Memorial Scrolls Trust. The work is ongoing and, in time, we will be able to see the fruits of this research in a special website dedicated to the Klatovy Scroll of Thanet.

If you wish to learn more about the Czech Scrolls, have a look at the certificate presented to us by the Memorial Scrolls Trust which is on the west wall of the prayer hall and on the Trust's website www.memorialscrollstrust.org



Etz Chaim - The Tree of Life

by Tim Spurrier

The links between Judaism and the environment is always one that has interested me. With **Tu Bishvat** coming up soon it seemed a good time to reflect on this a little.

Also known as Rosh HaShanah L'Illanot or New Year of the Trees, Tu Bishvat in biblical Israel is linked to the ageing of trees for tithing purposes. Laws relating to fruit not being eaten for the first 4 years of a trees life were calculated from Shevat 15.

In contemporary Israel, it is a day celebrated as an ecological awareness day, and trees are planted in celebration. This tradition started at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th Century with tree planting being a focus, and soon became adopted. The Jewish National Fund continues to encourage Israelis in tree planting activities on Tu Bishvat, which has become the Israeli Arbor Day.



Arbor Days are celebrated all over the world (on different dates) where people are encouraged to plant and care for trees. In the UK this is in National Tree Week in November. So if you are interested go and find out more from the Tree Council (www.treecouncil.org).

Although we would see the importance of trees in Jewish culture just as one that assists in counting age and/or years, there appears to be a deeper connection. Whether it is the ancient Israelites being told to not destroy fruit bearing trees when besieging a city (Deut. 20:19-20) or ensuring that you finish planting a tree even if the messiah is coming (Avot d'Rebbe Natan 31b), the symbolic representation of trees in Jewish life over the years is abundant.

There is an interesting story in the Talmud of the sage Choni. He was walking along the road one day and saw a man planting a Carob tree. Choni asked the man, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?". The man replied "seventy years". Choni then asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?". The man answered "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planted for my children."



Of course in Choni's time, a community was very much reliant on crops and the flourishing of the local and wider environment. In contemporary society we are a little more detached from this but perhaps this gives us more of a reason to use occasions such as Tu Bishvat to focus on the idea that the longevity of trees, their fruit and maybe the environment as a whole continue to be important to us and future generations.

The planting and caring for trees at Tu Bishvat seems like a tradition worth holding on to and one that promotes a positive Jewish message. I know that TDRS has a strong tradition in thinking of the festivals in this way. Outside of this there are organisations

such as the Tree Council (noted above) that actively promote tree planting. Locally we have Dane Valley Woods (www.danevalleywoods.org) who have cultivates a 13 acre site in Margate since 2003. As an area which, compared to other parts of Kent, is lacking in trees they seek to make a little difference in Thanet. That is never a bad thing.



