

The Second Synagogue

Rev. Harry Bornstein was appointed Minister early in 1938. A graduate of Cambridge, Etz Chaim Yeshiva and Jews College, he was currently Minister of the South-East London Synagogue, New Cross. Chief Rabbi Hertz inducted him into office at Norrice Lea on 3rd April 1938.

Rev. Bornstein was a spiritual leader possessed of great zeal and enthusiasm, and in a short time became much loved and admired by the community. The Synagogue also acquired its first official, albeit temporary, Chazan in that year when Rev. Emil Nemeth was engaged as 'Temporary Assistant Minister (Reader) and Teacher' at a salary of £182 per year. By February 1939 the influx of Jewish residents had resulted in an increase in the male members to 255. The Board decided that the time had arrived to build on the vacant land adjoining the existing premises. The proposed building would be used as a Synagogue leaving the existing building free for use as classrooms, communal hall and for overflow services. The single storey Synagogue would have accommodation for over 500 people and be constructed so as to allow of the addition of a gallery at a later date. Of the estimated cost of £6,300 HGS would provide £1,440 and the balance would be borrowed from the U.S.

The new building was completed by November 1939 at which time permission was granted by the U.S. Honorary Officers to consecrate and bring into use the new Synagogue, '... but that it be strongly represented to the Honorary Officers and Board of Management that, unless great energy and enthusiasm is brought to bear to retrieve the very serious financial position of the Synagogue, it may prove impossible to maintain it, and the question of it having to be closed and its members accommodated at the neighbouring synagogues would have to be seriously considered.' This admonition was the result of a shortfall of £661 in the income of HGS during the previous year. The consecration ceremony took place on Shabbat morning, 23rd December 1939 in the traditional manner, after the Morning Service the Scrolls were carried in procession from the old Synagogue into the new Synagogue where the service continued with the Reading of the Law. The services were conducted by Rev. Bornstein and Rev. G. Boyars. Celebrations were kept to a minimum because of war-time conditions.