

## **Recent Years 1970-1985**

In 1970 the community acquired the services of two Rabbis. The first was Rabbi Alan Plancey (previously Minister of Luton Synagogue) who was appointed Youth Minister at HGS. During his six years in this post he had much success with the Youth and also took a leading role in establishing and editing the Synagogue's first magazine *Hagan*, which was issued during the 1970s. Rabbi Plancey remained until 1976 when he took up the position of Minister at the Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue.

Later in 1970 Rabbi Isaac Bernstein of the Terenure Hebrew Congregation, Dublin, was appointed Minister at HGS and took up his duties on 1st January 1971. It was during his ministry that the Bat Chayil ceremony was first introduced in May 1972, taking place initially in the Synagogue Hall. Rabbi Bernstein was successful in arranging Adult Education lectures, even persuading some of the more gifted members of the congregation to prepare and deliver lectures themselves. The community took great pride in the oratorical and scholarly skills of its Rabbi but in 1978 Rabbi Bernstein received a call to become Minister of the prestigious Manhattan Center Synagogue in New York.

In 1973 the present Secretary, Mr. Gerald Cohen was appointed and he has since given conscientious' and loyal service to the Synagogue. He succeeded Mr. Harry Ginsbury who had been Secretary for 26 years from 1946 and who had taken over from Capt. Franks (later a Warden). It is a measure of the esteem in which Mr. Ginsbury was held by the congregation that he was accorded the honour of being Chatan Bereshit in 1969.

There was an 'interregnum' for nearly two years, from 1978 to 1980, when the congregation was without a Minister. During this period the community relied heavily on its Reader, Rev. Freilich. No Chazan could be more loved by his community than Rev. Freilich, who built up a wonderful relationship not only with regular worshippers but also with those members who were rarely seen in Synagogue. Rev. Freilich had always involved himself with communal activities, for example he used to hold a regular Friday night Oneg for the youth at his home. He also helped organise Mizrachi lectures and assisted with the Combined Charities Committee in the early years. His pleasing vocal accomplishments and personality made him a Chazan very difficult to replace.

During that two year period the Shabbat afternoon Gemara Shiur was given by Rabbi Shimon Winegarten, formerly a member of the community, who has since been appointed Minister at Bridge Lane Beth Hamidrash. At that time also Dayan C.D. Kaplin began a Gemara Shiur on Wednesday evenings which continued for many years. There were other successful ventures during that time. The first Communal Shabbat Lunch was held, an event that became an annual occasion; well-attended Adult Education lectures were given by Dr. Irving Jacobs, and the new *RGS Synagogue Magazine* was launched.

Despite all these efforts made to maintain community cohesion, the lack of a Minister caused considerable concern among many members of the Synagogue. Eventually the community was fortunate to be able to appoint Rabbi Edward Jackson who took up his duties as Minister in March 1980. He was born in Cork, studied at Jews College and was formerly Assistant Minister at Hampstead Synagogue, Minister of the Kingston, Surbiton and District Synagogue and latterly of the Kenton Synagogue.

One of the most significant ventures started by the Rabbi has been the communal welfare committee, of which the Rabbi himself is chairman and Berenice Salkind is the organiser. This has resulted in a well-run system of visitation of sick and housebound members of the Synagogue. The Rabbi's outgoing personality has made him accessible to all sections of the community and he is able to communicate with them on all levels. With young people especially he has an excellent rapport. He frequently speaks at the Youth and Children's Services and gives Shiurim to the older children at Kerem School.

There have been many attempts over the years to provide a club for the Youth. Most such Youth Clubs have failed after a time although the one formed in the late 1940s was successful, even publishing its own magazine, *The Gen*. With the Rabbi's encouragement a Youth Club was again started three years ago. There are also other active youth groups, for example Bnei Akiva and B.B.Y.O. Brownies, Guides, Cubs and, until recently, Scouts also meet on the Synagogue premises. The Rabbi is also active in the field of teaching and Adult Education. As well as his Shabbat afternoon Gemara Shiur he gives a Shiur each week in Mishna Berurah and also a Shiur for ladies. Recently started in the community is the *S.E.E.D.* Project in which over 40 members participate, each with his/her own individual teacher. Although the Rabbi is involved fully in every sphere of communal life, he is also Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S., Chairman of the

Jewish Marriage Council and visiting Chaplain to Wandsworth Prison.

A recent addition to the Synagogue facilities is the Beth Hamidrash which was consecrated on Sunday, 23rd January 1983. In his address Dayan Lew said:

*"Today has a special significance for' our community. The establishment of a Beth Hamidrash at this Synagogue will not only serve a practical purpose for holding Shiurim and some services, but it will also enhance more deeply the status and spiritual image of our congregation." After paying tribute to Mr and Mrs Louis Taub for their initiative and generosity, Dayan Lew said that it was a "proper and fitting occasion to recall the devoted efforts and tenacious advocacy of the founding fathers of 50 years ago. Their vision and keen enthusiasm as well as the sustained and strenuous efforts of their immediate successors must never be forgotten. Today we must record our gratitude for the sincerity, diligence and enthusiasm with which the present generation are endeavouring to uphold the principles and honoured traditions of their pioneering predecessors in our religious and communal life."*

Chief Rabbi Iakobovits once remarked, during a visit to HGS, that the Suburb 'has more communal leaders per square yard than any other community in England'. A number of such leaders spring immediately to mind: Mr. Harry Landy, who has been Treasurer of the U.S., Vice-President of the Board of Deputies and Chairman of Mizrachi in England; Mrs. Leila Wynbourne who is Chairman of the Federation of Women Zionists; Mr. Fred Worms, International Vice-President of Bnai Brith, Mr. Gerald Ronson, Chairman of the Jewish Educational Development Trust; Mrs. Leo Grahame, President of The Child Resettlement Pund-Emunah, Mrs. Joe Conway, Chairman of the United Synagogue Mikva in Kingsbury. HGS is especially honoured to count among its members Mr George M. Gee, the President of the United Synagogue, and also President of the Jewish Deaf Association; Mr. Asher Fishman, a Vice-President of the United Synagogue and a former Chairman of the Board of Shechita and of the London Board of Jewish Religious Education; and Mr. Greville Janner, M.P., Q.c., the President of the Board of Deputies.

There are of course numerous individuals, past and present, whose names do not appear on lists of Honorary Officers but who nonetheless have worked so hard for the Synagogue. For example, Dr. George Webber, a member from the 1930s until his recent death, who represented the Synagogue on the Council of the U.S. for many years and who was the founder of the annual Jewish Book Week; Mr Michael. Walden who served on the Board of Management for 27 consecutive years; Mr. Marcus King and Mr. Tim Ginsberg who have,

whenever called upon, carried out the duties of Beadle; Mr. Albert Landy who for many years was a one-man visitation committee; Mr. David Lauffer, who organised the Scout Group for 15 years; Mr Vivien Harris who for many years has audited the Synagogue's local accounts; Iris Landau who has for years taught basic Hebrew reading to many an adult wishing to learn. These are just a few of the many. The list is really endless since the community has been blessed with countless members willing to devote time and energy to its many activities.

The Golden Jubilee of HGS is being celebrated in February 1984. A Jubilee Service will be held attended by local dignitaries, the Chief Rabbi and Honorary Officers of the U.S.; a Jubilee Dinner is to be held at the London Marriot Hotel, Grosvenor Square; the youth and children of the community will have their own celebration; and to mark the occasion this short history of the Synagogue is being published. It is hoped that the United Synagogue as a whole and HGS in particular, are able to meet the many challenges, which they face in 1984. What is certain is that HGS embarks on its second fifty years proud of its past and confident of its future.