

## **Hampstead Garden Suburb Centenary- A Unique Shabbat Occasion**

Centenary Celebrations started in April 2007 and one of the first events to mark the occasion was a celebration at the Shul following morning service on Shabbat, 28 April. Several months of careful planning went into this event, a task undertaken by Alan Cohen, Julian Pollard and a small team of helpers.

It is no exaggeration to say that this was a truly unique event. It was graced by the presence of the Chief Rabbi, who delivered the main address, the President of the United Synagogue and the Worshipful the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Mrs Eva Greenspan, numerous local dignitaries and distinguished guests. The community extended its welcome to many non-Jewish local civic visitors and religious leaders.

The organisation of this event, held on a Shabbat, was complicated enough without the details of protocols to be observed. For example, it was immediately appreciated that only the Chief Rabbi (who was consulted and was extremely supportive throughout the planning stages) should speak from the pulpit. Equally, other speakers such as local ministers of religion had to be shown proper respect and it was decided to erect a small stage in front of the pulpit from which they could address the community.

The Mayor walked to the service and her Mayoral Chain of Office was delivered by chauffeur-driven limousine to Norrice Lea just before the formal procession into shul began. After a song of welcome, *Baruch Habah*, sung by Chazan Avromi, a formal welcome was extended to all the guests by Rabbi Livingstone. The Kerem Choir accompanied the Chazan in a *Song of Peace* and the Prayer for the Royal Family was recited before the Chief Rabbi's moving and inspirational address. Our Youth presentation, entitled *Echoes of the Past*, summed up a century of life in the Suburb.

What made the day so unusual were the greetings extended to the Community by the Mayor and by local ministers, the Reverend Alan Walker of St Jude's Church and Reverend Dr Ian Tutton of the Free Church - both on Central Square. Every seat in the shul was occupied as they thanked the community for the warm welcome they had received and spoke emotionally about the ecumenical spirit of the occasion. This was the first occasion that visiting non-Jewish ministers had addressed the community in Shul – maybe a unique event in any English synagogue – but this was a special occasion and it was deemed a great success. The service ended with Hatikvah

and the *National Anthem* before the guests and congregants retired to enjoy a special Kiddush in the Max Weinbaum Hall.

David Littauer, organiser of the Suburb's Centenary celebrations and representing the Suburb Trust, sent Alan Cohen a letter thanking the community:

*"Dear Alan,*

*The Hampstead Garden Synagogue event today was much more than just a special act of rejoicing: it proved to be an unforgettable and memorable experience. We were delighted to see so many distinguished people heading the huge crowd of congregation and guests. So much careful thought went into the formulation of the Centenary Service, which we thought was beautifully presented by everyone concerned. Rabbi Livinstones warm and endearing personality touched the heart as he welcomed the guests who joined him and his congregation in celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the Suburb. He set the scene for a series of brilliant and witty addresses from other speakers. It goes without saying that the Chief Rabbi's contribution was a tour de force. We thought the songs by the Cantor and children of Kerem School were utterly charming. And what a clever idea it was to have the four persuasive young people reciting a chronology of key events of Suburb history. Perhaps the highest point was the moving and heartfelt singing of The Hatikvah by the entire congregation.*

*In conclusion, I should like to thank you very much for the marvellous welcome you and many other kind members of the congregation gave to Joyce and me.*

*We can only guess at the extent of planning and hard work entailed in making the event run so smoothly and successfully. And the refreshments looked so appetising and they tasted delicious!*

*Please accept our congratulations and grateful thanks and pass on these sentiments to all your colleagues who went out of their way to give us so much pleasure.*

*Very sincerely,*

*David Littauer"*

An exhibition, arranged by Alan Cohen and Julian Pollard, showing the Suburb's history and the role of the Jewish community in its development, was displayed at the shul before, during and after the Centenary Service and helped the visitors better understand the role the Jewish community has played, and still plays, in creating the unique environment of the Suburb. This display was then relocated to the Church Farmhouse Museum where

it formed part of a much larger exhibition, to which many organisations contributed and which was visited by the public during the rest of the year.

Addressing the AGM later in the year Rabbi Livingstone complimented the organisers of a service which was *"the highlight of the year and which could only enhance the community's standing in the Suburb"*.

By way of reciprocation, some twenty HGSS members attended an interdenominational service at the Free Church on 13 May. This included a magnificent rendering of Handel's coronation Anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, performed by joint choirs with organ accompaniment. Rabbi Livingstone was requested - apparently without warning - to convey a greeting from our community which he did with characteristic aplomb and humour, emphasising the value of different communities getting to know each other better.

The children of Kerem School performed Israeli dancing on Willifield Green, after local celebrity, Jonathan Ross, Patron of the HGS Horticultural Society, dedicated the commemorative flower bed at the Centenary opening event, also attended by local Member of Parliament, Rudi Vis, and Sir Donald Sin den CBE.