



AGE OLD CEREMONY AT ALYTH

A joyous *Siyum*, completion ceremony, took place in February at Alyth. The ceremony occurs when a synagogue acquires a new copy of the Torah. Each scroll is painstakingly handwritten with enormous skill on parchment by a scribe, who leaves some 18 letters incomplete when he gets to the end of the Book of Deuteronomy. They are then completed under his supervision by the rabbi and members of the community that is to own the new scroll.

On this occasion Alyth is to place the new scroll on permanent loan to the Leo Baeck College at the Sternberg Centre for Judaism. It will be used regularly by the college's rabbinical students.

As this is the 40th anniversary of the Leo Baeck College the *Siyum* was also a fund-raising occasion. A total of over £5,000 was donated by those who took part.

At the outset, scribe Eric Ray explained the whole ceremony. To the singing of psalms, the new scroll was brought in to the

synagogue by Rabbi Charles Emanuel and carried beneath a *chuppah* - wedding canopy - to mark a symbolic marriage between the community and the new Torah scroll.

Those completing the letters were each called up in turn, recited a special prayer and received the quill pen. The first of the letters was completed by the congregation's President, Professor Ben Segal, who is also President of the Leo Baeck College, and the last letter was completed by Rabbi Emanuel.

The synagogue choir, led by Viv Bellos, sang songs in praise of the Torah, interspersed with short readings on the same theme read by different members of the community.

For most of those present, it was the first time they had witnessed this rare ceremony. One octogenarian member of the congregation said it was the most impressive religious occasion she had ever witnessed.

Raymond Goldman
Chairman, North Western Reform Synagogue

BUSY INSTITUTE SUMMER

There was a time when most educational institutions seemed to go to sleep during the summer. Some would close altogether, while others employed a skeleton staff to keep the organisation ticking over. Individuals with specific responsibilities, such as

dealing with examination results, would come in at the appropriate moment before disappearing again until September.

In the late twentieth century, however, a different philosophy has emerged, and places like the Institute are offering a service to their community throughout the year, without any significant breaks.

Previously, potential students would have found a handful of courses for adult and young people, basically restricted to the second half of July, and a summer school for international students staffed by Institute teachers but essentially treated as a private enterprise which did not take place in the main Institute buildings. Now the choice available to them is increasing steadily from year to year, and the response is improving as the public gets to know about it.

The English Language Summer School, which is now a focal point of the Institute's summer programme, running from 7th July to 27th August, features courses at various levels from Pre-Intermediate to Advanced, as well as English for Business and Commerce.

There is an extensive list of short art and craft courses for adults, enabling participants to explore subjects in a more concentrated way than in a once-a-week format. Various aspects of painting and drawing can be studied, as can sculpture, jewellery making, stained glass picture framing, silk painting, embroidery, flower arrangement, lace making and design and papier mâché and decorative surfaces. There will be a bridge course, 'The Play of the Hand' in early July, possibly some photography and an extension to the fitness walking programme run by Pat Cove, which has grown beyond all expectations in the last few months.

The Institute Business Centre, meanwhile, is planning its most ambitious summer holiday programme, ever 'Business Centre Plus!' and, as last year, aims to cater for all the family with many of the courses open to children and adults. Belying its name, the Business Centre is offering more than just information technology, although keyboard skills, computing and word processing figure strongly it also has first aid and personal safety for children, cookery and tennis. Most of the courses last one week and the programme starts on 14 July and finishes in September only a week before the Institute autumn term begins.

At the end of July there are workshops in art and craft and pottery, provided by the Art and Creative Studies Department for children aged between seven and fourteen.

It's going to be a busy summer at the Institute!

Richard Bradbury

LETTERS

90 Falloden Way
NW11 6JD

itself, we should all perhaps reflect that it may have been our own failure to control the "Politburo" which eventually provoked such a reaction.

Editor

It was significant that, at the annual meeting of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association on Monday evening, a number of the Suburb's elder statesmen/women expressed their profound sadness that the election of the association's chairman should have required a contest between candidates instead of the customary nodding through of the executive committee and RA

council's nominee. Surprising, too, that the reaction to the unusually large attendance should have been a sense of resentment from the organisers rather than a genuine welcome.

This was precisely the question at issue. The residents' association is supposed to represent the views and interests of an informed membership, not that of a closed, self-perpetuating clique. And if these elder statespersons regret that the calm surface of the Suburb was temporarily ruffled by small waves of democracy exercising

101 Willifield Way,
NW11 6YH

Dear Editor

I believe this year's AGM of the Residents Association to have been one of the most uncivilised RA meetings I have ever attended: uncivilised in the sense that very few of the normal civilities were observed.

Orchestrated campaigns seem to be the norm these days, but need they be accompanied by quite so much viciousness? And departing officers used at least to be thanked for the work they had done: not so much as a bunch of flowers for the retiring Chairman.

What a pretty pass we have come to!

Yours,
Eileen Whelan

46 Oakwood Road,
NW11 6RL

Dear Editor

The Annual General Meeting of HGS Association was not a representative gathering of Suburb residents - it was a carefully orchestrated event fuelled by anonymous letters pushed through letterboxes.

To put the record straight: the Council of the Residents Association is elected democratically at the Annual General Meeting. Any resident who has been a member for two years is eligible to stand and all residents are invited to attend the monthly council meetings. There is no question of it being a 'closed self-perpetuating clique' and a great deal of hard work, entirely voluntary, is done by members of the Council in the interests of the Suburb generally.

The question of officers is given very careful consideration before recommendations are made to the AGM. Mr Wakefield, who is himself one of the 'old guard' and was vice-chairman last year, stated at the outset that he did not wish to stand for office in 1997 and agreed to the Council nominations before changing his mind. The Residents Association has always welcomed new members and it is to be hoped that residents will not have been deterred by the very unpleasant meeting held on 24 March.

Yours
Janette Harris

The Editor happens to know that Mr Wakefield abstained when votes were taken on the nomination of officers

Yours
Terry Rand

30 Southway,
NW11

Sir,

When an election for Chairman was notified to residents only one candidate's name was printed, nominations for others were invited. By the closing date for nominations a second had been proposed. He got no such publicity. Had not the name of one candidate been published, supporters of the second would have had no need to let electors know they had a choice. In future may one suggest that no names be published until all candidates are known when all may be listed.

Yours
Elizabeth Gundry

Garden Suburb Infant School on top form

In a glowing inspector's report Garden Suburb Infant School has been praised for its "happy and well cared for pupils and high education standards".

The report said the school's strength lies in the high quality of teaching by staff who plan well, make full use of their resources and keep in close touch with parents.

The high expectations shown by the staff were responsible for ensuring pupils felt valued, safe and secure.

Garden Suburb Infant School, in Childs Way, Hampstead Garden Suburb, was visited by inspectors from education watchdog

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) who spent five days in October looking closely at every aspect of school life. Their final report has just been published.

With over 250 pupils-40 per cent using English as a second language-the inspectors were able to single out for special praise the way the school used this rich cultural mix to the advantage of all.

The report made particular mention of exceptional standards reached in art, geography, English, science and history.

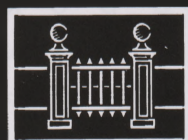
The report also focused on the excellent use made of outside activities such as visits to

museums, galleries, parks and workplaces.

The school's positive atmosphere ensured children were well-behaved with a strong sense of right and wrong and good respect and tolerance for each other.

Head Teacher Diane Lewis welcomed the report saying the school was proud of its achievements and its close links with the local community.

"It is gratifying that all aspects of school life, and the contributions of everyone involved with the school, have been recognised as valuable to the children's well-being and progress," she said.



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