

Jewish Deaf Association

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Rev. Michael Plaskow with members in the Jewish Deaf Association Sukkah.

Jewish Deaf Association

The Formation

Taken from an article written in the mid-1960's by the founder of the Jewish Deaf Association, the Late Julius J. Newman.

“In the late 1940's following a successful function to raise funds for the Jewish Blind Society, the thought went through my mind — what arrangements were available for the Jewish deaf? (I had close contact with deaf people because my daughter is deaf). I decided to find out if there was any centre for Jewish deaf and to my surprise I very quickly learnt that in the main, meeting centres for deaf people were run by the churches.

I approached Miss Hilda Schlesinger, MBE, knowing that she had been interested in the Deaf for many years, and she explained that attempts at organising clubs for Jewish deaf prior to the 1939/45 war years had not met with success — but she was willing to help me in my efforts.

We formed a committee and various Synagogue Halls were made available for meetings for the Jewish deaf but during discussions with the deaf people themselves, I learnt that their main ambition was to have a centre of their own.

Enquiries were made for suitable premises and we found that 90/92 Cazenove Road, having previously been a hostel for refugee children, was available. It had, however suffered war damage and essential repairs were necessary to make the premises habitable.

We set about raising funds in order to do this, and later bought the property”.

The official opening of the Jewish Deaf Association Club took place on 27th May, 1951.

The Present

During the 36 years of the existence of the Jewish Deaf Association many changes have come about, although some of the first members are still actively involved in the club.

The building was re-modernised in 1968 and it contains a billiards/snooker room, table tennis room, lecture hall, television lounge with a teletext T.V. set. Jewish



George M. Gee, President , welcomes
Issy Schlisselman, Deaf Sign Language
Tutor.

traditions are upheld and festivals celebrated with the assistance of Rev. Michael Plaskow, Chaplain to the Jewish Deaf. Rev. Plaskow is conversant in the language of the deaf and visits the centre frequently.

All the equipment at the Centre is geared for those who cannot hear door-bells with flashing lights, fire-alarms with flashing beacons, a smoke detector system and the most modern fire fighting appliances.

The Hall is equipped with the 'loop induction' system especially for the hard of hearing. This enables those with a hearing aid to hear with clarity the voice of a speaker without having to endure environmental noise.

Technology is racing ahead and a major step forward is the introduction of the telephone system for the deaf. This is an innovation and still in its infancy, but it is the policy of the Jewish Deaf Association to take advantage of any new development for the benefit of the deaf, hence the installation of the "telephone system" in the club.

The Jewish Deaf Association provides a full service for the elderly deaf where they can meet at the Day Centre, enjoy a hot kosher meal and take part in activities arranged to suit their special needs. A keep fit session is held weekly.

In warmer weather they are able to sit in the well maintained gardens communicating with each other in sign-language.

Their welfare problems which seem insurmountable to them, are dealt with by staff specially trained in sign language, thus overcoming any communication difficulties.



A typical keep-fit class in session

Age is no barrier at the Jewish Deaf Association — our Social Club is thriving, the activities being arranged by the members themselves which reinforces the policy of encouraging disabled people to develop their skills and be independent.

Sport plays a major part in the leisure time of Jewish Deaf Association members and they are encouraged to participate in tournaments arranged specially for those similarly handicapped. In this they are sponsored by the Association when selected to take part in international sporting events and recent honours awarded include Gold and Silver medals obtained at the World Games for the deaf held in the U.S.A. and good placings in the British Team at the World Deaf Chess Championships held in Portugal.



Seder Service 1987

The Jewish Deaf Association acts as the centre of a widespread community helping to build and maintain friendships and in so doing, alleviates the loneliness experienced by those living in a 'silent world'.

Accommodation is available for deaf visitors passing through London.

The Jewish Deaf Association is affiliated to all major deaf organisations calling on their resources whenever needed. It is registered with the Charity Commissioners and is financed by voluntary contributions, fund raising functions and friends.

It is the only organisation in the United Kingdom serving the needs of Jewish deaf and hearing impaired people.