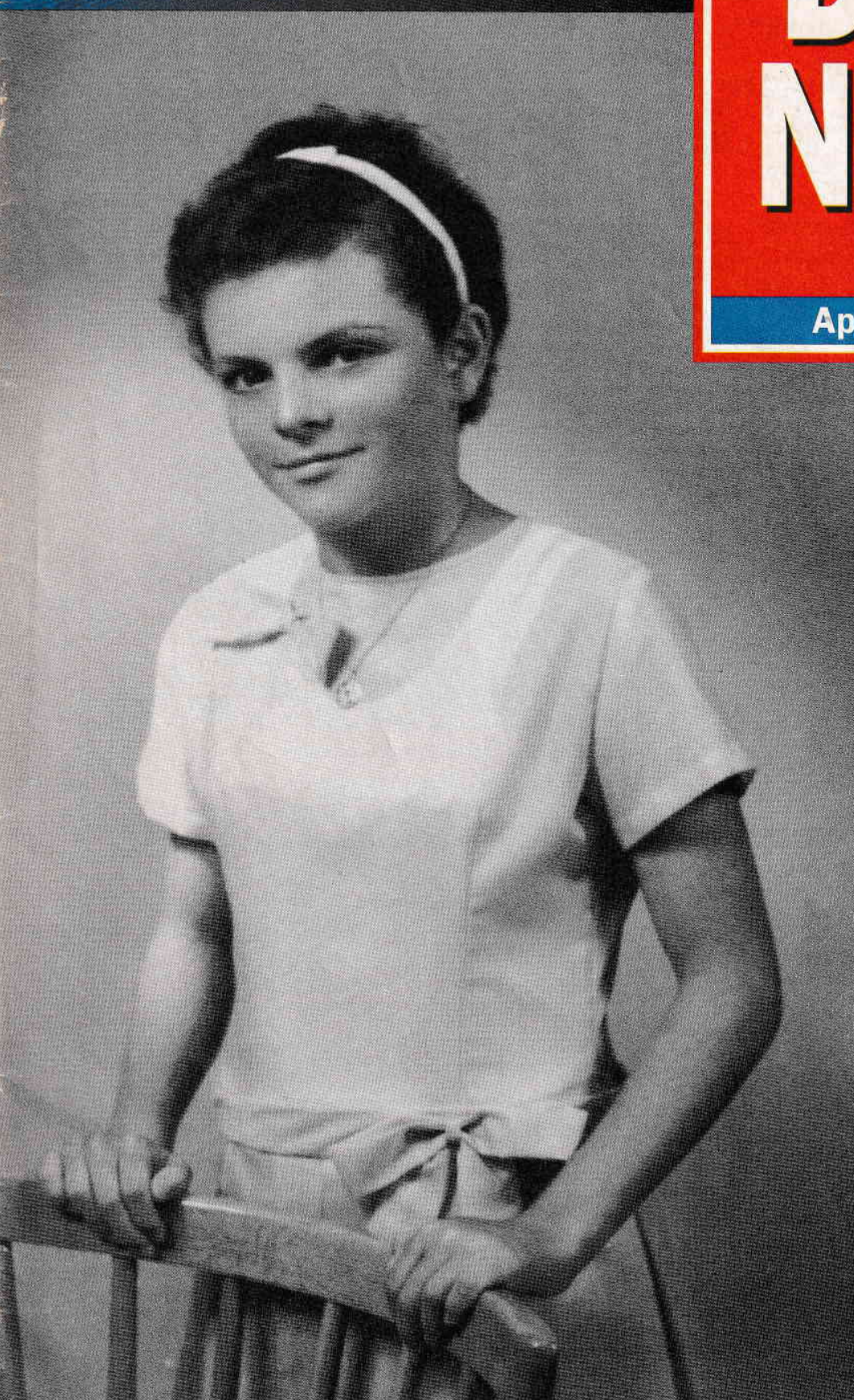


British

Deaf News

April 1995 70p



Inside:
Spotlight
on the
Jewish
Deaf
community

SIGN ON
Update

The magazine for Deaf people by Deaf people



Towards a freer world

David Jackson is Secretary of the World Organisation of Jewish Deaf.

The British Deaf community is varied and vibrant. Its diversity is such that there are further minorities within itself. This issue of the BDN concentrates on one of them - the Jewish Deaf community. The title above is the theme for the forthcoming World Congress of Jewish Deaf which is taking place here in London and it seems a good opportunity to show in the BDN how attitudes in the British Deaf community are changing for the better.

For a long time there was some underlying anti-semitism in the British Deaf community mainly through lack of awareness. What was not apparent to them until fairly recently was the fact that Deaf people as well as Jewish people were executed in concentration camps. The Nazis wanted to produce a pure Aryan race free of all disability and of one belief. Now, together with a better attitude, many Deaf people have changed their sign for Jewish people from the offensive hooked nose sign (possibly influenced by Nazi propaganda) to a more acceptable downward sign from the chin.

Today Deaf people in the British community are much more aware of what is happening around them. They are continually seeking for fuller access to everything. This includes a fuller understanding of the Jewish Deaf culture which brings us to this special issue which will hopefully do that.

It is worth repeating the words of the Nobel Prize-winner, Elie Wiesel, at the recent fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, himself a concentration camp survivor, - "... a better world in which children could be happy, smiling, singing, taking each other's hands and saying to each other: 'Well, another morning, another day. Another morning, another day, for humankind'". One could use a similar message to hope for an even better world for Deaf people, where freedom of communication, expression and a positive attitude towards deafness is made possible. These are the keywords and it is appropriate to end here by wishing the first-ever Deaf Chief Executive of the BDA success in pursuing together with the BDA members for that kind of world.

David Jackson

*Front page:
This young girl is now
a prominent member of
the Jewish Deaf
community. Who is she?
Find out on pages
10 and 11.*

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Jewish Deaf - a minority within a minority

In July this year the 5th Congress of the World Organisation of the Jewish Deaf will be held in London. In Britain the Jewish Deaf community is very active, both as a minority group and as part of the British Deaf community as a whole. This month the BDN finds out what is happening on the Jewish Deaf scene, meets some of the Jewish Deaf people who are already well-known to BDN readers, and finds out more about the coming WOJD Congress.



Young Jewish Deaf people at a party at the JDA.

JDA - a focus point for Jewish Deaf

Jewish Deaf people's lives are centred around two rich cultures, those of the Deaf community and the Jewish community. The Jewish Deaf Association is based in London and is a centre point for Jewish Deaf people to meet or to contact for advice or information. The BDN finds out about the JDA from two JDA members, MARTIN BOGARD and MYER SOLOMON.

Where is the JDA?

The Jewish Deaf Association is situated at 90 Cazenove Road in North London. It was officially opened on 19th October, 1952.

Before World War II there was a Jewish Deaf Club in Aldgate/Whitechapel (East London). It did not seem to have a proper structure, but was run as a get-together club and met in a hired room every week with the help of a Miss H. David, who became Headmistress of the Residential School for Jewish Deaf Children (RSJDC).

The JDA was founded by Mr. J.J. Newman who was concerned that there was no proper Jewish Deaf Club where Jewish Deaf people could share their Jewish faith and culture. Mr. Newman, helped by Miss H. Schlesinger and supporters, rented two adjoining houses in Cazenove Road, North London that had previously been a hostel for German refugees. Later the two houses were bought and altered extensively to make a proper club house. Since, at that time, most of the Jewish Deaf were pupils of the RSJDC, they automatically became members of the JDA.

The JDA has over 200 members from all over Britain, Europe and the USA.

What does the JDA provide?

The JDA is not only a club, it also provides welfare help where and when needed, such as providing interpreters for visits to hospital or the Benefit Agency for example. There is also a Friendship Club within the JDA where meals are provided.

In addition, the JDA has a wonderful resource centre that was opened by Desmond Wilcox (the husband of Esther Rantzen). It has a large range of special aids equipment for deaf people that anyone, whether a member or not, can try out.

Day Centre

The JDA has a Day Centre which is open every Wednesday. Members from all over London arrive about 11.00a.m. and enjoy a chat before a three course hot meal is served at 12.30p.m. This is prepared by a cook carrying out the special Jewish kosher dietary laws and the meal is served to the members by regular volunteers. After lunch, activities are arranged by the members. A raffle is held every week, the prizes being brought in by the members and the money goes towards the various outings that take place during the year. Tea and cake is provided at approximately 3.30p.m. and a minibus hired from the Borough Council takes members either to their home or to their nearest point of transport.

Committee

We have a committee which meets regularly to arrange a programme and run events.

Magazine

We are very lucky to have a wonderful editorial committee who work together to layout and publish a quarterly magazine. The magazine usually has 30 pages per issue and is full of various topics and information. It is distributed to JDA members, supporters and various organisations connected with the Deaf community in general.

Koleinu

Since the RSJDC closed in 1965, Jewish deaf pupils have been going to different schools (Deaf Schools or Partially Hearing Units or mainstream schools) which don't teach them their Jewish faith and culture. So the JDA works closely with "Koleinu", a Jewish deaf youth club in NW London, where youth workers run activities for them every Sunday.

Jewish Deaf Circle

There is another Jewish deaf club called "Jewish Deaf Circle" that opens once a month on the last Tuesday of each month and is situated in a synagogue in Marble Arch (West London). It benefits those who live nearby.



A group of JDA members prepare to leave Heathrow Airport in London for a holiday in Israel in 1975.

Sport

The JDA has helped to sponsor members to participate in international deaf and hearing sports.

It has also organised holiday tours to Israel both for sight-seeing and for sports events with the Israeli Deaf.

Jewish festivals

The JDA organises celebrations for special Jewish holy days and festivals.

Residential accommodation

There is a limited number of rooms available for Jewish Deaf residents at 90 Cazenove Road. The two people living there now - both former pupils of the Jewish Deaf School - have been there for many years, have never married and have no family of their own now.

Religious services

Religious services are not held regularly as the members come from such diverse areas, but they go to their own local synagogues if they wish. Interpreted services are held in a centrally located synagogue from time to time.



Stoke Newington Police Station near the JDA's premises in London was one of the first in the Metropolitan Police to have a minicom. JDA members demonstrate how the minicom should be used.

Other activities

We used to have monthly rambles during summer and winter but times have changed and we don't have them nowadays. What with the increase in motorways and the industrialisation of the countryside, it is difficult to find new routes to walk not far from Central London.

Besides the usual coach outings, we have a yearly photographic competition in which members go to a particular place such as the Docklands, Greenwich or London Zoo to take photographs to compete for a photography trophy.

Recently we have had speakers on Women's Rights and Self Defence. (So far we haven't had any talks on Men's Rights and Self Defence!). Also Sharon Ridgeway has given a talk on Mental Health among the Deaf, a talk that was very thought-provoking.

Move for JDA?

For some years it has been noticed that members have gradually moved from East London to North West London, so the JDA is actively seeking new premises in North West London with good access to public transport.



BBC TV Producer, Desmond Wilcox, with Deaf members at the JDA Resource Centre.

Resource Centre proves its need

On 31st March, 1992, the first JDA Advisory and Resource Centre, based at the Club premises in Cazenove Road in London, was officially opened by Desmond Wilcox the BBC TV Producer.

A lot of research was done before the opening to find out whether such a Resource Centre was needed. The Executive Director of the JDA had a discussion with representatives of other major deaf organisations as well as local social services and they all agreed that such Resource Centres were badly needed and could be a valuable asset to their own work. It was felt that people who became deafened really did not know much about environmental aids and often needed advice.

The JDA members watched the conversion of the room where the equipment was to be installed with much interest and, as soon as the environmental aids were displayed, they put their own names forward to receive advice on the latest technology.

The JDA's policy is that the Resource Centre should be available to deaf and hard of hearing people of all faiths and religions, as well as to carers and families. Another policy is that nothing is sold or loaned, but, if a piece of equipment is found to be suitable, the Centre's staff contacts the relevant social services to provide it for the client. The staff then follow up the order to make sure that the equipment is received and the recipient is satisfied. Obviously the various local authorities have their own policies which result in some Borough Councils dealing with the orders within a couple of weeks and other Boroughs taking as long as six to nine months or more.

The Resource Centre was widely used and the JDA Committee approved the funding for a second Centre in Golders Green, North West London. The two Centres attract deaf and hard of hearing people from all parts of London and the suburbs, as well as social workers, lip-reading teachers, audiologists and other professionals. The staff, with volunteers who are themselves hearing impaired, visit Day Centres and Residential Homes to demonstrate portable equipment.

The success of the Centres has been far more than expected. They have been extremely useful to deaf and hard of hearing people in the area and it is felt more Centres should be available to deaf and hard of hearing people throughout the UK.

For more information about the two Resource Centres ring 081-455-1557 (minicom/voice).

Pat Goldring, Executive Director, JDA

Feature



re-telling the story of how Moses led us all out of Egypt out of the land of slavery and into the promised land.

Israel Independence Day is celebrated in May. We eat Israeli type food and organise quizzes and competitions with an Israeli theme.

There is usually a good attendance at the Seder Meal for Passover.

Jewish holy days and festivals

Jewish festivals are a very important part of Jewish Deaf people's lives. What are these festivals and how are they celebrated? EVA FIELDING-JACKSON, MARTIN BOGARD and MYER SOLOMON of the Jewish Deaf Association explain:-

Throughout history Jewish people have often been attacked in a big way by different people who wanted to wipe out the Jewish culture. They have always failed and the Jewish culture is still here, which is why we enjoy celebrating the special festivals in the Jewish calendar - to commemorate our continuing freedom.

Here are some of the most important holy days and festivals:-

Shabbat: This is held every Saturday and is similar to the Christian Sabbath on a Sunday. It requires a special procedure such as lighting candles, blessing the wine and eating Cholla (Jewish bread for Shabbat). One of the 10 Commandments orders us to remember the Shabbat and to guard it, so it is traditional to light two candles - one to represent the word remember and the other to represent the word guard.

New Year: The Jewish New Year is around the month of September. The Jewish calendar is 5755 years old (compared to the Christian calendar which is 1995). It is a happy festival. We eat sweet things to bring us a sweet year. We blow into the Shoffar (Ram's horn) to ensure God listens to our prayers.

Yom Kippur: This is held about 10 days after the Jewish New Year and it is the most holy day in the Jewish calendar. On Yom Kippur you are supposed to fast and pray for forgiveness for your sins. You pray the New Year will enable you to correct yourself and do better.

Chanukah is celebrated in December. It is the festival of lights to commemorate the victory of Jewish zealots over the Greeks and Syrians when they tried to destroy the Temple. We light the nine candles in the menorah (candelabrum), eat doughnuts and have a stage play given either by our members at the JDA or professional performers.

Purim, in March, commemorates the King of Persia stopping the plans to kill every Jewish person in Persia. We sometimes wear fancy dress, eat special pastries (Hamantasches) and have a stage play usually with a Purim theme.

Passover follows around April. This is the story of the people of Israel who were slaves in Egypt for 400 years and who found freedom with the help of Moses. We eat traditional food like matzohs which is unleavened bread to remind us of the bread people of Israel ate in the desert on the way to the Holy Land. We listen to an invited guest



Myer Solomon lights the Chanukah candles while George M. Gee, President of the JDA, reads a prayer.

Warm welcome for visitors at JDC

The Jewish Deaf Circle was founded in 1981, the International Year of Disabled People. It is the only independent Jewish deaf club run by deaf people for deaf people.

A member of the JDC, Ruth Myers, said: "The JDC is a social club and meets on the premises of the West London Synagogue (near Marble Arch) which has at all times made us very welcome and helped us get involved in synagogue activities when we wish to do so.

"We meet on the last Tuesday of every month and activities include whist drives, bingo, scrabble, quizzes, parties and the ever popular social evenings. Jewish festivals are marked when they fall around the time of our club night and we have also arranged for sign language interpretation of the most important synagogue services, the first time they have been accessible to deaf people in the UK".

Visitors are warmly welcomed at the Jewish Deaf Circle and further information is available from Ruth Myers, 70 Blacketts Wood Drive, Chorleywood, Richmansworth, Herts WD3 5QQ; minicom/fax: 01923-283127.

Towards a freer world

The World Organisation of Jewish Deaf (WOJD) was set up in 1977 in Israel. Among the founders were the late Emil Stryker from London and Chaim Apter from Israel, who is the present Secretary of the Organisation.

The WOJD was funded by the Israeli Government for the first few years but now is dependent on membership fees and fundraising.

The aim of the WOJD is to keep Jewish Deaf people all over the world in touch with each other and to the Jewish faith.

Because of the various educational needs of Deaf people, they are educated in either mainstream Jewish or mixed schools or mixed denomination Schools for the Deaf. There are very few schools for Jewish Deaf people. The result is that most Jewish Deaf people are missing out, either on their Jewish culture or on their Deaf culture. The WOJD aims to be a bridge between the two and give Jewish Deaf people, access to both cultures.

The WOJD organises a Congress every four years. The first three were held in Israel and the last one in Paris in July 1992. The 5th Congress will take place in London at the Olympia Hilton between 21st and 27th July this year.

The theme of the Congress is "Towards a Freer World" and it aims to bring together, for the first time ever, Jewish Deaf people from East Europe, particularly from Russia and Hungary.

Anyone interested in the Jewish Deaf culture can attend the Congress.



For more information on the Congress contact: Eva Fielding-Jackson on 0272-836994 fax/voice, or Pat Goldring on 081-806-6147. You can also write to the Jewish Deaf Association, 90-92 Cazenove Rd., Stoke Newington, London N16 6AB.



David Jackson

VIDEO REVIEW

Schindler's List (15)

(running time - 187 minutes) starring Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley and Ralph Fiennes

A powerful film by Stephen Spielberg - it deservedly won many cinematic awards including seven Oscars. It is in black and white, giving it a feel of a documentary.

There are some colour scenes in between. It is skilfully edited to show why colour is needed at the right time.

It is based on a true story about a cunning Nazi member, Oskar Schindler (brilliantly played by Liam Neeson). He takes advantage of the Second World War to make quick money. He sets up a business manufacturing metal items for the German army and employs Jewish people - they are cheaper to employ than the local Polish people. Actually, it is a rule that Jewish people, wanting work, are not to be allowed to earn money. Their "earnings" would go to the SS.

Schindler is a womaniser and unfaithful to his wife. There is nothing good about him - one would think.

He becomes more involved in his business which is reaping enormous profits. Very often he has to argue with the Nazis in an attempt to keep his Jewish workers, but it is to keep his business running more than to save his workers. However, he eventually learns about the horrific events that are happening to the Jewish people and is genuinely determined to save his workers. The ending is very emotional and moving.

Many of the scenes are very harrowing. I saw it first in the cinema without subtitles and I was moved to tears. It was impossible to control myself. The second time, this time with subtitles, I would have expected to be less moved because I knew what to expect. My assumption was wrong - I was again emotionally affected.

So if you are a sensitive person, you will need a box of tissues.

For your information, Oskar Schindler was honoured by the Israelis (he became a righteous person), with a special award given by Israel to Gentiles (non-Jews) who perform heroic deeds to save Jewish people. He visited Israel for six months every year until his death in the early nineteen seventies. All his expenses while in Israel were met by the Israeli Government. He is buried near the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. His wife is still alive and is living in Argentina. She continues to visit Israel, her expenses again met by the Israeli Government.

Deaf Watchability Value - 5/5
Subtitles - 3/5

Comments from deaf viewers

Senan Dunne, Dublin - "The production of the film was absolutely brilliant - really a unique experience to see it. I was numbed at the end of the film - probably one of the most moving films I have ever seen".

Fiona Garfield and Antony Rabin, London - "Although we are fully aware of what happened as we are Jewish ourselves, the film stirred our feelings very much - it is a brilliant film - we were totally engrossed and, even if it was more than three hours, we did not feel it".

Judith Jackson, Reading - "This film should be seen by everyone as a lesson to be remembered - marvellous filming, editing and superb acting of first class

quality. It is a film that can be seen again and again".

Gloria Pullen, Bristol - "The film is of tremendous educational value - it makes us think of the terrible things that are happening in this world and also makes us realise that so many people are suffering like in Rwanda and Bosnia. Everyone should see the film".

Hilary Sutherland, Bristol - "It gave me a new insight into the strong community spirit of the Jewish people especially after the terrible experiences they went through during the war. My deaf son watched the film throughout with me and became totally aware of all the things that happened - he continually asked me questions, proving the film's real education value".



Face to Face

with John Hay



Eva Fielding-Jackson

This month the BDN puts the spotlight on the Jewish Deaf community and John Hay's guest is Eva Fielding-Jackson, who is co-ordinator of the 5th World Organisation of Jewish Deaf Congress being held in London in July this year.

J.A.H.: Eva, you were not born here in England - where do you actually come from?

E.F.J.: I was born in Hungary in 1954, a couple of years before the Communist revolution in 1956. My parents did not like the idea of living under Communism so they purchased tickets to the USA. Unfortunately, I became ill with pneumonia and was in hospital at the time we were due to fly. Consequently the tickets were not valid any longer. However my parents had another option - they escaped to Italy and waited there for 3 weeks before a ship came and took us all to Israel. So you can say that I grew up in Israel. I was married to an Englishman and in 1984 we decided to try and move to live in England. I have been here since then. My marriage did not last and I got divorced and remarried nearly two years ago.

J.A.H.: You come from a deaf family; tell me more about it, where were they educated?

E.F.J.: Yes, both my parents were profoundly deaf, they were both born in Hungary. My mum was educated at the Jewish boarding school for the deaf in Budapest, in Mexico street, - this school still exists but it is now a special school for children with various disabilities. My father was educated in a non-Jewish school in Debrecen and was bullied for being Jewish so did not stay there for long. He returned to his village Goulash (yes, the same name as for the famous Hungarian dish).

J.A.H.: Every Jewish friend of mine lost some of his or her family during the Holocaust. Is this the same for you?

E.F.J.: Sadly it is. My mother had 10 brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents. While she was in the school, the area became a ghetto and she was not allowed to leave. Meanwhile, back in the town where her family lived, the Nazis took all the families to

Auschwitz, among them my mother's younger sister who was only 2 years old. Her name was Eva and I was named after her.

After the war when my mother returned to her home town she learnt that all of her 10 brothers and sisters, her parents and grandparents had been taken to the gas chambers. She was 16 and all alone in the world.

My father had 2 deaf brothers. Their parents were hearing but they were cousins (in those days many Jewish people married into the family to avoid mixed marriages of different religions). I believe that is why the three brothers were all born deaf. During the war the Germans took the 3 brothers to do forced labour work in various camps in Germany while the parents were taken to Auschwitz.

From what my father told me he had been to 7 concentration camps to do various jobs. His favourite brother was with him but eventually died in his arms of starvation.

Somehow my father survived the Holocaust. His last camp was Bergen Belsen, but the absurd thing was that my father was still there until 1947. Why? Because nobody told him the war was over! He was deaf and could not speak German and he did not know he could get up and go.

After his return to Hungary he discovered that all his family had died and that he was the sole survivor.

In Bergen Belsen he met another Hungarian Jewish Deaf man who eventually emigrated to Israel and married a woman who was with my mother in the same school/ghetto. This couple arranged for my parents to meet in Budapest. The interesting thing is that they were both the sole survivors of their families and my mother said to me that he was the only Hungarian, Jewish, Deaf and Single man in the whole of Hungary, so she married him for the sake of creating a family.

They got married in 1951 and my sister was born in 1953. I was born a year later.

The war never ended for my father until the day he died which was January this year. My father kept on having nightmares about the Nazis and about his family back home.

J.A.H.: What happened to your mother?

E.F.J.: My parents followed me to England in July 1985 and stayed here. My mum was suffering from cancer of the liver that spread to her bones, lungs, and eventually her brain. She died in April 1989 aged 62 and was buried in Reading. My father was also a very ill man. He had 8 strokes, one of them on my last birthday. He also suffered from Parkinson's disease and really he went down slowly over the years. He was ill for 23 years and eventually died in January this year. Now there is only me and my sister left from those two families who once lived in Hungary.

J.A.H.: Sorry to hear about it. Tell me something about your schooling in Israel.

E.F.J.: I was educated in a hearing school, as my parents, both being profoundly deaf, never

identified the fact that I could not hear well. Really my deafness was diagnosed at school when I was 14. By that time I had a lot of behavioural problems and was very unsettled. Even a new set of hearing aids could not help at all. I could not fit in the schools I attended and eventually gave up going to school and completed all my studies on my own at home. I have a full matriculation certificate which is equivalent to 7 'O' levels and two 'A' levels.



Eva, aged 3, with her sister and parents on the way to Israel from Italy.

J.A.H.: When you came to England you worked for the Scope Youth Project, what was it like coming to England with a new lifestyle, new language, new friends?

E.F.J.: I was still married to my first husband when I came to England and I was desperately looking for a job. At first I was working in Walthamstow in the electronics field. I then applied for the full-time youth worker post at Scope. I was qualified (at that time I was the only qualified full-time Deaf youth worker in England). I am really grateful to the committee who gave me the opportunity to prove myself. I was a foreigner, a stranger if you like, and yet they gave me the chance. Scope was the only full-time youth project for young Deaf people in England and was very new. Now it is a well-known project, with a large number of members and rich in facilities and activities. I still do some work for Scope like helping to arrange an exchange visit with the Russian Youth which will take place in May 1996.

I loved working for Scope but felt it was time to go, to widen my horizons, to try new areas and, mostly, to enable new blood to give a fresh input into Scope.

The English language was not so difficult to pass in but BSL was. After 3 months in England I went to the City Lit for my CACDP Stage 1 and failed it because of my accent and my lip patterns. However, I tried it again a couple of months later and passed it. I then went on to learn Stage 2 and 3 and passed them both.

J.A.H.: I am told you speak several different languages. Which ones and what is your secret?

E.F.J.: I can speak fluently in 3 languages, Hebrew, Hungarian and English. I can also sign in BSL and ISL (Israeli Sign) fluently. The Hungarian Sign Language is very similar to Israeli Sign Language so there is no problem there. The secret? I think it is very important to master at least one language at an early age, and to use it as a base to be able to translate a new language. That is why I strongly believe Deaf children should be given British Sign Language at an early stage. English can then be taught at a later stage as a second language. The way it is now, Deaf children are given both if they are 'lucky' or just the oral if they aren't - and it is difficult to acquire a full language that way.

J.A.H.: You are known here in England for your work for See Hear!; can you tell us more about that?

E.F.J.: Those four years at See Hear! as researcher broadened my experience so much that I learnt a lot about the British Deaf community. However, I realised how much I missed the teamwork and community work that prevailed at Scope. The work at See Hear! meant a lot of travelling around, meeting people and visiting places - all these were invaluable experiences. My contract with See Hear! ended nearly two years ago. Nevertheless I am glad to be doing things that I experienced while at Scope - such as my part-time work for the University of Bristol as well as my voluntary work for the World Organisation of Jewish Deaf (WOJD). I am the Chairperson and Co-ordinator of the 5th Congress of the WOJD which will take place in July this year in London.

J.A.H.: The theme for the Congress is "Towards a Freer World" - why did you choose this theme and how are you trying to achieve it?

E.F.J.: In recent years the Communist bloc has changed its face and its map. Russia is no longer Communist and neither is Hungary nor the other surrounding countries. We realised that we have never had Jewish Deaf people from those countries at our Congresses. So with that theme in mind we started to raise funds to help those Deaf people from east Europe to come over and take part for the first time in a Jewish International Congress.

It has been very hard to raise the money but it seems now that we will be successful in securing places for around 10 Russians, 5 Hungarians and 5 others from smaller countries such as Moldavia, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

It will be an extremely valuable experience for them and I do hope that they will be able to go back home and be more involved in the life of the Jewish Deaf people there.

J.A.H.: You went to Russia last year; was it part of your work for the WOJD?

E.F.J.: Yes there were two reasons for me going there. Firstly, to arrange the visit to the Congress and, secondly, to help set up a Jewish Deaf Club there. I am going again in

April and hope to see more of the community there.

J.A.H.: I wish you good luck with the Congress. Now can I ask you more general questions about the Jewish faith?

For example, when we were in Israel for the recording of the See Hear! Christmas Special, I noticed that there were some extreme orthodox Jewish sects like Hassidim and Neturey Kartha.

How can deaf children or even Deaf adults survive the isolation within predominately hearing families?

E.F.J.: I would say very much the same way non-Jewish Deaf people survive among their hearing families no matter how big the difference is between the two cultures. To be honest, I have not seen many Deaf people who practise their religion. It is fairly hard to practise it. There are 613 laws in the Jewish Halacha and most of them are "Do this.." and "Don't do this" - very hard to follow. Also Deaf people are known to travel around at weekends to meet their friends. Religious Jewish Deaf people cannot do that often as they have to wait for the Shabbat (Saturday) to be over. Men and women are not allowed to mix. They have to follow a strict diet called 'Kosher'. All this is difficult so Deaf people are just opting out. However, I know that in recent years there has been a movement in Israel that is trying to bring the Jewish Deaf people back to religion. There are about 100 Deaf people who are studying the Bible very seriously and practising it.

J.A.H.: Eva, you have been in England 10 years now; what do you think of the attitude of British people towards you as a Jewish person, compared to your parents' experiences in Hungary and Israel?

J.A.H.: I will talk about my own experiences first and then refer to those of my parents.

I don't remember much of Hungary.

My first memories are really of Israel. And I remember growing up never even thinking to myself that I am Jewish. I was just another person.

When I came to England I was reminded every day that I was Jewish, that I was a member of a minority and at times faced prejudice. I did experience some anti-Semitic (racist attitudes against Jewish people) remarks.



Last family photo of Eva (right) with her parents and sister before her mother died in 1989.

I have never experienced discrimination on the grounds of being Jewish or at least I was not aware of any. I believe attitudes and behaviour patterns have now changed for the better.

My mother always remembered about the years of hostility she met because of her being Jewish. She never declared she was Jewish but she had strong facial features that suggested she was Jewish. She always told me off for showing my necklace with the Star of David on it saying I was asking for trouble.

As I have already mentioned, my father was bullied at school for being Jewish. His sign name actually shows the hair that comes from the temples of Jewish religious men. It is what we call Peyah. In Hungary nowadays, as well as in Russia, Jewish people still face anti-Semitism and discrimination.

J.A.H.: I know that the Jewish Deaf Association caters for Deaf Jewish people predominately living in the London area. How does the Association serve the needs of the Jewish Deaf people in the rest of the country where there are strong Jewish communities, for example in Glasgow, Manchester and Leeds?

E.F.J.: The JDA serves the Jewish Deaf people nationally, not just the London area. It is true to say that the majority of Jewish Deaf people live in London. But many of the others are members of the JDA. They get the newsletter and come to the festivals every now and then. However, if they need community help, our Executive Director Pat Goldring can help.

J.A.H.: Finally, Eva, what are your hopes for the Jewish Deaf people here and worldwide?

E.F.J.: Firstly, I would like to see all Jewish people, whether Deaf or hearing, living in peace with their neighbours and not facing discrimination or anti-Semitism.

Here in England I would like people to be more aware of, more understanding, and more welcoming towards Jewish people as well as other minorities. I would like Deaf people to sign the word Jewish using the acceptable sign that represents a beard and not the hooked nose that is used in the north and in other places.

Worldwide. . . I would like to see more mobility, more exchanges and stronger links between communities and individuals.

The word Shalom in Hebrew has three meanings - Peace, Hello and Bye Bye.

So I will say **Shalom** now, meaning peace on you and byeeee. . .

Around the Jewish Deaf community

Many Deaf people well-known in the Deaf community are also members of the Jewish Deaf community. The BDN meets some of them and finds out what they do and what their Jewish and Deaf cultures mean to them.

Paula Garfield

Paula Garfield, who is a Deaf actress, was born deaf 27 years ago. Her twin sister, Fiona, was also born deaf. Her family is very close-knit and caring. Her parents are very strong believers in the Jewish faith. Paula was brought up in a very strong Jewish community in Kenton in London where her mother was working at the synagogue as administrator.

Paula and Fiona learnt to read and speak Hebrew when they were six years old. At twelve years old, they both had their barmitzvah. They joined their local Jewish youth club and a Jewish Deaf club in London. They still go to the Jewish Deaf Club occasionally when they are not too busy.

Paula says: *It is not easy to be an actress when you are Jewish. I have been acting for the last five years and often have to miss some of the important Jewish festivals. Luckily my mother is very understanding about the situation and gives me all her support.*

Paula is currently on a four months tour with a production for Graeae Theatre Company, "UBU".

Golda Dahan

I came to London in 1987 to work with the Common Ground Sign Dance Theatre, which I had seen in Israel. I myself started to dance ballet at the age of 13 in Tel Aviv, Israel. I toured all over Israel, Europe and the UK with an Israeli dance company called Sound & Silence which had both deaf and hearing dancers. My elder sister Sara also performed with this company.

I come from a family of 12 children, 6 boys and 6 girls - 4 of the girls including myself were born deaf, so life was by no means easy. My parents were hearing and could speak both French and Hebrew.

Nowadays I earn my living as a computer operator, although I am still quite involved with deaf dance projects and have worked with Shape at Saddler's Wells Theatre. Also last summer I worked as a play leader with deaf children in Essex, using dance to help the children express and enjoy themselves.

I have been involved with the Jewish Deaf Association and have taken part in plays with the Jewish Deaf Drama Group directed by David Jackson. I hope to contribute in the future in some small way to Deaf culture through dance.

Issy Schlisselman

Issy Schlisselman is well-known to BBC TV's See Hear! viewers for his roles in Christmas Shows. He has also played an important part in Deaf Theatre. He serves on the Equity Disabled Performers Committee and was a founder member of the British Theatre for the Deaf with which he has performed "Hassan", "The Voyage", "Boy in Darkness" and "The Most Dangerous Animal". He has been an adviser on several theatre and TV productions, including "Monday after the Miracle" and "Fox".

Issy says: *My Jewish faith means a great deal to me as does my Jewish and Deaf cultures. I enjoy attending my local Deaf Club and taking part in the discussion groups there. I attend the celebrations of the Jewish festivals at the Jewish Deaf Association and the special religious services at the West London Synagogue where a Sign Language interpreter is provided. I do not experience any conflict between my Jewish and Deaf cultures.*

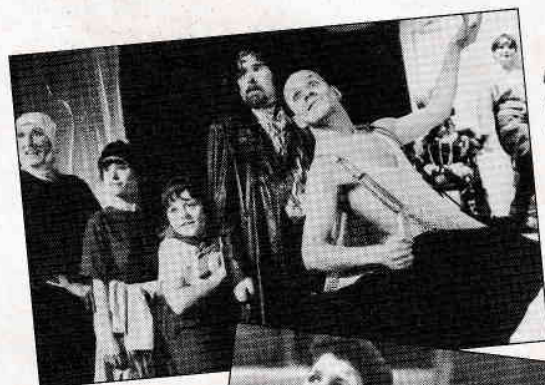
Tyron Woolfe

I go to Redbridge College of Further Education and am studying psychology and sociology A levels. My aim is to achieve a psychology degree.

Two years ago, I did biology and English A levels but I was depressed because of not enough support at my last college and I left with a low grade for English and a fail for biology. Now, at Redbridge, I have access to all my studies via a facilitator, who either signs or takes notes depending on what I want. So far my assignment marks have been very high, which shows that correct support gives correct grades.

As for the Jewish part of me, it is just a label. I do not carry out religious beliefs anymore, but always feel a loyalty to the Jewish Deaf community. I have had my barmitzvah, and then Dad told me my religion was now up to me. I still believe strongly in God, but not in religion.

The Jewish Deaf community is a warm community that I can always rely on. People are not the 'meanies' they are labelled - they are loving and thoughtful. I used to go to the JDA regularly, but now I have lost interest mainly because my mates of my own age are usually not there. I still respect the club and adore their monthly magazine. There is no bar in the club and never a disco, which are the main things people my age want! My friends vary from Roman Catholics to Protestants, Muslims and Hindus and they don't feel welcome in the club. Not being Jewish seems to be immoral to some members. I find this embarrassing.



Paula Garfield (second left) as Gyron in Graeae's 1994/95 tour of UBU.



Golda Dahan



Issy Schlisselman (right)



Tyrone Woolfe



Susan Daniels



Sandra David



David Rose



Sharon Ridgeway

Susan Daniels

Susan Daniels is the first deaf person to become Chief Executive of the National Deaf Children's Society. Before being appointed to the NDCS, Susan, who qualified as a teacher, lectured at the City Lit Centre for Deaf People and later became RNID Higher Education Development Officer then Head of the RNID's Policy and Research Department.

She has won a number of awards including the 1992 Young Jewish Pentland Care Award and in 1994 she was a finalist in the Options/Mercury sponsored "Working Women Mean Business" Awards. Susan says: *I do not think there is any conflict between my Jewish and Deaf cultures and I have a natural affinity towards both communities. I feel Jewish more as a result of history than religious belief, particularly as almost my entire Dutch family perished in the Holocaust.*

I am a member of the West London Synagogue (Upper Berkeley Street) and attend with my father on High days and holidays. I do feel that all religious groups need to do far more to make their services accessible to deaf people. As a child I felt alienated from Judaism, particularly when attending synagogue, because I understood very little of what was going on. Now many of the services are accessible through sign language interpreters and this makes a real difference in enabling me to feel part of a vibrant community.

Sandra David

I am the third generation Deaf member of my family on my late mother's side. (The three generations are Jeannie Saunders, Gabrielle Israel and myself).

I taught on a course called 'Basic Survival Kit' at the City Lit Centre for Deaf People for five years. The subjects ranged from literacy and numeracy to communicating with people in public and using information to gain access to services. I enjoyed this very much, but found that a lot of the literacy and numeracy skills should have been acquired at school. Why didn't this happen? Because of this, I decided to change my career and went off to train as a fully qualified teacher of Deaf children.

I now teach at the Frank Barnes School in Swiss Cottage,

London which caters for 2 - 11 year-olds coming from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Being Jewish from an orthodox background, I continue to observe and celebrate the main festivals. Because of my profound deafness, I don't go to a synagogue as I can't follow the services. Also I don't regard myself as strictly orthodox - more in between reform and liberal. I go out socially on the Sabbath because Deaf events are meaningful and it is more important for me to be in contact with other Deaf people.

I am a member of the Jewish Deaf Circle which meets at Marble Arch monthly and I enjoy the Jewish Deaf Association's Newsletter. I also attend other clubs and the majority of our friends are non-Jewish.

David Rose

My present position is that of Manager of Deaf Services for Surrey Social Services Department where I have worked for nearly 11 years.

A day at work normally covers a variety of tasks and there is never a dull moment! These revolve around supervision and training of staff, raising general awareness of the needs of deaf people at every given opportunity, equality of access issues, development of projects, applying for funding and managing a cost centre budget and contracts.

I am Chair of the Alliance of Deaf Service Users and Providers (ADSUP), a Governor of Burwood Park School and College for the Deaf, and a Trustee of the National Deaf Children's Society and Playmix.

What does my Jewish faith mean to me? I was born into a Jewish family and was brought up in a fairly orthodox way with regular attendance at a local hearing synagogue until my barmitzvah. The services at the synagogue were inaccessible to me. I am now not practising the religion for personal reasons, and see myself, in many ways, as a multi-cultural person, rather than just a Jewish person!

Nevertheless, I cannot deny my cultural links with my family and relatives, and can strongly identify with the Jewishness within that circle. I find also that I can identify rather more closely, and experience a nice, warm feeling, when I meet up with my Jewish Deaf friends. I don't think that the two cultures (Deaf and Jewish) always mix comfortably because the issue of Deaf culture and communication are quite different from those of the hearing Jewish world.

Sharon Ridgeway

I am a Research Psychologist/Counsellor at the National Centre for Mental Health and Deafness at Prestwich.

My work involves meeting different clients, some having come long distances to the Unit at Prestwich. There are meetings to attend and correspondence and telephone calls to deal with. Sometimes I need to travel to the Belfast clinic or to conferences in Britain or abroad.

Being Jewish is an important part of my life and it has become more so over the past few years. After attending Hebrew classes as a youngster of 6 and 7, it was too difficult to learn and I think I drifted away from having a Jewish orientation until my late 20s. I keep kosher and it means most of the time I am vegetarian because restaurants don't sell kosher food unless I go to kosher restaurants and there is only one in Manchester and a few in London. I go to synagogue on Jewish holy days. Usually I read from the books as there is no access to services. I read the Jewish Chronicle weekly and am interested in Israeli affairs and often visit family in Israel.

It makes me sad to see there is still so much anti-semitism (anti-Jewish attitudes) in both Deaf and hearing society. I am horrified when some people say the Holocaust is not true. I lost family in the Holocaust. I believe we must never forget it - it was only 50 years ago - or it could happen again.

It is important to be able to combine both Jewish and Deaf cultures. I would not want to choose only one.

Young Faces



Ramon Woolfe

with Antony Rabin

Ramon interviews Antony Rabin who is co-ordinator at Koleinu.



Antony Rabin

R.W.: Can you describe your job as co-ordinator at Koleinu?

A.R.: Koleinu is a project for young Jewish Deaf people and their families. I now work as co-ordinator after three years there as a youth worker. There are two age groups for Jewish Deaf young people in the project which members regularly attend although numbers are small. They enjoy interacting in a relaxed environment. My role also involves outreach work to give individual support to families and members who do not attend many of Koleinu's events.

My role is to co-ordinate a team of volunteers and workers to meet the needs of our members and families. Koleinu invites Deaf guest speakers to give talks to portray role models for our members and families. There is also a library, sign language classes, Deaf awareness training in Jewish schools and synagogues, community groups, informal educational workshops and festival celebrations organised jointly with the Jewish Deaf Association.

R.W.: How do you identify yourself - as a Deaf Jewish man or a Jewish Deaf man?

A.R.: That is a tough question to answer! You may see me as a Jewish Deaf man at this stage due to my present job, being brought up by a Jewish cultural hearing family, enjoying its unique food, being

proud of Israel and its vulnerable history and the sense of unity of Jewish people. I am a cultural Jew not a religious Jew. But I see myself as a Deaf Jewish man as I face the oppression of the hearing society. I put my Deafness before my religion. I am politically involved with the Deaf community. So I have a dual identity on a balanced level. I am Deaf and Jewish with pride.

R.W.: Can you tell me about your barmitzvah when you became a man at the age of 13? Was it easy to recite in Hebrew - did you have any help?

A.R.: My barmitzvah gave me a shiver of nerves and I had to speak an alien language, Hebrew, to hundreds of relatives, friends and strangers at the synagogue. I shared half of

the prayers with my older brother.

My barmitzvah was a memorable occasion, especially the party afterwards. It was like enjoying a wild New Year's Eve party with all the presents.

R.W.: How did your schoolmates react to you being a Jewish boy? Were there any racist remarks or did they accept you as a person?

A.R.: At my secondary school, my schoolmates accepted me being Jewish. I believe they saw me as a person first before my religion although there were a few comments about circumcision and I was envied for going home for extra Jewish holidays!

R.W.: How do you think the hearing Jewish community sees the Deaf community and the Jewish Deaf community? Do you consider their views as "patronising"? Are they supportive?

A.R.: Every day many Jewish Deaf people can take a reasonably full part in Jewish religious life. However, Deaf awareness among the Jewish community is very thin and the community can easily leave Deaf people as outsiders. Jewish culture, such as Israeli singing, the Rabbi giving talks and the use of the Hebrew language, creates puzzlement for Deaf people as they find it difficult to follow even with interpreters present. More awareness and support for Jewish Deaf groups needs to be established.

R.W.: Are you a member of the JDA?

A.R.: I am a member of the JDA and I occasionally attend meetings if there is an interesting event and when I am doing outreach work for Koleinu. However, I recognise the younger generation has different needs from the older generation. There was a Jewish Deaf school in the early days and the JDA has many of its former pupils, but the new generation of young people is being brought up through a different education approach, attending hearing Jewish-only schools or mixed schools. So Koleinu is better able to support the younger generation.

R.W.: Have you any message you would like to give to other young Jewish Deaf people?

A.R.: I would like to encourage Jewish Deaf young people who are only involved with the hearing Jewish community to explore their Deaf identity and to develop their self-esteem as a Jewish person and Deaf person and not allow themselves to be patronised and isolated without realising it. I would like to say to those Jewish Deaf young people who reject themselves as being Jewish - I understand the oppression everyone faces in society today especially those of us who are a minority within a minority. Nevertheless every Jew is an individual and there is some value in being Jewish. I hope to see more self-esteem in being Jewish as well as Deaf.



Antony teaching sign language to hearing Jewish girls

Jewish Deaf sportspeople in the top league

With only around 400 members, the Jewish Deaf community in the UK is very small, but it has its share of top Deaf sportsmen and sportswomen. The BDN names a few:



The British Jewish Deaf Sports Organisation's first ladies' basketball team to play in an international competition. They lost to Haifa Deaf Club in Israel. Photo by Jack Hart.

Martin Bogard: Martin Bogard began his badminton competitively when he was 18 years old and at his full-time college in Surrey. After his time at college he joined three different badminton clubs, in Essex, Middlesex and Kent, so that he could play for them in separate county leagues. Before Martin was married, he played badminton every day including Saturday and Sunday in matches and tournaments.

Martin and the late Rodney Fletcher were often playing against each other in the final of the British Deaf Championship. Martin was a member of the British Deaf Badminton team and gained many gold, silver and bronze medals in the World Games for the Deaf in Los Angeles in 1985, New Zealand in 1989 and Bulgaria in 1993. He won more medals in the 1st European Championship in Manchester in 1990 and in Copenhagen in Denmark in October last year. He was selected to represent Great Britain in the Maccabiah Games held in Israel in 1981 and again in 1989. The Maccabiah Games are the "Olympic Games" for the Jewish people. Martin was the only deaf sportsman out of over 4,000 who came from all over the world for the Games. He was honoured with a gold medal on both occasions.

Martin became a fully qualified badminton coach in 1986. He often helps and instructs deaf players during the British Deaf Sports Council's training sessions.

Malka Bogard: Malka Bogard, who is an Israeli, has been married to Martin for 17 years. She has played table-tennis and basketball for Israel in international competitions against Germany and Romania.

When Malka first came to England she had never played badminton before, but she learnt and improved her game so quickly she was selected to play in the World Games in Los Angeles and New Zealand with the British team. Malka managed to gain a bronze medal for the mixed event in New Zealand. Malka then decided to go back to the Israel team and for the very first time Israel was able to send a badminton player to the World Games in Bulgaria.

In May this year Malka will be playing table-tennis for Israel in the European Championships that will be held in Tel-Aviv, Israel.

Howard Woolfe, Ilan Dwek, Barry David: Among a number of Jewish Deaf chess players are three who have represented England in international tournaments. They are Howard Woolfe, Ilan Dwek and Barry David. They have also taken part for some years in the English Deaf Championships.

Bernard Polchar: The National Table Tennis Championships men's double event of 1994 was won by Bernard Polchar and his partner.

Some years ago there was a group of good Jewish table tennis players which won the British Table Tennis Championships, but only a few Jewish players are playing competitively at present.

Sharon Hirshman: 1993 was the very first time the British Deaf Sports Council had sent a basketball team to an international event since the British Jewish Deaf Sports Organisation had sent its basketball team to Israel in 1991.

1993 was the year of the World Games for the Deaf in Bulgaria and Sharon Hirshman was in the British team.

Jane Stryker: The only Jewish player to have played in the British tennis team at the World Games for the Deaf was Jane Stryker and this took place before the war.

Neil Kaufman: The only Jewish sportsman to be selected for the Great Britain Deaf football team was Neil Kaufman. Here he describes his experiences when he played for the Great Britain team in the World Games for the Deaf in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1969:

"The late Joe Goulding from Liverpool was the manager of the Great Britain football team. David Chaplow from Coventry was the captain. We played against the USSR, as it was called in those days. Great Britain was favourite to win the cup. We were leading 1-0 at half-time. Great Britain was popular with the spectators from other countries and they came onto the pitch and mingled with us during half-time. There were also television cameramen filming us. Poor Joe Goulding, the manager, was in a frenzy because he could not get his tactics talk going during the precious half-time. The Russian team, which was well-disciplined and organised, went to a quiet corner of the pitch for its tactics talk. After half-time, the Russian team scored 3 goals and won the match. We were knocked out of the tournament after only one match. It was the price we paid for being too popular!"



It must be rare for three brothers to play in the same football team. Top row: Andrew, Gerry and Frank Frankis. Below: Brothers Mark and Simeon Hart also play for the Jewish Deaf football team. Photo by Jack Hart.

Deaf Sport



The British Jewish Deaf Sports Organisation's first football team to go abroad (right). It was in August 1991 and they played Israel (left). Israel won 1-0. Photo by Jack Hart.