



Reminiscences Corner



This extracted article was published in the "JDA Quarterly Review, No. 1. in Autumn 1968. The Editor was Alan Murray, and he has kindly sent in two Quarterly Reviews from 1968 -69. I thought many of you may be interested in this article, written by the founder of the Jewish Deaf Association - Mr Julius Newman (father of our Chairman Mrs Evelyn Gee) - which could jog your memories of the days long past....Ed.

HOW THE JEWISH DEAF ASSOCIATION WAS FORMED by J.J. Newman

I have been requested by the Editor, Mr. Alan Murray, of the JDA Quarterly Review to write an article entitled the Story of the Jewish Deaf Association, its formation and subsequent progress. In setting out this short resumé there is much more that could be written but time and space do not permit.

After we had a successful Bazaar for the funds of the Jewish Blind Society, a meeting was held to express appreciation for the work done by the organisers of the Bazaar. This meeting was addressed by the blind MP Mr. Hugh Fraser. He was emphasising the disabilities of the blind and how much they needed attention and help.

The thought that immediately went through my mind having had personal contact with deaf people) was "What arrangements are available for Jewish deaf people?". I decided to ascertain if there was any centre or activities for the Jewish deaf. To my surprise I learnt very quickly that the only available meeting centres for the deaf and dumb were all being run by the Churches and that the large number of Jewish deaf people, young and old alike, were attending these various meetings in church halls,

I then approached Miss Hilda Schlesinger M.B.E., knowing that she had been interested in the deaf for many years. She was very cooperative and explained that prior to the 1939/45 war, there had been attempts at organising clubs for the Jewish deaf but unfortunately they had not been successful.

My next effort was to find members of the Jewish Community who would help financially. My first call was on Miss Clarica Davidson (who is unfortunately no longer with us) and she responded very enthusiastically. From then on progress was very rapid. We then held gatherings of the Jewish deaf and dumb people at various synagogue halls and particularly the Hampstead and Golders Green Synagogues who were always very helpful.

In April 1948, we held our first meeting at the Palestinian Club in the West End of London, where a tea was provided by courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. Harry Goodman. During discussions with the deaf people I learnt that their main ambition was to have a centre and home of their own where they could meet and discuss their problems.

In the Autumn of 1949, a Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Miss Clarica Davidson, and was known as the Jewish Deaf Association Concert Committee.

Subsequently an All Star Concert was organised at the Palace Theatre in the middle of 1950 and the sum of £3,200 was raised. Miss Clarica Davidson acted as Chairman for this function and I was the Hon. Treasurer. Miss Clarica Davidson was the Guest of Honour at this function and Dr. Feldman addressed the audience and asked anybody present in the audience who knew of premises that might be suitable for a club, to please contact me. Within a few days I was approached and told that 90/92 Cazenove Road, although having suffered war damage, could be obtained if quick action was taken. I immediately contacted the Chairman of the Joint Synagogue Children's Hostel and it was eventually arranged that, providing we repaired the building and made it habitable, they would give us a peppercorn lease at one shilling per annum. We then proceeded to have the necessary construction and decoration carried out at a cost of £1,400. (Funds were obtained for this work as a result of the Concert held at the Palace Theatre).

I would like to emphasise that through the enthusiasm and interest of our early Committee members, the Jewish Deaf Association was founded. To them, we, who have and are at present using our club premises, owe a great debt of gratitude, not least of all to Miss Sherwin who unfortunately is no longer with us.

Much has happened in the past twenty years and we are now fortunate enough to be the owners of this magnificent freehold premises (and free from all encumbrances).

JEWISH DEAF ASSOCIATION CONCERT COMMITTEE (The 1st. Committee of the J.D.A.)

Chairman: Miss C. Davidson
Hon. Secretaries: Mrs. S. Samuel and Miss J. Parker

Dennis Alfred, Esq
Leonard Alfred, Esq.
Harry Cohen, Esq.
Mrs. H. Freedman
Mr. & Mrs. G. M. Gee
C. Halpern, Esq.

Mrs. M.I. Hilton
H. Jacobs Esq.
Mrs. L. Lechem
Mrs. H.A. Matthews
Mrs. W. Paros
Mr. & Mrs. M. Polchar