

Bessie Marcovitch

12 January 1920 – 31 December 2009

Bessie was born on 12 January 1920, in Mile End, to Alexander and Jessie Myers.

Her father was a cabinet maker. Like most Jewish children who were born deaf at that time, she went to live at the Residential School for Jewish Deaf Children. It was there that she became a part of the Jewish Deaf community, and part of the group of friends who grew up together and shared each other's lives for nearly nine decades.

Bessie enjoyed her school life and, upon leaving school became a seamstress, working in the tailoring industry.

On 11 June 1944, Bessie married the love of her life - Israel Marcovitch. They were married in Stamford Hill Beth Hamedrash and had a long, happy and very loving marriage.

Bessie and Issy were best friends – what we would call today “soul mates”. They shared a love of nature, spending many happy days rambling, walking and exploring nature together. Bessie adored landscapes, and became a talented artist, creating colourful tapestries and beautiful paintings of many things including scenery, butterflies and exotic birds.

They travelled extensively and Bessie particularly adored the mountains and forests of Switzerland. The happy couple dedicated their lives to each other. Sadly, in his latter years, Issy succumbed to a long illness and Bessie cared for him and supported him, with a heart full of love.

Bessie was an active member of the Jewish Deaf Association, participating in every activity that took place – holidays, parties, outings, arts and crafts – whatever the JDA was doing, Bessie was there, enjoying everything to the full.



Through her JDA life, she developed a deep and joyous friendship with Minnie, and they spent many years sharing their wicked sense of humour and grabbing every opportunity to laugh raucously.

Bessie's nephew Roger found a special relationship with Bessie. Sharing her love of nature, he loved communicating with her through gestures, mime and humour.

Through this, they built a mutual respect and genuine, deep relationship that sustained Bessie throughout her life. Some say that Roger was the child that Bessie never had. And during her latter years, whether as a nephew or a son, nobody could have brought more joy to her life.

As Bessie grew older and more vulnerable, it was Roger who looked after her, cared for her, and made sure that Bessie knew deep in her soul, that she was truly loved.

Bessie's wonderful memories of her fun friendship with Minnie, her deeply loving relationship with her husband Issy, her strong connection with her mother and the love and support of her nephew Roger, gave Bessie strength and comfort during her final months of illness. She shared stories of her life and her happy memories with the JDA staff who visited her every day, and who got to know the beautiful, witty and strong person that was Bessie.

After a short illness, Bessie died in the late hours of Thursday 31 December 2009.

On Monday 4 January 2010, we said goodbye to Bessie as we approached what would have been her 90th birthday. On that day, whilst we mourned our sad loss together, we honoured and truly celebrated 90 years of Bessie, and all that she brought to those who knew and loved her.