

## A Community is Established

Pogroms and persecutions brought Jews to the British Isles. The underground railway took them to Hendon. The Jew of the Diaspora is by nature an urban-dwelling creature. Over half Anglo-Jewry lives, and has always lived, in London. And most Jewish families will not want to move far from a synagogue and a Jewish shopping centre, and a suitable environment in which their children can grow up and marry. Before the First World War, therefore, the areas of Middlesex which have now been absorbed into the London Borough of Barnet (Finchley, Hendon, Golders Green and Edgware) were almost entirely without Jews, the bulk of whom lived in the 'East End'; in 1914, of the 150,000 to 180,000 Jews who lived in Greater London, only about 7,000 at most lived in the north-west of the metropolis. In Hendon fields and farms abounded in what was still, to a great extent, a semi-rural area; borough status was not achieved till 1932. The nearest synagogue was at Golders Green. Jewish religious services began there just before the Great War, but a synagogue was not established in Golders Green till 1916; it was admitted to the Associate status within the United Synagogue the following year, and achieved full Constituent status in 1922. Five years later the Dunstan Road synagogue, in Golders Green, was completed. And it is at that point, in 1927, that the story of the establishment of the Hendon Jewish community really begins.

Increasing prosperity after 1918 propelled the Jews out of the East End ghetto. The escape took several routes. One followed the commuter lines of the Great Eastern Railway out to south-west Essex, to East and West Ham, Leyton and Ilford. But this was largely a working-class

migration. The traditional area of Jewish middle-class migration had been the north-west of London: first Hampstead, then Golders Green, then Finchley and Hendon. The growth of the Finchley community was, however, hampered by lack of railway facilities; the first electric train to reach East Finchley was in 1940. The line from Golders Green to Edgware had been opened in 1924. This coincided with, and perhaps facilitated, a wave of speculative building in the Hendon area, made possible because freeholders of land thought it worthwhile to sell leases to builders rather than to tenant-farmers. Fields and pastures gave way to detached and semi-detached suburbia. The underground railway provided rapid communication with Golders Green and central London and, conversely, paved the way for Jewish migration to Hendon. During the 1930s the natural movement of Jews to Hendon was reinforced by the settlement in the area of large numbers of refugees from Nazi persecution. By 1940 the Hendon Synagogue could boast 561 male members, making it the sixth largest of the United Synagogue Constituent synagogues. By 1950, with 1,015 male members, Hendon was second only to the New Synagogue, Stamford Hill. By then it is possible that over a quarter of the population of the borough of Hendon was Jewish.

But this is to anticipate events. In the mid-1920s the Hendon community was small, but growing rapidly. The first Jewish religious service in Hendon, of which evidence exists, was held on Rosh Hashanah 1925, at the house of H. Berman, in Alderton Crescent. Dr. Avrom Saltman's Silver Jubilee history records that services continued to be held at this address on subsequent festivals, until Pesach 1927, and that

it was found possible to obtain a Minyan for many of the intervening Sabbaths.

The central figure in the community at that time was a much-respected local shopkeeper who had come to Hendon from Jersey just after the Great War, Abraham Mayer Krichefski. Mr. Krichefski may be regarded as the founder of the community. An elderly white-bearded man — he was then in his mid-60s — he was nonetheless possessed of great vigour, enthusiasm and determination; he was also a scholar. On Sunday 26th September, 1926 he took the chair at a meeting held at the home of J. Young, in Sinclair Grove. Yomim Noraim services that year had been held in the Alderton Hall; but what was wanted was a permanent synagogue. The meeting resolved 'That a synagogue be obtained for worship and religious educational activities suitable to the immediate needs of the present Jewish inhabitants of Hendon'. It was also resolved that membership contributions be not less than one shilling per week per member. Mr. Krichefski was elected President of the Synagogue and his son-in-law, Robert Katz (a founder of the Golders Green Synagogue) was elected Vice-President; the Honorary Secretary was S. J. Levine.

The search for a suitable site for the Hendon Synagogue was, happily, not a protracted one. A deposit of £215 was given on a plot of land (together with a row of six cottages) in Brent Street, near the junction with the North Circular Road. The full price of the land was £2,150. It was decided to build on this land a temporary synagogue, at a cost of about £800 — £1,000. A Building Committee was at once set up to raise the total sum needed for land and building. It is noteworthy that, at this stage, the intention was that the community should remain independent. The relationship with the United Synagogue arose more through dead members than through living ones. Early in 1929 the Hendon congregation negotiated burial facilities with the United Synagogue, on the basis of a payment of fifteen shillings per member per annum, plus ten shillings for 'the General Purposes of the United Synagogue'. In return the community had to agree that it would 'not take as a member any person resident on the Golders Green side of the North Circular Road'.

The community continued to grow. For the Yomim Noraim of 1927 the Town Hall had to be used; congregants came from as far away as Mill Hill and Edgware. There was no regular Minister; instead the services were conducted by H. Friedlander and H. Richenberg. But moves were already under way to obtain premises for twice-weekly religious education classes. A Ladies' Guild had also been formed. Then, in 1928, the Brent Street synagogue was completed. Designed by H. Gordon Kay, the Honorary Architect, and built by Messrs. Beck of Crickle-

wood, it measured 80 feet by 30 feet, and could seat about 360 persons. The building included a small hall, about a quarter of its total size. There was also a Succah, donated by Robert Katz. 'The Hut' — as the synagogue building came affectionately to be known — was austere, functional, and could certainly not be called elegant or graceful. But it served its purpose, and provided the growing community with a spiritual centre. Consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. H. Hertz, on 30th June, 1929, it was opened by Lord Rothschild in the presence of Sir Isadore Salmon, Treasurer of the United Synagogue. It would be true to say that it was always regarded as a temporary structure. But it was the first purpose-built synagogue in Hendon, and the tablet commemorating its consecration, now on the wall in the vestibule of the Raleigh Close synagogue, acts as a reminder of the humble origins of the community.

After 1928, therefore, there were regular services in the synagogue on sabbaths and festivals, and occasionally on weekdays. In 1931 the synagogue became recognised by the civil and religious authorities for the solemnization of marriages; three weddings were celebrated there in that year. The first Minister had already been appointed, the Rev. B. Wykansky. He remained only a short while in Hendon, becoming Minister and Secretary at Finchley, and was succeeded in 1929 by the Rev. Joseph Herman, who had come from Margate and who became, in 1936, Welfare Minister of the United Synagogue. While at Hendon Rev. Herman also acted as Synagogue Secretary, and Headmaster of the religious classes which, at the time of his departure, numbered 120 children.

The early 1930s were years of very substantial expansion for the Hendon community. They were also years of growing uneasiness for the fate of European Jewry. On the seventh day of Pesach, 1933, the day of his death, the Rev. Gatchell Isaacs, the Emeritus Minister of the South Hackney Synagogue, and then a resident of Hendon, had preached at the Brent Street Synagogue, on the rise to power of the German Nazi party. But even without the prospect of Jewish refugees in Hendon, the natural growth of the community pointed to the need for larger premises. Yet the question of expansion was intimately bound up with that of independence. Expansion would have needed more money, not just for a bigger synagogue (proposals were already under discussion to enlarge the Brent Street building to accommodate 600 persons), but also for other related communal needs. By the end of 1931 the Board of Management seems to have decided against 'going it alone'; a rapidly expanding Hendon community simply could not rely on its own resources, in the short term, to provide the extra facilities so desperately needed.

In the absence of a local benefactor of enormous wealth, the options open to the community were limited. It could have allied itself with the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (the Adath Yisroel), formed in 1926 under the aegis of Rabbi Dr. Avigdor Schonfeld. But the orthodoxy of the Adath was, obviously, too rigid for Hendon Jewry at that time. It is worth remembering that in the Hendon Synagogue of the 1930s silk tallisim were much more in evidence than woollen ones, a mixed choir was permitted at weddings, and Sabbath observance was not of the strictest variety. Even if Hendon had wanted a union with the Adath, it is almost inconceivable that the Adath would have approved.

That left the Federation of Synagogues and the United Synagogue. Affiliation to the Federation was an attractive proposition. A memorandum obtained from the Federation showed that Hendon would have enjoyed almost complete autonomy. Against this, two factors weighed heavily. The first was that the Federation had in 1925, following the dismissal of its highly-respected Secretary, Joseph Blank, and the resignation of its President, Lord Swaythling, entered upon a period of deep internal division and rancour which was to remain with it for the next quarter-century; in 1932 its future seemed far from clear. The second was that, at that time, the Federation was mainly a collection of East End 'chevras'. Had the Jews of Hendon escaped the atmosphere of the 'stiebels' only to find themselves back in the fold?

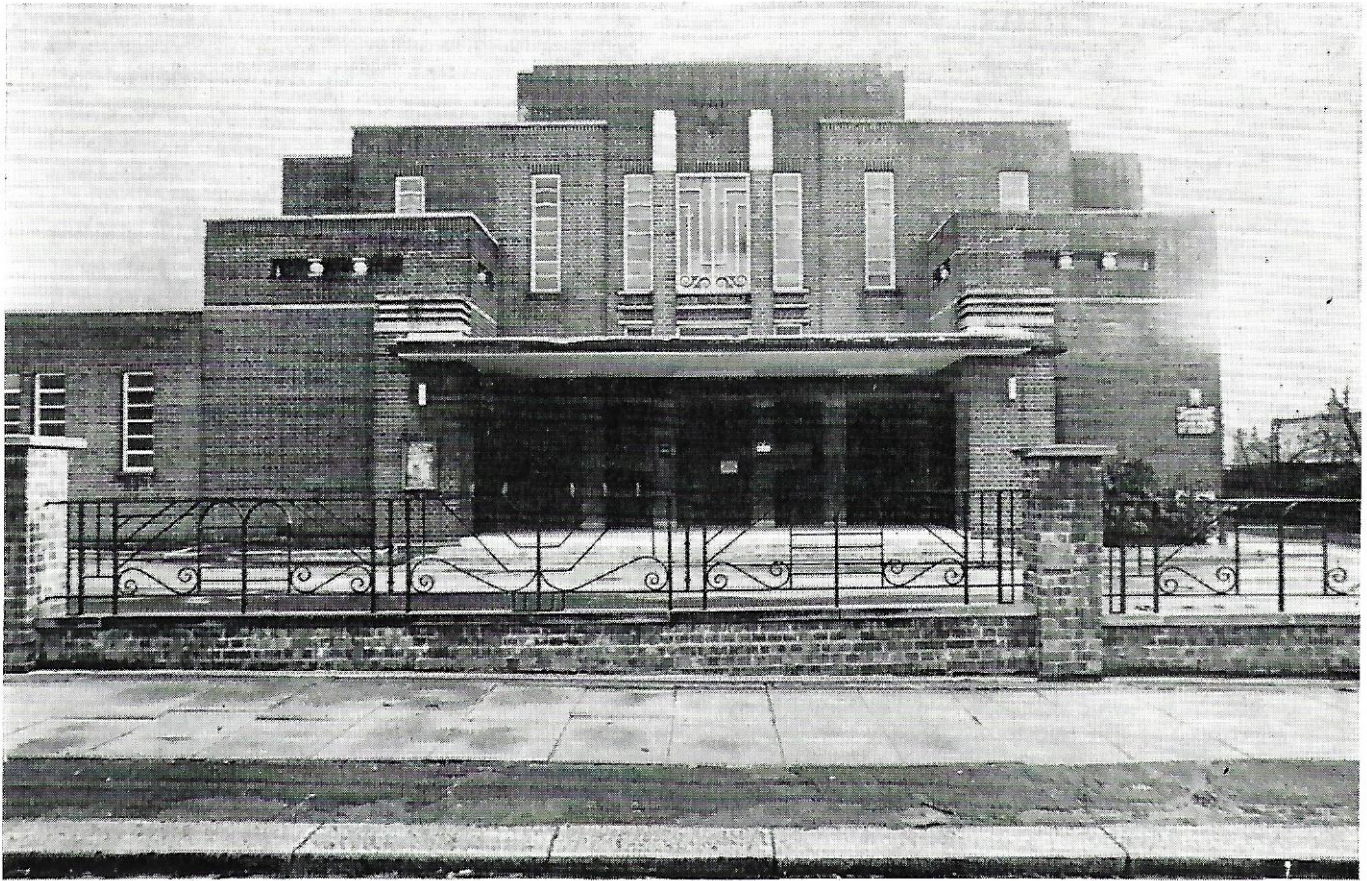
So it was that at the general meeting of the Hendon Synagogue in 1932 there was a majority vote in favour of affiliating to the United Synagogue as a District Synagogue. The District Synagogues Scheme was itself only five years old. It had been adopted by the United Synagogue in order to provide financial help for new congregations, without making any one District Synagogue responsible for the deficit of any other. But each member of a District Synagogue was an assessed member of the United Synagogue, and all District Synagogues were members of the District Synagogues Council. In July, 1932 the District Synagogues Council recommended the admission of Hendon to the scheme. Almost at once local opinion veered to the idea of Hendon achieving full Constituent status. This move received the approval of the Council of the United Synagogue in December, 1932. In fact Hendon did not formally affiliate to the United Synagogue till 1935; it was admitted as a District Synagogue and, the same year, became a full Constituent.

It would be wrong, however, to think that affiliation to the United Synagogue was simply a matter of elimination of other alternatives. In retrospect, the link seems perfectly natural, even inevitable. The earlier burial arrangements pro-

vided a most important foundation for the union. Moreover, the United Synagogue reflected just that brand of 'central' orthodox practice in which the mass of Hendon Jewry indulged and, indeed, of which they were part. The United Synagogue, for its part, was already making its mark in north-west London, not merely through the expansion of Golders Green, but also through its promotion of congregations in Finchley (also admitted as a District Synagogue in 1935) and Hampstead Garden Suburb (admitted as a District Synagogue in 1937).

Formally from 1935, therefore, but in practice from 1932, Hendon was part of the United Synagogue network. The three-year waiting period was the result of conditions imposed by the United Synagogue, and these themselves reflected tensions within that organisation. In deference to the fears of the Golders Green community, the United Synagogue intimated that it would not allow a permanent building to be erected on the Brent Street site, for it was under one-and-a-half miles from Golders Green. In September, 1932, after much searching, a derelict area, known as the 'Gravel Pit', and over an acre in extent, was found in Raleigh Close. The owners of the land, All Souls' College, Oxford, agreed to lease it to the United Synagogue for 99 years, at a rent of £100 a year.

The synagogue was erected at Raleigh Close in a remarkably short space of time. The building — a perfect square of 65 feet — was designed by C. J. Epril, who had already designed Cricklewood Synagogue. The cost was originally estimated at £17,500, of which the United Synagogue agreed to advance half as a loan. In fact the final cost was nearer £20,000. The Brent Street site was to be handed over to the United Synagogue. Originally it was hoped it would fetch £5,000, but this figure proved wildly optimistic; the site, excluding the cottages, was eventually sold in 1940 for £2,700, and is now occupied by the Adath synagogue; the cottages were sold in 1942 for £600. The balance of the money for the Raleigh Close building was to be found partly from the surplus of the Hendon Synagogue, which then stood at about £1,000, and partly from local contributions. A Building Fund Committee at once set about the task of raising this money. The necessary planning approvals were obtained by November, 1934 and the contractors, Messrs. Bovis, began work shortly afterwards. The Foundation Stone was laid by Sir Robert Waley Cohen, Vice-President of the United Synagogue, on 7th April, 1935. On 15th September (17 Ellul 5695) the synagogue was consecrated by Dayan Dr. Asher Feldman and opened by Mr. Krichefski. On the same day Hendon Synagogue was formally admitted as a Constituent Synagogue of the United Synagogue.



EXTERIOR OF SYNAGOGUE



INTERIOR OF THE SYNAGOGUE AS IT IS TO-DAY

## Growing Pains

The synagogue at Raleigh Close was established at the time of a momentous turning point for world Jewry, and for the Jewish community of the Hendon district. Whether this was evident to the congregation at the time must be a matter of conjecture. The new synagogue was capable of providing seating accommodation for 591 men and 429 women. This was rather less than the community had wanted, but in 1935 it was greatly in excess of the total membership. Should a synagogue cater for its maximum needs or its average needs? In 1935 the Raleigh Close synagogue seemed big enough. But even before its building had been completed, the congregation had taken the initiative in pressing the United Synagogue to help finance a set of permanent classrooms and a communal hall. The hall and four classrooms, costing in all nearly £4,000, were ready by 1937. That same year the hall had to be used as an overflow service for the Yomim Noraim; and within a very few years the classroom accommodation had become totally inadequate to the community's needs.

Paradoxically, however, the synagogue lacked a full membership and the community was in some ways remarkably apathetic. In 1938 there were 553 male seatholders and 364 female, leaving 103 vacant seats. Yet the overflow services show that there was no lack of potential members in the borough. By then regular morning and evening services on weekdays had been instituted; but attendances were so poor that 'minyan men' had to be paid to make up the statutory number — a practice which was, perforce, continued for another decade or more. Sabbath morning services were always well-attended, but with what purpose? In November, 1938 the House Committee pointed out that 'it will be necessary to educate and train the members... to make them realise that they should attend synagogue as worshippers and not regard it as a weekly club which they are entitled to attend by virtue of having paid their subscriptions'.

Inevitably, therefore, the running of the synagogue fell to a small band of devoted and hard-working men: Mr. Krichefski, until his death in 1939; Jacques Cohen, a solicitor and a man of immense learning and extreme affability; and, above all, Sol Cohen, a social worker, and a communal leader of strong opinions, imbued with a deep sense of responsibility. Practising always what he preached (as Warden he was a regular attender at the daily services), Sol Cohen was never afraid of speaking his mind to the membership whenever he felt it necessary. He died, in the midst of his labours, within a few minutes of opening the annual general meeting on 17th May, 1942. A sum of money was collected by his friends, to be devoted to communal and

educational purposes. In return the United Synagogue agreed that the communal hall should be named the 'Sol Cohen Memorial Hall'.

During the late 1930s the synagogue was also fortunate in acquiring the services of a dedicated and talented team of officials. In March, 1937 the Rev. H. I. Alexander, B.A., then with the Portsmouth congregation, was appointed Minister at Hendon. Rev. Alexander instituted regular shiurim on Sabbath afternoons and during the week. He organised Sabbath services for children and was himself a teacher in the religious classes. In 1940 he edited the short-lived **Hendon Synagogue Bulletin**, publication of which had to be terminated the following year owing to financial stringency. In July, 1937 the Rev. David Kusevitsky, a member of the famous family of Chazanim, was appointed to be the first Reader of the congregation; in him the synagogue acquired a man of extraordinary musical ability. He remained at Hendon till March, 1949, when he received a 'call' to New York. Two other officials appointed in the late 1930s deserve mention. One was Simon Wilsack, who had filled the post of Synagogue Secretary since August, 1935 and who (apart from war service in the Far East) remained in this post until his appointment as Secretary of the Federation of Synagogues in 1954. The other was Lionel Rosenthal, formerly Beadle of the old Hambro' Synagogue, who commenced his duties as Beadle at Hendon at the end of 1937, and remained with the community until his retirement in 1966.

The spiritual ambivalence of the community on the eve of the Second World War has already been noted. It was a condition which was widespread in Anglo-Jewry at that time. The sons and daughters of the pre-1914 immigrant generations had grown up; for many, alas, that process was accompanied by alienation from their cultural and religious heritage. One might have thought that the growing antisemitism of the 1930s, not only on the European mainland but also in Great Britain, would have acted as a counterweight. For many individuals it did so, especially where it was accompanied by Zionist idealism. But for many, especially the more affluent sections of Anglo-Jewry, it had the opposite effect.

The response of the Hendon community towards the refugee problem illustrates this point. In November, 1938 a meeting was held at the synagogue, under the auspices of the Ladies' Guild, to discuss the plight of Jewish refugee children. The following month a 'Jewish Emergency Committee for Refugees covering the Boroughs of Hendon & Finchley' was formed, with representatives from the United Synagogue congregations at Hendon, Hampstead Garden Suburb, Finchley and Golders Green, and also from the Golders Green Beth Hamedrash and

Golders Green Reform Synagogue. 'The cause is so great,' Sol Cohen reported back, 'that the energies of every Jew and Jewess must for some time be fully devoted to it. Sacrifice of personal leisure and of material means will have to be made by all.' Hendon was invited to play its full part in this work, especially on committees to provide homes for refugee children and to help deal with the thorny problem of financial guarantees.

The actual response from the community was less than inspiring. In July, 1939 permission had been given to the German Jewish Aid Committee to use the hall and classrooms to teach English to refugees; a year later the Board of Management turned down a request to allow Rabbi Dr. Wilde to preach to the refugees on Shavuoth because it did not want 'to encourage gatherings of German people' — even though they were Jews! At the Annual General Meeting of May, 1940 Sol Cohen 'dwelt on the effects the war had on the Synagogue. He deplored the apathy of Members towards the Synagogue and regretted that although the war should have inspired greater interest in the Synagogue work, the reverse had been the case'. He deplored the poor response which had been made to Rev. Alexander's appeals, from the pulpit, for funds. 'Committees had been set up for the relief of refugees, but the Hendon Synagogue was not represented, because of its fear at the attempt of collection (of money).' Attendances at the synagogue were excellent,' Sol Cohen reported, but only 'on account of the attendance of refugees.'

But it was not apathy alone which had induced these responses in a growing community. It was also fear. Between 1938 and 1942 anti-Jewish prejudice spread in the gentile population. Locally there was much concern with the attitude of the press. In July, 1940 Rev. Alexander refused to support the local paper because of his doubts concerning its attitude to the Jewish people; similar concern was voiced at a Board meeting in March, 1942. The general response of Anglo-Jewry at this period was to keep a low profile. Hendon was part of this pattern, which was not broken until the documented truth of the Nazi extermination of European Jewry reached the newspapers towards the end of 1942. The shock of these revelations did not leave Hendon untouched. A strong message of support was sent to the Albert Hall protest meeting held on 29th November that year.

For the Hendon community, as for all London Jewry, the Second World War was a period of profound dislocation. Many of the younger men and women of the community served in the armed forces; other members played a full part in Civil Defence and in the Home Guard. The proximity of the Hendon Aerodrome, and of the

important railway line from the East Midlands to St. Pancras, made the area a target for German bombers. The nearest high-explosive bomb fell only 100 yards from the synagogue, though the structure itself was never damaged. There was an exodus of Jews to safer parts. While some synagogue members were careful to maintain their Hendon membership, many others failed to do so. In 1940 Mr. Richenberg, the Financial Representative, deplored, perhaps a little harshly, 'the actions of members who had evacuated themselves and had entirely forgotten about the payment of their synagogue accounts'.

When war broke out, many parents were understandably afraid to let their children attend the religious classes, and for a time these classes collapsed. In September, 1941, of a total roll of 150 children, only 49 attended. Many children were, of course, in rural reception areas, where their religious needs were being catered for by emergency organisations set up largely under the auspices of the United Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi. The continual drift of children back and forth between Hendon and the reception areas was a problem which had to be lived with. In 1941 the communal hall was requisitioned by the local authority for civil defence purposes, thus causing further accommodation difficulties. Yet, somehow, the children who remained at Hendon were taught. During air-raids they were conducted to an air-raid shelter in Prothero Gardens, and sometimes the lessons were continued there, below ground. By 1942 there were classes not only on Sunday mornings, but also on Saturday mornings (when Mr. Janus Cohen conducted a children's sabbath service) and on Wednesday evenings. By the end of that year six teachers were employed, and the attendance roll had risen to over 100.

The statutory services were maintained at Hendon throughout the war years, subject only to the black-out regulations. The synagogue never closed down. In 1941, for instance, there were 37 weddings and nine barmitzvah ceremonies. This continuance of religious activity was all the more remarkable because during the war years the community lost some of its most valuable workers. The death of Sol Cohen has already been mentioned. Mr. Krichefski had died in December, 1939. In 1940 the Secretary was conscripted into the army. Early in 1941 Rev. Alexander became a Chaplain to the Forces, first at Aldershot and later in Scotland. Initially he remained the Minister at Hendon, while the Rev. A. Behrman was appointed as Temporary Minister and Acting Secretary. In March, 1943 Rev. Alexander found it necessary to resign through ill-health. Later that year Rev. Behrman was himself appointed a Chaplain to the Forces. For a time the synagogue was without the services of a Minister or Secretary, or a caretaker. In

October, 1943 Mr. C. Goldstein was appointed Secretary and, in December, the synagogue was fortunate in securing the services, as Temporary Minister, of the Rev. (now Rabbi) M. Landy, of St. Albans. Rev. Landy remained with the Hendon Synagogue for the rest of the war. He set about reviving the synagogue's cultural activities, and instituted a weekly Talmud Shiur conducted (until his departure for Israel in 1950) by Dayan I. Abramsky.

There can be no doubt that the Hendon community emerged from the war a stronger, more united, and a spiritually more highly-motivated congregation. In the midst of all the upheavals of the period, how was this possible? Firstly, those members who left Hendon were not lost to the community thereby. In the reception areas the United Synagogue established Group Membership Schemes, through which membership of the United Synagogue could be maintained, affiliation fees standardised and collected, premises secured and communal facilities provided. In all there were 22 such groups, from Eastbourne and Worthing on the south coast to Blackpool in the north and Bath in the west. Although as much as possible was done to provide these communities with Ministers and organisers, they were inevitably forced to help themselves to a far greater extent than in peacetime. So it was that a number of Hendon members unexpectedly gained experience in communal organisation and the conduct of services. They returned to Hendon with a much greater degree of understanding of communal difficulties, and of sympathy with the problems which daily confront Honorary Officers and Boards of Management.

Secondly, the membership of Hendon Synagogue actually increased during the war. Loss of members through evacuation was more than counterbalanced by an influx of Jews seeking refuge from the terrible havoc caused by enemy action in the East End. Male membership rose steadily in the early years of the war, to just over 600 in 1942. In 1943 the rise noticeably quickened, and by the end of 1945 male membership stood at over 700. If the first, the pre-war Jewish migration to Hendon was largely a middle-class one, and affluent, the second, that of the war years, was indubitably working-class, and not affluent. Perhaps in deference to these new congregants, the Board resolved in November, 1942 to replace the system of public offerings on sabbaths and festivals by a levy of ten per cent to be added to all seat rentals.

This growth of membership had a direct and very welcome effect upon the finances of the synagogue. Before the war Hendon had been a deficit synagogue. Quite apart from its capital debt to the United Synagogue, it simply did not pay its way from year to year, and had to receive aid from other synagogues through the United

Synagogue's mechanism established for this purpose. In 1936 the size of the deficit had been £110; in 1939 it stood at £250. During the war the deficit position disappeared. In 1940 there was a modest surplus of £14; Hendon was one of only five synagogues which had managed to balance their budgets that year. In 1941 contributions increased by over £500. At the end of that year the synagogue was left with a surplus of £89; but this was a net figure, because £588 had been taken to make up the deficits of other synagogues. As a result of the war, therefore, Hendon was enabled to live of its own, and to help synagogues in less fortunate financial circumstances.

One further aspect of the wartime migration to Hendon needs to be stressed. The migration was not merely one of quantity. It was also one of quality. There is no easily-available yardstick by which such quality can be measured. But there are a number of pointers to the truth of the observation. Religious study — especially by adults — increased. Religious observance became more rigorous. Cultural activities blossomed; in 1943 a Literary & Social Society was formed, and a Youth Society opened. There was a flourishing Zionist Society (two if one includes the Women's Zionist Society), a branch of the Jewish National Fund, and an Orphan Aid Society. In September, 1942 the Hendon Co-ordinated Charities Fund was established, with an initial membership of 250, each giving a fixed amount per year, and the Fund itself supporting (as it has continued to support) a long list of local and not-so-local charitable causes.

## Post-War Development

The period of post-war development of the Hendon Synagogue, which may be taken to have ended when the Community Centre was opened in 1964, falls into three distinct phases: the immediate post-war austerity years, when little long-term reconstruction was possible; a period of intense planning in the 1950s, when the challenges of rapid and in some respects fundamental change in the community were met and provided for; and the period 1958-64, when the attention of the community was concerned largely with the Community Centre project, which it was hoped would meet the needs of a new situation.

That situation had been brought about by the sharp increase in membership after the end of the war. Male membership continued to rise until 1948, when it topped the 1,000-mark. For the next two years the figure remained virtually static; some members, resident temporarily in the borough, moved back to their former homes, others moved to Kenton, Wembley, Kingsbury and Edgware, some went to live in Israel. Writing

in the Silver Jubilee history, Dr. Saltman argued that 'it is very possible that a measure of stability has now been attained'.

The period of expansion seemed to have ended. Plans drawn up in 1947 to build a communal centre were shelved the following year. The Sol Cohen Hall was repaired following subsidence caused by nearby poplar trees; the offending trees were cut down. In 1950 the synagogue was re-decorated and its lighting improved. The forecourt was paved at the same time. All this was very much synagogue management on a care-and-maintain basis. It is true that on the Yomim Noraim two overflow services were now necessary, in the Sol Cohen Hall and the Alderton Hall; in the 1950s the Sol Cohen Hall and the Classic Cinema were used. But such extraordinary accommodation was only required on three days of the year. In 1952 the community did not want to expand. 'For some years', Dr. Saltman wrote, 'membership has remained at about a thousand men, a figure which is well in excess of the present accommodation, and it is questionable whether an increase in membership is at all desirable.' There were 'a large number of members', he observed, who seemed content 'to wait several years before becoming seat-holders.'

In the late 1940s and early 1950s only one building project — and that a very modest one — concerned the community: the provision of much-needed extra classroom accommodation. In 1953 there were over 300 children on the roll of the Hebrew School. They were accommodated in twelve classrooms on Sundays and ten on weekdays. Some of these 'classrooms' were, in fact, the stage of the Sol Cohen Hall and the cloakrooms of the synagogue itself. In these circumstances there was naturally much concern at the standard of tuition possible in such surroundings. In 1954, largely through the use of monies in the Silver Jubilee fund, and through the kindness of Mr. Bernard Landau, four temporary classrooms — 'The Malka Landau Memorial Children's Synagogue and Classrooms' — were erected at the rear of the synagogue building. The United Synagogue had wanted this scheme deferred, if not abandoned, in favour of a grander one, involving the rebuilding of the Sol Cohen Hall and the addition of a first-floor extension to it. In 1954 the Board of Management thought that the classroom accommodation scheme should have priority. It was soon only too obvious, however, that the community had not ceased to grow. By 1959 the number of members (including wives) had reached 2,000. 'It had proved most embarrassing,' the Board was told that October, 'to take on new members and find it impossible to give them a ticket (for the Yomim Noraim) of any description' — not even for an overflow service.

In the early 1950s, though, this renewed growth, except in terms of extra provision for the children, was not envisaged. What was wanted, naturally, was consolidation and tranquility after the upheavals of war. Above all, perhaps, there was a need for continuity of leadership. When Rev. Kusevitsky resigned to take up his New York post, the synagogue experienced great difficulty in finding a suitable successor. For a time the Rev. S. Shine acted as Temporary Reader, as did the Rev. S. Hass. At the end of 1950 the Rev. S. B. Taube, a survivor of Auschwitz, and then with the Dalston Synagogue, was appointed Reader at Hendon, and began an association with the congregation which lasted until his resignation in 1958. In 1951 the United Synagogue purchased 147 Audley Road as the Reader's residence; the Minister's residence, 127 Station Road, had been acquired on the synagogue's behalf in 1944.

If the problem of a Reader was delicate, that of a Minister was difficult. The United Synagogue had ruled that temporary appointments must cease at the end of the war, and permanent officials appointed. Rev. Landy's temporary appointment had therefore to come to an end; the post of Minister at Hendon was declared vacant. A strong list of applicants was narrowed down to three, all born in South Wales! Each had compelling qualifications, and it is a tribute to the reputation of Hendon Synagogue at that time that the two candidates who applied unsuccessfully for the post were later appointed to Ministerial positions in other very prominent London synagogues. The successful candidate was the Rev. Leslie Henry Hardman. He was elected Minister of the congregation on 30th December, 1946, and has been its Minister ever since.

To many people both inside and outside the Hendon congregation, Rev. Hardman personifies its finer features, and is synonymous with it. He has stamped the imprint of his own character upon it, and he and his wife, Josie, have found in it willing devotees of their own vigorous orthodoxy. Why was Rev. Hardman appointed at Hendon? He was a young man of 33 at the time, had been educated at Manchester and Liverpool Yeshivot, and had practised as a shochet before being appointed, in 1936, to a Ministerial position at Leeds. While at Leeds he had obtained the degree of Master of Arts, by examination and thesis, in Hebrew and Semitics at the University there. He was, therefore, steeped in Jewish learning and was familiar with both religious and secular education at the highest levels.

But it was Rev. Hardman's wartime experience which had marked him out in Anglo-Jewry. Appointed as an Army Chaplain in 1942, he had been privileged (if that is the right word) to



have been present when the notorious Belsen concentration camp was liberated in April, 1945, and had worked selflessly to bring material aid and spiritual comfort to the inmates. His accounts of the Belsen camp were front page news in the **Jewish Chronicle**. He broadcast on the B.B.C., and was not afraid to take lay and ecclesiastical leaders publicly to task for their dilatoriness in affording the camp victims direct help. 'My colleague, the Rev. L. H. Hardman,' the Senior Jewish Chaplain, the Rev. I. Levy, wrote in the **Jewish Chronicle** in May, 1945, 'has been there (Belsen) since the second day of its liberation and has done yeoman service in helping the Military Government to bring some order into this disastrous chaos.' In June, on a short leave, Rev. Hardman spoke at the Cheetham Public Hall, Manchester. 'Mr. Hardman,' the **Jewish Chronicle** reported, 'said he might have been a quite insignificant Jewish minister, but now he was the man who had seen the unbelievable, and he was going to make the leaders of Jewry listen to him and take action.'

Rev. Hardman's book, **The Survivors**, published in 1958, remains as a permanent reminder of these harrowing events. A man of infinite but never misplaced compassion, he has indeed been a doer, a man of action as well as of words, in the cause of Israel, of Soviet Jewry, of Anglo-Jewish orthodoxy. It was a sign of the times that he succeeded, where others had failed, in inducing the Synagogue to abandon, in 1951, its mixed choir at weddings. In 1953 Rev. Hardman became, as he has remained, editor of the community's magazine, **Tzibbur**, which commenced publication that year, and which has functioned, not merely as a chronicle of the activities of the community, but also as a most important catalyst of communal unity. In 1962 he was awarded the Sir Robert Waley Cohen Scholarship, and spent three months in America. Two other of his particular communal concerns may be mentioned here: his patronage of cultural activities, such as the Hendon Synagogue Fellowship and the Jewish History Circle; and his overriding concern with the Jewish education of the community's children.

It has already been noted that, in 1950, the community began to expand once more, and continued to do so virtually without interruption for the next decade-and-a-half. The additional membership was drawn largely from the East End and from Hackney, especially Stamford Hill. These older areas of Jewish settlement were rapidly changing character. There was much post-war development in them. Hendon was the chief beneficiary. There was indeed, an almost uncanny relationship between the contraction of the membership of the New Synagogue, Stamford Hill, and the expansion of the Hendon Synagogue, Raleigh Close. Neighbours followed

one another from the N.16 postal district to that of N.W.4.

Hendon became not merely the largest of the United Synagogue constituent synagogues, but also one of the most homogeneous, and certainly one of the most active. There was a greater degree of commitment to orthodox institutions. The synagogue contributed funds to the North-West London Communal Mikveh, and to the Chief Rabbi's Jews' College Appeal. A Bikkur Cholim Fund was established. An Amenities Fund was set up to provide 'extras' for the synagogue. The Ladies' Guild, among its many other activities, presented to the synagogue a new Chupah and a Brides' Room. A Friendship Club was formed for the senior citizens. The synagogue premises were also used by the Youth Club, Habonim, Bnei Akiva, a Sinai Group, a Jewish Youth Study Group, and a Jewish Scout Troop. And there was, particularly with young people in mind, a strong commitment to the observance of kashrut. The synagogue was represented both on the Kashrus Commission and on the Kosher School Meals Service. In 1958 four of the six members of the Kashrus Commission were members of the Hendon Synagogue. In 1958, too, a scheme was approved to enlarge the kitchen facilities in the Sol Cohen Hall, with a view to Hendon providing its own Kosher School Meals Service facilities for schools in the area. By June of the following year 250 children daily were being served kosher lunches in the hall. This, in turn, led the children to a greater awareness of the importance of kashrut observance and there is some evidence that it led to stricter observance by them of the Jewish festivals as well.

The expansion of the community thus brought many benefits in its wake. But it also brought acute difficulties and tensions. Because the community expanded so rapidly, other United Synagogue Constituent synagogues regarded it as a wealthy congregation, and tended to forget that every penny of the community's funds — and more besides — was required to provide for its local needs. In the view of the Hendon Board of Management the answer lay only partly in raising seat rentals. When, in 1954, the United Synagogue moved to raise the schedules of seat prices in its synagogues, including Hendon, the Board was acutely conscious that to raise them to too high a level would do more harm than good. 'Our community,' Mr. S. Fox, the Senior Warden, told the United Synagogue Council, 'is composed of, in the main, small businessmen, professional men, Civil Servants, and artisans. We have no more than a handful of people who can be termed reasonably wealthy.' But the Hendon revised schedule came under 'an inspired, organised attack' (Mr. Fox's words) from Golders Green, and was defeated; most Hendon representatives withdrew from the Council meeting in protest.

The establishment of a Reform congregation in the area, in 1950, was a particular source of worry. In 1955 there were 163 women and 551 men waiting for a synagogue seat at Raleigh Close. Some members, faced with the prospect of never being given a seat in the synagogue itself, joined the Reform Synagogue instead. The cramped accommodation for youth at Raleigh Close led to a drift of children to Reform youth clubs. The Hendon Synagogue management was very willing to see another United Synagogue congregation established in the area. In August 1955 a special sub-committee of the Board was appointed to explore the possibilities, and in December, 1956 a site was actually found at Holders Hill, between the North Finchley and Mill Hill congregations. Nothing emerged from these explorations, but the Hendon Board, following discussions with Mill Hill, agreed that 'members residing in the Mill Hill area... be encouraged to join that Synagogue'. Some years later, in 1959, the Board agreed (despite protests from the United Synagogue's Head Office, that it was contrary to the United Synagogue constitution 'to allow any other Service than one in German and Polish Minhag') to allow the Sephardi community to hold a sabbath service in the Sol Cohen Hall, with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a Spanish and Portuguese congregation in the area. But the Sephardim preferred to remain at Raleigh Close.

Yet, of the many problems which expansion brought, none was felt more keenly than the effects which it was having upon the Hebrew School. The Board minutes of the 1950s are replete with complaints on this score. The establishment of the London Board of Jewish Religious Education after the war promised to alleviate the perennial difficulties of shortage of money and lack of trained teachers. The London Board, financed by special levies, organised the classes and found and paid the teachers. The synagogue provided the premises and, through its Education Committee and its Parents' Association, kept a watchful eye on the education provided.

In 1952 one boy from Hendon entered and passed the London Board's Junior Examination, while two out of five passed the Senior Examination; this was not regarded as satisfactory. Gradually the standard improved. In 1956, six pupils passed the Junior grade, four the Senior, and two the School Certificate Examination of Jews' College; a special Gomorrah class was provided for older boys, and Rev. Taube conducted a class in Neginoth. In 1960 there were fourteen passes at the Junior level, nine at the Senior, six at the School Certificate, and three (two girls and one boy) at the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level examination in Classical Hebrew. But these successes, praiseworthy though they were, touched only a small

percentage of the roll, which then amounted to 450 pupils, split into fourteen classes. To say that the Hebrew School was bursting at the seams would be a gross understatement. On Sunday mornings every available space, however unsuitable, was used in the synagogue premises to house the classes. The demand for Jewish education showed no sign of slackening. In this sphere, as in others, the synagogue had run out of space.

So it was that the scheme to build a Community Centre was born. Or rather re-born, and re-fashioned. As already noted above, the idea had been mooted as far back as 1947, and had been abandoned only in view of the pressing need for temporary classroom accommodation. In 1955 the scheme came alive again. The Annual General Meeting that year agreed to a recommendation of the Board that the Hebrew School and the Sol Cohen Hall be enlarged, and that this work be financed, in part, by a voluntary levy, equivalent to one year's membership contributions, from every member of the synagogue. The intention then was still to construct an additional floor over the hall. By 1957 it had become clear that the building works entailed in this plan would have incurred an inordinate cost. So an alternative plan, drawn up by two chartered architects, S. L. Stern and Michael Barnett, was adopted. This envisaged an entirely new building, of 8,000 square feet, on land at the rear of the synagogue, incorporating two long bays of five classrooms each, with space for a communal hall between them, capable of accommodating about 1,000 people, the whole to be constructed in stages and costing, in all, £16,500. It was not proposed, at this stage, to demolish the Malka Landau Memorial building.

Between 1958 and 1963 the energies of the community were absorbed with the Community Centre scheme. There were several distinct but related problems. How much money could be raised locally, and to what extent would the United Synagogue contribute to the project? How would the local authorities and the ground landlord react to the project, and in what respects would the wishes of the community be circumscribed by the need to meet the wishes of other interested parties?

The revised building proposals, for a one-storey building, seemed well within the financial capabilities of the community. There was a great deal of discussion with Hendon Borough Council and Middlesex County Council, both of which agreed to recommend the scheme at a Public Inquiry which was held, at the instance of the Minister of Housing, at the Town Hall on 22nd July, 1958. The United Synagogue agreed to contribute one third of the cost of the project, and the Building Fund Committee set to work to raise the remainder. The annual Building Fund dinners, held in May of each year, became gala

occasions for the community and distinguished guests of honour, such as Dayan and Mrs. Morris Swift and Rabbi and Mrs. Kopul Rosen, were happy to lend their support. By May, 1961 £20,000 had been raised. But the cost had already escalated to nearly £20,000, partly through inflation but partly, too, because it was decided, in 1961, to add further classrooms, and an additional floor, to the building plans; these additional works necessitated the demolition of the Malka Landau Memorial building.

In August, 1960 came the first setback to the project. The United Synagogue deemed it necessary to withdraw from its undertaking to provide a third of the cost; instead it offered a loan of £11,000, to be repaid within five years. Thus, just when the community had seemed on the verge of fulfilling its share of the obligation as to cost, it was faced with the daunting prospect of having to raise still more money. The United Synagogue would not even agree to the sending out of building tenders. Meanwhile costs rose by leaps and bounds. By the beginning of 1962, by which time £30,000 had been collected, the United Synagogue had been induced to raise its loan to £15,000, repayable over seven years. But the overall cost was now estimated at £58,000, plus fees. A further blow, in the spring, was the death of one of the architects, S. L. Stern. Then, on Friday, 1st March, 1963, a letter from the United Synagogue intimated that the promise to lend £15,000 would not be kept, and that, before building could commence, the Hendon community would have to find the total sum due — nearly £60,000.

It is a tribute to the communal leaders, and to the members of the Building Fund Committee, that they neither resorted to legal action (of which there was some talk), nor did they throw in the towel and call an end to what must, to many, have seemed the pursuit of a phantom. There was, instead, a great deal of patient, delicate diplomacy. On 14th March, 1963 the Treasurers of the United Synagogue were persuaded to agree to honour their undertaking of the previous year. Then an interest-free loan of £5,000 enabled the synagogue to fulfil its obligation to collect £40,000. At the time the loan was anonymous; but it can now be revealed that it was given by the late Mrs. Ella Jacobs.

So the project was alive again. But it would surely have died, for good, had building contracts not been signed at once, before prices rose again. And this meant that another problem, that of securing the consent of All Souls' College and of the occupiers of certain adjacent properties in Raleigh Close, had to be tackled without delay, the more so because the synagogue Board of Management naturally hoped to be able to recoup some of the cost of building the Community Centre by letting its hall for all gatherings, religious and secular. On 18th March

All Souls' College granted the Licence enabling the project to go ahead, and on 1st April the building contract, with Messrs. Whyatt, was signed.

Later that month the Malka Landau Memorial building was demolished, and work on the Community Centre commenced. The Foundation Stone was laid, on 30th June, by Mr. J. J. Rothstein, then one of the oldest members of the synagogue. By April of the following year the structure, named the Maurice and Malka Landau Community Centre, was complete. It was consecrated on 14th June, 1964 by Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie and opened by Mr. Louis Packer, Chairman of the Building Committee, in the presence of the President of the United Synagogue, Sir Isaac Wolfson.

On the Yomim Noraim the Centre seats 800 men on the ground floor, and 600 women in the gallery. There is an Ark specially built for it, and a Bimah which can be dismantled when not in use. During the year classrooms and offices, on both floors, are formed by large sliding wooden partitions, a feature which aroused a great deal of architectural interest when the Centre was opened. On the ground floor the partitions, when in place, still leave a large central area — the Victor and Mary Cohen Hall — which can be used for communal purposes, and which is provided with its own kitchen. In the event of a national or local emergency, the Community Centre, like the synagogue, would be used by the local authority as a Rest Centre.

The Community Centre (the eventual cost of which was £61,000) stands as a tribute to the fortitude and determination of the community to provide for the religious needs of all its members, and all their children. The Building Fund Committee, and successive Boards of Management, saw the project through, from start to finish, often against great odds. This resilience is all the more remarkable because the Community Centre, though the biggest, was by no means the only building project to be launched at Raleigh Close at that time. In 1964, with the prospect of more space for meetings being made available in the new centre, it was decided to convert the old Board Room, which doubled as a Succah by means of a sliding panel in the roof, into a new and larger synagogue office. Since then a wooden Succah has been erected and dismantled as necessary, but it is hoped to erect a permanent brick-built structure for this purpose. More ambitious, and controversial, was the decision to undertake a major structural alteration in the synagogue itself.

Every synagogue has its *cause célèbre*. Hendon has had several. But none has aroused greater passion than the Bimah controversy. When the synagogue was built the Bimah was not erected in the centre of it, but in front of



INTERIOR OF THE SYNAGOGUE BEFORE THE BIMAH WAS BUILT IN THE CENTRE

the Ark, and it was from there that the services and Reading of the Law were conducted. Exactly why this was done remains something of a mystery. Probably it was felt that this arrangement made for the greatest possible amount of seating accommodation in the body of the building. The effect was to make the Reader remote from the congregation. Some members felt, over the years, that this gave both him and the Minister an enhanced sense of leadership; others felt, equally strongly, that it made the Reader seem aloof, and turned the congregation into a mere audience. But there was little doubt that the arrangement, which smacked of the Reform movement, was against traditional practice, and was contrary to the opinion of Maimonides; and what doubt there was, was silenced when the late Isaac Herzog, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, invited to preach from the Raleigh Close pulpit, chose to criticise the arrangement in unambiguous terms. It was then only a matter of time, and money, before the Bimah was moved. For some members of the congregation, in fact, the need for this alteration was felt to be more pressing than the building of the Community Centre. But the two projects were never merged. In 1962 the Board approved plans, involving no loss of seats, to move the Bimah to the centre of the synagogue. The work was completed in the summer of

1963. The new Bimah, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. I. J. Pomson, and a new Ark, presented by Dr. Sonia Fox, were installed in time for the Yomim Noraim that year. The arrangement, in wood and marble, had an immediate impact, and certainly improved decorum. It has also enhanced the acoustic qualities of the synagogue building.

In March, 1960 the Rev. Moshe Korn, who had spent the greater part of his life in Israel but who had been born in Cologne, and who had returned to that city as Cantor of the reconstructed synagogue, was appointed Reader at Hendon. Since that time Raleigh Close has enjoyed the benefit of his beautiful chazanut, which adds considerably to the meaningfulness of the services, and which undoubtedly puts him in the forefront of chazanim in Anglo-Jewry. He and his wife, Chanah, enjoy great personal popularity in Hendon.

Some months previously the Hendon Synagogue had secured the services, as Choirmaster, of Mr. Lionel Leigh, a local man who was then Choirmaster at Finchley and Assistant Director of the Zemel Choir. The delightful choral renderings of Rev. Korn and the choir, not only at the statutory services but also at concerts and other gatherings, have given the synagogue a well-deserved reputation for attractive and inspiring musical expertise.

## Consolidation

Though the male membership of the Hendon Synagogue had not quite reached its peak in 1964, it was to do so within a very few years. In 1973 male membership at Hendon stood at 1,333, and was the largest of any United Synagogue Constituent synagogue. In 1974 the Hendon total, 1,292, was overtaken by that of Edgware (1,302), and Hendon retained the top position in terms of overall membership only because of the increase in the number of women who were members in their own right. At the time of writing (mid-1977) Hendon, with 2,026 members in all, is only the third largest United Synagogue Constituent synagogue, after Ilford (2,699) and Stanmore (2,128). So far as Hendon is concerned, this trend is evidence not merely of a contracting but also of an ageing community. There are other signs as well. In November, 1973 the Board was told that, at the Yomim Noraim services earlier that year, there had been 'the usual tremendous demand for seats — but notable absence of worshippers'. A similar pattern of declining attendances on the Yomim Noraim has been evident in subsequent years.

In 1974 a Committee for Investigation of Lack of Attendance was set up. The Board minutes do not record whether the committee ever made a report and, if so, what were its conclusions. But some causes are obvious. In the later 1960s and early 1970s young married couples either could not afford the price of housing in Hendon or, if they could, there was no suitable accommodation to be had. They moved even further afield, to Kenton, Pinner, Watford, Bushey and Borehamwood. This had a secondary effect on Hendon too, because the demand for places at the Hebrew School slackened off. The roll would have declined in any case, because of the end of the post-war 'bulge' in the birthrate. As it happens, the decline was made more rapid still by the expansion of Jewish primary and secondary schools in north-west London.

The roll of the Hebrew School reached a peak of 424 children in 1968, then fell to 300 in 1970, 206 in 1974, and 185 in 1976. In 1969 the Headmaster, Mr. S. Rosslyn, who had done so much during the difficult years before the building of the Community Centre, left for a position in Ilford. He was, in due course, replaced by Rabbi Sassoon Abrahams, who has maintained a fine record of scholastic achievement. In 1974 two candidates were successfully entered for the General Certificate of Education in Classical Hebrew, at the Advanced Level. In 1975 there was a one hundred per cent success rate in the London Board examinations.

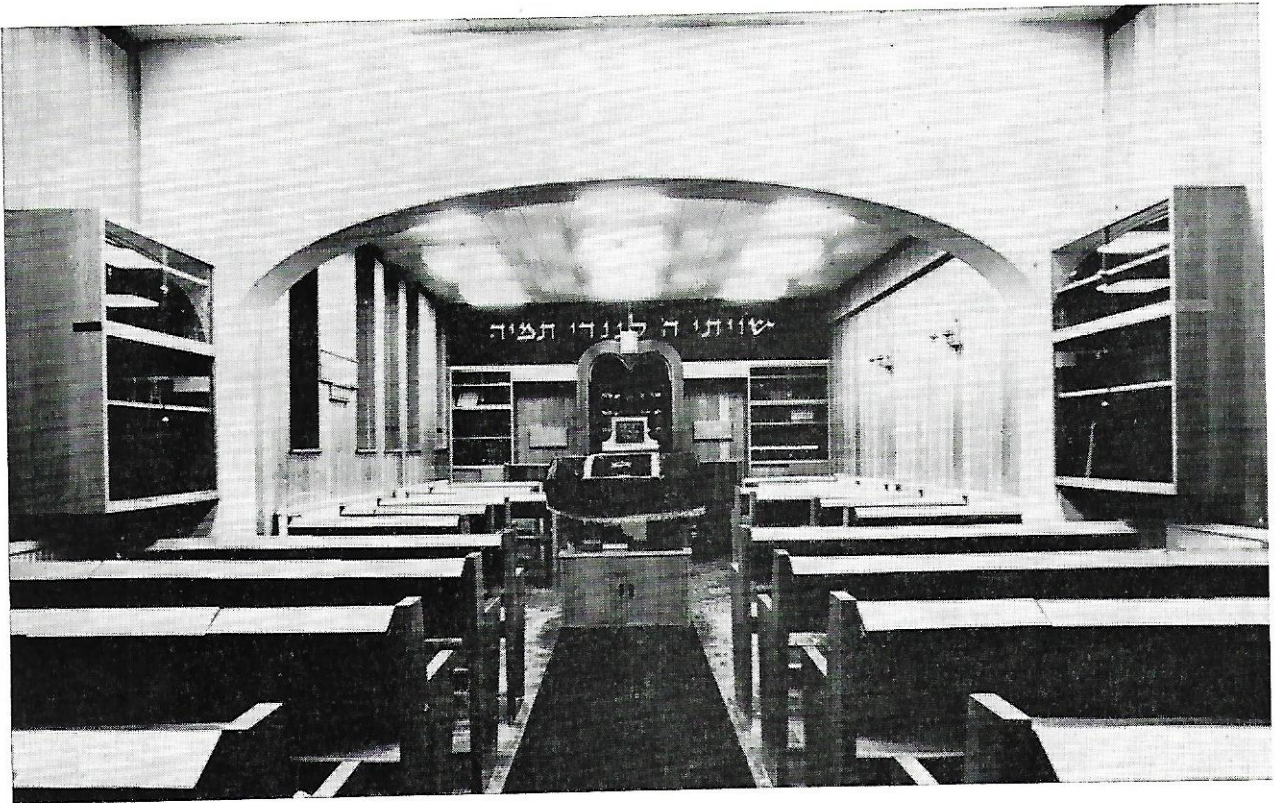
One further, inevitable casualty of the rise of the Jewish Day School movement, and the decline in the number of young Jewish married

couples in Hendon, was the collapse of the Kosher School Meals Service. In 1964 the Hendon centre, catering for 374 children per day, was the largest; there was even a waiting list. But the service was heavily subsidised, numbers dropped sharply in the early 1970s, and those children who did not attend Jewish day schools were being allowed to take sandwiches. In 1972 the service was closed down.

In these circumstances building, in the sense of expansion, came to an end. Plans which had been in the air for some time, to build three flats above the Sol Cohen Hall for synagogue employees, were finally abandoned in December, 1967. In 1966, however, the synagogue was fortunate in acquiring, as its new Beadle, the services of Moshe Steinhart, who has endeared himself to the membership as a man of warm personality, great learning, and pious generosity.

An important piece of rebuilding took place in 1970. This was the conversion of the western end of the Sol Cohen Hall into a completely separate and self-contained Beth Hamedrash, capable of seating 75 persons and of being used instead of the synagogue during weekdays. Designed by Mr. Philip Lebor, its construction was financed partly by means of a grant from the Merze Charitable Trust, on the initiative of Mr. S. N. H. Gabe, a trustee, and former Honorary Officer of the Synagogue, who had for many years urged this project upon his colleagues. The 'Beth Hamedrash Shlomo' was consecrated by Chief Rabbi Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits in February, 1970, and opened by Mr. Gabe. It contains a fine library of books and an imposing memorial tablet 'In Sacred Memory of the Six Million' presented by the architect. The Beth Hamedrash has a warmth and intimacy of its own, and draws to weekday services members who are not or who have ceased to be mourners. It is the meeting place of the synagogue's weekly Talmud Shiur which was, until his death, conducted by Dayan Rapoport, and which is now conducted by Dayan David Kaplin.

In recent years the two principal concerns of the Hendon community have been the care of the aged and the welfare of the youth. In both spheres Rev. Hardman has been a leading advocate of more extensive provision of services. The major project for the elderly has been the building of a Home for the Aged in Hendon. In February, 1969 the synagogue involved itself formally in this project, under the auspices of the Jewish Welfare Board. The Co-ordinated Charities Fund raised money towards the cost of the building, in Church Road, which was opened in January, 1975 by Lord Shinwell in the presence of Mr. Reg Fresson, then Minister of Housing. The home — Ella and Ridley Jacobs House — commemorates in its name two prominent benefactors (often anonymously) of



INTERIOR OF BETH HAMEDRASH SHLOMO

the Hendon Jewish community. It accommodates 34 elderly people and incorporates its own synagogue.

Raleigh Close itself has become a major centre for Jewish youth activities in north-west London. In 1963 the synagogue was approached by the Association for Jewish Youth, the Welfare Committee of the United Synagogue, and its own Youth Committee, with proposals to establish a permanent Youth Centre on its premises. There was immediate agreement. The synagogue's own Youth Club was re-formed to cater for a wider variety of religious, cultural and sporting activities; the club became affiliated to the A.J.Y., and was officially recognised by Barnet Borough Council. The Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies based at the synagogue experienced renewed growth, and organised camping holidays abroad; in 1967 the Group Scoutmaster, Mr. Don Alvarez, received a special presentation in recognition of his assistance to the borough. By 1970 the multiplicity of youth groups and the amount of youth work connected with the synagogue was such that it was felt a more formal framework was necessary. So early in 1971 Leonard Tann, B.A., a student at Jews' College, was appointed as the Hendon Synagogue's Youth Minister. Of Rev. Tann's many activities in this position, one which was of particular note was the organisation of a 'Young Volunteers' Service', an over-16 age-group, to assist with Ella and Ridley Jacobs House.

In the autumn of 1972 Rev. Tann was appointed Minister of Sutton Synagogue. The United Synagogue's Welfare Committee then suggested that an Area Youth Officer be appointed for Hendon and Finchley, the two synagogues each to bear some of the cost. This proposal received the unanimous approval of the Hendon Board. In September, 1973 Mr. Jeffery Blumenfeld, a university graduate and a qualified youth worker, was appointed to the position. He is, in the words of the Hendon Board, 'an extremely busy and industrious young man', organising and co-ordinating a wide variety of youth activities, visiting schools in the area and addressing them at assemblies, giving shiurim on Friday nights and editing a youth newsletter, **Chadashan**. Special youth services are held at the synagogue not only on sabbaths, but also on Sunday mornings, when breakfast is served — a popular innovation, introduced on Rev. Hardman's initiative.

If the education of the young and the care of the old have been the major concerns of the community in recent years, this has not been at the expense of other causes. Money has been raised to support the Hillel Foundation, which caters nationwide for Jewish university students. Programmes of adult education are provided at the synagogue premises, or locally under its auspices. There is a Hebrew-Speaking Circle, and there are kosher cookery classes. In 1976 a local lodge of the B'nai B'rith was formed. The commitment to Israel continues to

be one of the cornerstones of the community. Over £82,000 was raised for Israel after the Six Day War, and over £273,000 after the Yom Kippur War. But these sums are merely high points in a continual fund-raising exercise on behalf of the Jewish State. There is, too, substantial participation in a flourishing branch of the British Friends of the Israel War Disabled, through whom disabled Israeli soldiers are given hospitality by Hendon families.

Since the Six Day War the plight of Soviet Jewry has also been the concern of the Hendon community, the more so because, until recent ill-health compelled him to give up the position, Rev. Hardman was the member of the Chief Rabbi's 'cabinet' with special responsibility for Soviet Jews. Support for this cause, whether it be by mass letter-writing or by demonstrating or by deputation, is itself an act of faith. It was a reflection of Hendon's part in this work that when, in January, 1971, the Fast of Teveth was proclaimed a Day of Prayers for Russian Jewry, the B.B.C. television cameras were present at the morning service at Raleigh Close.

There are very few members of the Hendon Synagogue who are not involved in one or other of its many present-day activities. This is as true of the women as of the men. Perhaps it is truer. In Hendon, as in all synagogues of the United Synagogue, women may become members and attend meetings of members in their own right, but they may not be elected onto the Board of Management. But the Hendon Synagogue Ladies' Guild has, after several false starts, managed to get its foot into the Board Room door: since the summer of 1975 a representative of the Ladies' Guild has been present — by invitation — at Board meetings.

Locally, the synagogue has an important role in the life of the borough. It is at once a religious, cultural, youth and welfare centre. Its members play a full part in the civic culture of the wider community. In 1975 the synagogue saw, for the first time, one of its members elevated to the position of first citizen of the borough, with the election as Mayor of Barnet of Councillor Norman Hirshfield, J.P.; a Civic Service was held at Raleigh Close, and Rev. Hardman became the Mayor's Chaplain during Councillor Hirshfield's year of office.

Contrary to the impression given in many quarters of Anglo-Jewry, Hendon is not a wealthy community. Only in 1976 was its capital debt to the United Synagogue finally repaid. If, in recent years, it has achieved healthy gross final surpluses, these have invariably been 'creamed off' to help poorer congregations; in 1975 more than 70 per cent of the final surplus was used in this way. What has remained has always been ploughed back for the benefit of the community. Hendon is

also an ageing congregation. In 1974 the Annual Meeting was told that nearly 20 per cent of the membership was over 60 years of age. Today the proportion is probably higher. One aspect of the work of the Hendon Co-ordinated Charities Fund which is least publicised, but most vital, is the financial assistance it gives to congregants who are in poor circumstances. This is particularly important before Pesach, when no effort is spared to provide needy families, in as unobtrusive a way as is possible, with everything they need to celebrate this festival in the proper manner.

The rise in the proportion of elderly members, the decline in the number of barmitzvah ceremonies (from an average of 50 a year a couple of decades ago to about half that number in the mid-1970s) — these trends seem at first sight also to be portents for the future. But to those eager to rush into predictions, the past history of the Hendon Synagogue, especially in the period of the late 1940s, when membership seemed already to have reached its peak, should serve as a warning. Whatever the next 50 years hold for the community, it will face them with the same dedication and determination that it has displayed in its first half-century.

'Who is rich?', the Mishnah asks: 'He who rejoices in his portion'. This precept of Ben Zoma could well be taken as the philosophy by which the Hendon Synagogue has lived. Whatever problems have come its way, it has done its best to solve. Whatever tasks have been asked of it, it has performed to the best of its ability. It has never courted popularity, it has never demanded praise. It has striven only to abide by the orthodox Jewish faith through which it was created, and from which all its inspirations are ultimately derived.

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