

GOLDERS GREEN SYNAGOGUE

The First Hundred Years

Helen Fry

This is a fully illustrated history of the Golders Green Synagogue which was founded in 1915 during the First World War. At the turn of the 20th century, Golders Green comprised mainly open fields but the coming of the underground precipitated rapid development. Jews began to move into the area from places like Kilburn and Cricklewood.

Most of the land was owned by Church Commissioners from whom the congregation eventually purchased its plot in Dunstan Road to erect the first purpose-built synagogue in Golders Green, consecrated in 1922. From small beginnings of circa. 20 members, it soon became a thriving congregation with over 1,500 members at its peak.

Its members made their own contribution to the Armed Forces in both world wars and their sacrifice is commemorated on the shul's War Memorial. Amongst the ministers and rabbis in its hundred year history have been Rev Isaac Livingstone, Rabbi Eugene Newman, Dayan Swift and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks; the latter went on to become the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth.

In recent times, the Grade II Listed synagogue underwent refurbishment and was transformed from a tired, dilapidated building to a modern, regenerated place of prayer. Today, it enjoys religious revival with young families and a very successful Primary Free School. This book charts and celebrates its first remarkable hundred years.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

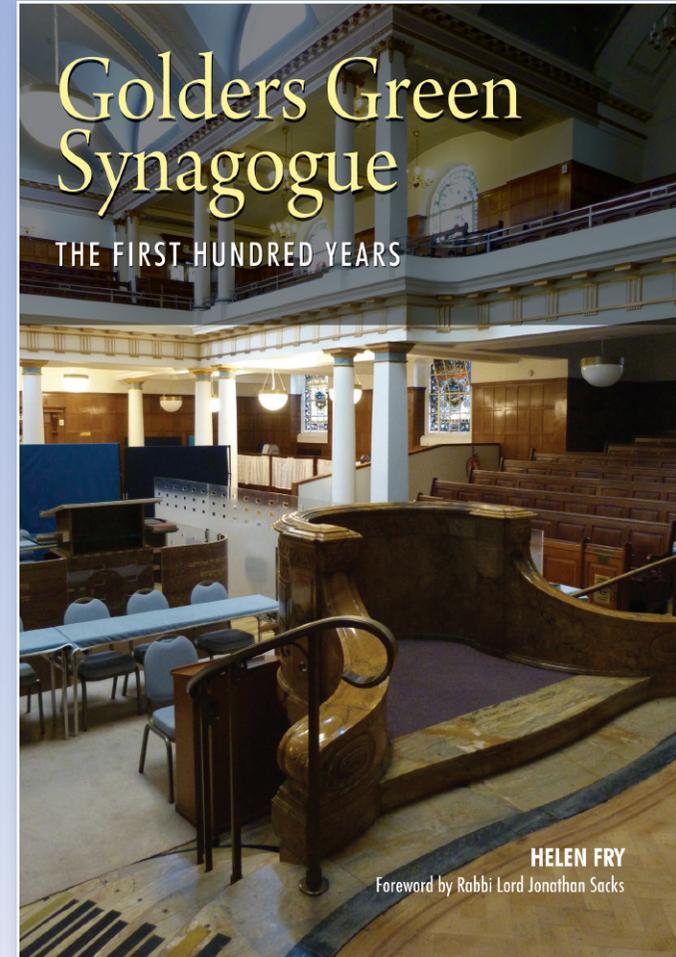
Helen Fry has written widely on the history of Anglo-Jewry, with particular reference to the Jews of Devon and Cornwall, including *Jews in North Devon during the Second World War*, *The Jews of Exeter* and *The Jews of Plymouth*. She also specialises in WW2, primarily writing about the refugees from Nazism who fought for Britain. Her WW2 books include *Churchill's Secret Soldiers*, *The M Room: Secret Listeners who Bugged*

the Nazis, *Freuds' War*, *Spymaster: The Secret Life of Kendrick* and *Inside Nuremberg Prison*. Helen has featured in a number of documentaries for Channel 4, ITV and Channel 5, as well as live interviews on the BBC and various radio stations. She is a member of the Biographers Club. Official website: www.helen-fry.com

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GOLDERS GREEN SYNAGOGUE THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS



July 20th 1915. Meeting in Woodstock Road.
 Present - Mr. B. Prage, Resident in the block.
 Messrs H. L. Brown, J. Bondson, R. Katz, J. B. B. Woodman, J. Samuel, J. Victor, M. Harari and H. Hush. J. Sheppard.
 The chairman referred to the generous response that Mr. M. Harari's appeal had met with, at the general meeting on the preceding Sunday. An opportunity not having been provided to notify the committee of all the business proposed to be dealt with at this meeting he briefly indicated the course it was desirable to follow.
 That the Secretaries should approach the members by letter and obtain payments

Resolved. V.S. 1915
 Proposed.
 Proposed.
 Proposed.
 Proposed.
 Resolved.

By Mr. J. Victor seconded by Mr. B. Prage, and the signatures to be accepted and honored by Bank should be the President Mr. B. Prage, and the Treasurer Mr. M. Harari. Carried.
 By Mr. Hush seconded by Mr. P. Woodman that the funds subscribed and promised at the general meeting July 18th amounting to £162-12-6 be set aside as a Reserve of the Building Fund of the Golders Green Synagogue. Carried.
 The members agreed that the Synagogue and unanimously agreed that the Synagogue should be carried on on the lines of the United Synagogue, and the Hon. Officers should informally approach them for guidance.
 By Mr. M. Harari, seconded by Mr. P. Woodman a sub-committee be formed to obtain temporary accommodation in this district.
 By Mr. M. Harari, seconded by Mr. J. Sheppard



Above, left to right: The Synagogue; Record of the first meeting that established the synagogue, July 1915; Rabbi Newman, civic ceremony at the synagogue with Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, 1970s

Right: Wedding of Alfred Woolf to Daisy Wollman, 31 January 1923.

Example of a double-page spread.

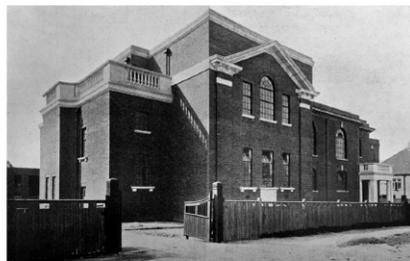


Introduction

THE GOLDERS GREEN Synagogue was the first purpose-built synagogue in a new residential suburb. From small beginnings in 1915, it became a vibrant community with well over a thousand members at its peak. Writing the history of a community is a journey, one of its triumphs and struggles, albeit at a distance of some years. At the start of writing this history of Golders Green Synagogue, one question was paramount: why did a congregation start in the midst of a world war – the Great War? I soon discovered that the congregation's history is bound up with the history of Golders Green itself and the rapid expansion from open green fields to densely populated urban development. Other questions emerged: who moved into the area and why? I soon discovered that this was an up-and-coming middle-class area, and those Jews who moved there were coming, not primarily from the East End as one might expect, but from around Crouch Hill and Kilburn.

In the 1910s, Golders Green was becoming a very fashionable area in which to live. However, research for the history of Golders Green Synagogue threw up something very unexpected. The religious life of the nascent Jewish congregation was bound up with another new community – the local Anglican Church of St Alban's. From 1915, the Jewish community, which did not yet have its own purpose-built place of worship, rented St Alban's Hall from the local Anglican congregation. The hall had only been built in 1908, and was being used as the church. The local vicar, the Rev. Herbert Trundle, was himself in the throes of establishing a new congregation and trying to raise funds to build a proper church. And so I learned from its current-day vicar, Rev. Rex Morton, that St Alban's Church that one sees on North End Road today was not actually built until 1957 – at least fifteen years after the Golders Green Synagogue was constructed.

In the early decades of these two communities, until the Rev. Trundle's death in 1937, the first minister of the Golders Green Synagogue, the Rev. Isaac Livingstone, and the Rev. Trundle had a close working relationship of cooperation and respect – all this in the days before the new relationship in Jewish-Christian dialogue. The renting of St Alban's Hall as a place for Jewish services from 1915 until 1922 was not an insignificant timepiece in the history of the Golders Green Synagogue. The two congregations



Exterior Golders Green Synagogue, 1927.