

'We were really happy to be in shul together'

BY LAURA PATER

FOR HAMPSTEAD Garden Suburb Synagogue members Zoe and Archie Sinclair, parents of 16-month-old Emily, last weekend was the first time they had attended shul on Shabbat as a family.

"The buggy park was absolutely packed," said Mrs Sinclair, who has not been to a Shabbat service since Emily was born. "Although Emily is walking, shul is still too far for her. We were really happy to all go to shul together. It was fantastic to see so many mothers and babies, and it's great we are now able to see our friends over Shabbat."

HGS's chazan, the Reverend Avromi Freilich, celebrated the presence of so many children by inviting them on to the bimah for *Adon Olam*.

"We're over the moon," said Corrinne Tapnack, who until now has taken turns with husband David to attend services at Hendon Synagogue with three-year-old Lior, or to stay home with year-old Eli.

"We are really grateful to all those people who worked so hard for the eruv. It has completely changed our Shabbat. It was great to be able to go to shul together," she told the JC.

Mira and Darren Lauber, who are from Hendon, have a three-year-old daughter, Tsafia, and nine-month-old son, Benji. They, too, were delighted to be able to take their children out. "It was fantastic," said Mrs Lauber. "It has made life so much easier. It is a long walk to shul for Tsafia, so it's great she can now go in the buggy. As Shabbat gets longer, I feel a bit cooped up. It is nice, for a change, to take Benji for a walk."

Golders Green family Anushka and Edward Levey attend the Yakar Synagogue in Hendon — where Mrs Levey's father, Jeremy Rosen, is min-

ister. The couple has two daughters, Ella, almost two, and eight-week-old Libby. "We have just got to the stage where Ella is able to walk," Mrs Levey said, "so it would have been very frustrating to have had to stay at home with Libby."

Ner Yisrael congregants Charlotte and Elliot Benjamin have two daughters: Talia, two, and six-month-old Michal. Mrs Benjamin said: "We were able to enjoy Shabbat properly. There was an amazing atmosphere in shul. It is nice to have something so positive to celebrate when there is so much sadness in the world."

At Ner Yisrael, where the minister, Rabbi Alan Kimche, and many leading members have been at the forefront of the decade-long campaign for the eruv, there was a particularly festive atmosphere.

In his sermon, a smiling Rabbi Kimche referred to his walk through Golders Green with London Beth Din head, Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu that morning, both of them carrying *siddurim*. The capacity congregation laughed when Rabbi Kimche noted that the synagogue car park was "full of McClarens," a reference to the baby strollers pushed there by young parents liberated by the eruv.

After the service, Dayan Ehrentreu joined the singing and dancing around the kiddush tables.

There was an especially emotional



Corrinne Tapnack (above) with sons Lior and Eli and (left) Chani Nussbaum and David Schreiber J. RIFKIN

greeting at Ner for wheelchair-bound Chani Nussbaum — whose attendance was part of a pact made a decade ago. A Multiple Sclerosis sufferer who has been unable

to walk for some 20 years, she was wheeled to shul by David Schreiber, a member of the Eruv Committee and long-time friend. He flew to London from China on Friday to keep a promise — to escort Mrs Nussbaum to shul on the first Shabbat of the eruv.

Mr Schreiber, who moved to Israel with his family in 1995, told the JC. "The eruv doesn't make such a big difference to me: my children are grown up and all I need to carry are my keys, but focusing on the differ-

ence it would make to someone like Mrs Nussbaum was a reminder why it was worth working so hard for."

"Nothing can really explain how it felt to go to shul after so long," said Mrs Nussbaum, who is now looking forward to enjoying Shabbat meals with her children and grandchildren. "I have wonderful friends and family who kept me company, but I was still stuck at home. It was lovely to be at shul and see everyone so happy."

Toledano criticises 'disunity'

THE HEAD OF the Sephardi Beth Din, Dayan Dr Pinchas Toledano, this week joined the critics of the North-West London eruv which came into operation last Shabbat.

The London Beth Din-approved project was breaking Orthodox unity, he told the JC, referring to strong opposition to the eruv from rabbis to the right of the United Synagogue.

Three years ago, he added, the Sephardim had withdrawn plans to introduce kosher hindquarter meat — unavailable in Britain for more than half-a-century — into a restaurant under its authority, after objections from London Beth Din head Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu.

"He preached to us about keeping the unity of Anglo-Jewry," Dayan Toledano said. "Now he is breaking the unity of Anglo-Jewry. For the last 50 years, we've had no eruv."

Still, individual Sephardi rabbis would be left to decide whether to let their members use the new boundary, Dayan Toledano said.

The Federation Beth Din has taken no official position on the eruv. "What we have said to our congregants is that each should ask their own rabbi," said Dayan Berel Berkovits.

Shabbat welcome for eruv

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wheelchairs and carry some otherwise prohibited items, was intact.

There was a minor hiccup when the Corporation of London issued a statement this week expressing concern at damage caused to trees on Hampstead Heath during installation of the eruv.

The Corporation complained that trees on Wildwood Road had

been damaged as a result of pruning to allow eruv wire to be threaded through trees. The corporation also alleged the work was done without prior knowledge of the Heath superintendent.

Catherine McGuinness, chair of the Hampstead Heath management committee, said: "We were very concerned that branches had been cut and we regard any such infringement extremely seriously."

She said they had told Eruv Committee members, who had apologised.

She said no action would be taken but warned: "We will be keeping a very close eye on any future maintenance work that takes place on Wildwood Road, and have made it very clear to the Eruv Committee that trees on the Heath must not be touched, other than under our close supervision."

'Thanks for ignoring the Foreign Office' says British ambassador

BY HYAM CORNEY, NETANYA
ERIC SILVER, JERUSALEM

"I THANK YOU for ignoring Foreign Office advice not to travel to Israel at this time," a visibly moved British Ambassador Sherard Cowper-Coles told the London Shabbaton Choir at the opening of a four-day "Solidarity Through Song" tour last week.

The 20-member group, joined in Israel by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and senior United Synagogue officials, flew from Heathrow days after several Anglo-Jewish missions had abandoned their trips because of difficulties in securing group insurance. "We all had difficult decisions to make," Simon Stone, a chartered sur-

veyor from London, said, "but our families supported us. We feel very safe here."

The choir, conducted by Stephen Levey and with cantors Lionel Rosenfeld and Shimon Cramer as soloists, began its tour with an emotional performance in the dining room of Netanyahu's Park Hotel, where a suicide bomber killed 29 people gathered for a Seder last Pesach.

The appearance, arranged by the United Jewish Israel Appeal and funded by the Ashdown Trust, was billed as a thank-you to Laniado Hospital staff and volunteers and other medical services involved in responding to the attack. Many of them attended the concert.

In Jerusalem, the choir performed in aid of Re'ut, a voluntary social-service organization, and later visited a

rehabilitation and care unit which Re'ut runs for terror- and accident-victims in Tel Aviv.

"So long as there is an Anglo-Jewish community," Chief Rabbi Sacks promised the audience in Jerusalem's Bible Lands Museum, "Israel will never be alone."

On Saturday night, he accompanied the choir to the Gush Etzion settlement block, between Bethlehem and Hebron. A handful of protesters distributed leaflets recalling his interview with The Guardian last summer, in which he suggested the conflict with the Palestinians was "forcing Israel into postures incompatible" in the long run with Jewish ideals.

Before flying back to Britain, Rabbi Sacks met for an hour on Monday with Israeli President Moshe Katsav.

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