

# Middle Street Synagogue 1875-2025: 150th Anniversary Celebration

*"From generation to generation, we declare your greatness."*

Psalms 145:4

On Sunday afternoon, 26th October 2025, we were privileged to hold the first in a series of events celebrating 150 years since the New Synagogue, as it was first called, opened in Middle Street.

Hosted by Michelle Cooperman and Michael Crook, the afternoon event comprised two thoroughly researched lectures. Michael Crook shed light on the history of Brighton and Hove Jewry while Michelle Cooperman related the stories behind the donors and those commemorated by the stained glass windows for which Middle Street is justly famous.

Naomi Cooperman introduced the afternoon's event, and we as a community gave a warm welcome to Councillor Birgit Miller of Brighton & Hove City Council. Cabinet member for Culture, Heritage, and Tourism, Councillor Miller has a genuine interest in supporting the future of Middle Street, and we look forward to a long-lasting and fruitful relationship with her.

A video message from Rabbi Rader, who was overseas for a family visit, set the tone for the afternoon. Rabbi Rader drew a link between the past and present, how Middle Street Synagogue represents a bridge that spans generations, and how our responsibilities to this historic place of worship in the present day reflect the commitments, perseverance, and sacrifices that were made by previous generations.

For the first talk of the afternoon, Michael Crook presented a vast overview of the 260-year-old history of the Jewish community in Brighton and Hove. From Israel Samuel, the first recorded Jewish resident of Brighthelmstone in 1766; to Henry Solomon, the first Jewish Police Chief, who was murdered in his own police station in 1844; and a major evolution to the dynamic of the congregation in 1918, when women were formally accepted as members of the congregation in their own right, making Brighton & Hove the first Orthodox congregation to take this step.



After tea and a celebratory slice of 150th anniversary cake, Michelle Cooperman presented her talk entitled, "The Windows of Middle Street", in which she related her research into the stories of English Jewry's most well-known, and lesser known, families and their generous contributions to the interior decoration of Middle Street Synagogue.

We heard stories of the Sassoons and Rothschilds, and stories less well-known, such as of the Cohen sisters (Lucy and Anna Louisa) who donated five pairs of windows and were amongst the most prolific donors to the synagogue and the redoubtable Ada Hannah Lewis, owner of not one but two Stradivarius violins and whose numerous legacies still benefit people today.

We welcomed guests from Israel and London via Zoom and we were glad to welcome the grandson of Mr Israel Silver, a former synagogue president, in person.

Our thanks to Angela Samuels for organising the catering of this celebratory tea, and to all the ladies who assisted during the afternoon. Thank you to our volunteer security, ably led by Stewart Macintosh, and to caretaker Rick for arranging the seating and clearing away afterwards.

For those who were unable to attend this wonderful afternoon, we expect a similar presentation to be given by Michelle to the Jewish Historical Society of England (JHSE) early next year. Michelle will be presenting her research as part of the David Hyman Prize which she was recently awarded by the JHSE, and which will form the basis of a new publication on the history of the windows of Middle Street Synagogue.

