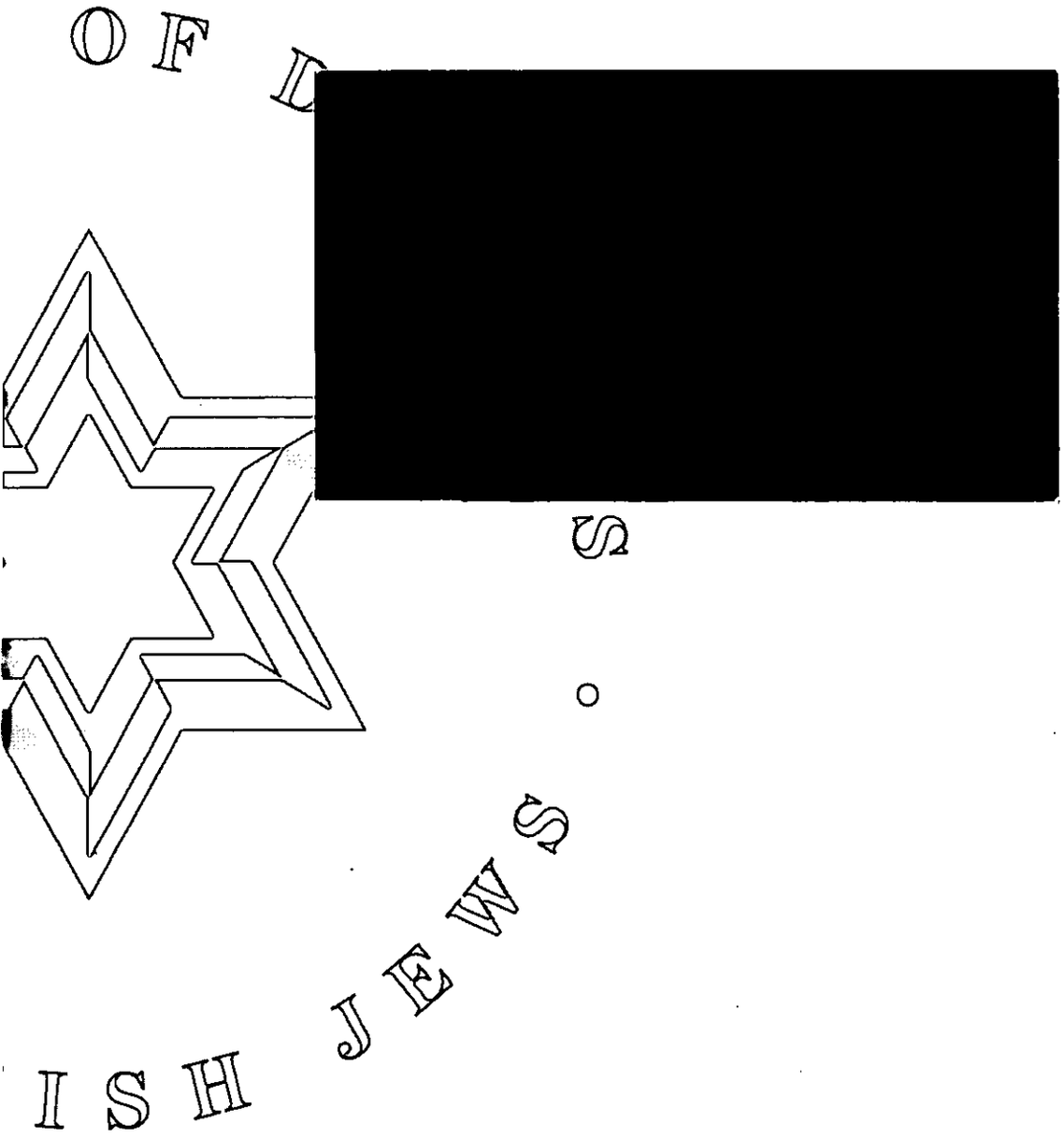
The Board of Deputies of British Jews



The Relaxation of Community?

Marlena Schmool

Rona Hart

Frances Cohen

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I. Introduction

This report concentrates on the situation of small Jewish communities in the United Kingdom at the end of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the patterns described may be taken as the extreme in a process that to some degree affects communities of all sizes. All communities are organic and none are static. While we are reporting here on towns and cities that have had less than 1500 Jews since 1959[1], the reduction in the quantity and quality of services and institutions in such places is mirrored over time in the largest British Jewish concentrations. For example, we can see that communities previously boasting one or two kosher restaurants and multiple kosher butchers and small Jewish shops, now are devoid of the former and can sustain maybe only one or two of the latter.

This is not to be wondered at. The early 20th century generations of immigrants and their children (and the Jews who preceded them) for the most part lived and worked within, by means of, or for the community but the children of the small Jewish sweetshop-proprietor or tailor were expected to improve on their parents' economic status; and indeed most did. Moreover, as the century wore on new external influences were felt. For example, the pattern of retailing changed. The small, independent shopkeeper disappears as large supermarket chains introduce kosher sections and adherence to kashrut weakens within the home. In parallel, synagogues in large communities close and consolidate as population moves from areas of first through to third, and fourth, settlement. Communities may still live in an area recognised as Jewish but that is more geographically spread and, for the majority of Jews, no longer restricts itself to walking distance from a synagogue.

The currents and pressures that bring these changes in the larger communities are equally present in the smaller ones. However, they manifest themselves differently. It is not always possible to move the sole, historically interesting synagogue; a smaller population may not be so concentrated; its low numbers may render particularist economic activity unviable. Across the wider community nationally, there has been renewed emphasis on leading a full Jewish life and especially on the importance of full-time Jewish education for children – an impossible goal in a small (or even larger)[2] community that does not have the number of children needed to start or maintain a Jewish day school. As a result the smaller communities have found it increasingly difficult to attract people, lay or clergy, who wish to follow this direction or with the skills required to underpin a strong religious life within the community.

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[1] New small Regional localities were added in successive studies. No original community grew to more than 1500 people over the period.

[2] This is illustrated by the unsuccessful long-sustained campaign for a Jewish state-aided secondary school in Leeds.

The history of British Jewry post-World War Two has been one of consolidation and migration. Whereas British Jewry has always been predominantly London-centred, this tendency has increased over the past half-century as higher education and availability of employment have attracted successive age-cohorts away from even large Jewish centres and into the Greater London catchment area, in many ways echoing general population movements mainly in search of work. These migrations and the overall ageing of British Jewry have speeded the depletion of the smaller communities. It is with these processes and their outcomes this report is concerned.

II. Background

The basic foundations of Jewish diaspora communities are the availability of work and the structures within which to live a Jewish life. The structural dimensions of the latter depend on individual and communal expectations at different times in history but *minimally* have required a room for worship (at least for Shabbat), availability of kosher food and, as communities grow and need arises, provision for Jewish education, marriage, *Brit Milah* and burial[3]. Since Resettlement in 1656, Jews in Britain have overwhelmingly concentrated in urban centres where there are the institutions that support Jewish life. Communal studies on which the planners and commentators have relied until the release of data by the Office of National Statistics (ONS)[4] indicate that Greater London and the neighbouring counties account for almost three-quarters of the 283,000 core Jewish population of the United Kingdom; approximately one in every ten British Jews lives in the Greater Manchester area and one in eight is found in middle range congregations (Leeds, Glasgow, Brighton and Hove, Birmingham, Liverpool, Southend and Bournemouth). All these communities have more than 3,000 Jews.

Outside these main centres, approximately 17,000 Jews live in the 67 small communities that are the subject of this report and between them have 84 congregations or another focal communal organisation[5]. This minority of the community population has historically been spread across many places.[6] These have not been constant and the smaller communal locations have waned as opportunities for livelihood changed. By the late 19th century, the Jewish population developed a particular character of distribution with

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[3] In terms of importance under *halakha* the *mikveh* should be included here but until very recently *mikvaot* have been generally absent from British Jewish communities, large or small.

[4] In April 2001 the censuses of England and Wales and of Scotland included a question on religion. This was a voluntary question and so presents figures for those who self-identified as Jews.

[5] M Schmool and Frances Cohen, *British Synagogue Membership*, studies for 1996 and 2001, (London: Board of Deputies).

[6] V.D. Lipman, (1990) A *History of the Jews in Britain since 1858*, (Leicester University Press).

immigrants settling above all in London and the burgeoning industrial towns of Northern England. The geographical profile and levels of communal provision established then and through the early part of the 20th century set norms that became the benchmark against which communities have more recently judged themselves.

Sociological research has shown that it is difficult to maintain a strong minority identity in a small group without institutional support[7], and from a practical point of view, the issues attaching to smaller communities have been recognised for over 40 years. In January 1959 a Conference of the Provincial Representative Councils devoted a whole day of its meeting to the 'Problems of the smaller provincial communities'.[8] This was a starting point for a series of monitoring exercises that have since been used to chart the development of these smaller communities. It gives a historical dimension to the latest study, a dimension which more than anything allows us to review the migration experience of the post-World War Two generation. While a 1959 Report may indeed pinpoint, among others, financial need, shortage of ministers, education and contact with other communities as issues confronting small regional communities, it is in the following decades that the impact of these factors has been played out through the disappearance of many of the communities named at that time. However, even then, it was noted that some centres were so small that 'it would not be strictly correct to describe them as communities'.[9]

Again from a sociological perspective, the size of a minority ethnic community has significant implications for its social, religious, and communal life, as well as for the complementary leitmotivs of assimilation and the preservation of identity and community. A community requires, among many other things, social and cultural focal points; high levels of geographical dispersion present challenges to any minority community bent on maintaining a distinctive way of life and institutions. Large-scale movement over time can lead to the disintegration of a community. Furthermore, research has found[10] that spatial distance may imply functional and/or psychological distance which leads to the detachment of individuals and families from communal life. Migration may thus be a calculated route away from community living. Conversely, for some, migration and geographical choice may be influenced by the wish for participation in a full communal life-style; this will precipitate the movement from a small to a large community.

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[7] Goldstein S, (1993) *Profile of American Jewry*, (New York: The Mandell Berman Inst. CUNY), Goldstein has shown that living in small regional communities, away from both essential communal amenities and social networks, can weaken identification whether ethnic, cultural or religious.

[8] Annual Report of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1959, pp 30 – 36.

[9] Report prepared by the Board of Deputies of British Jews on *the Problems of the Smaller Jewish Communities*, October 1959, p.9 (unpublished)

[10] Castles, S. and M.J. Miller (2000) *The Age of Migration*, (New York: Guildford Press).

British Jewry is to a very large extent organised around those formal institutions which are the foundation of community. For example, synagogue, school and charity groups provide pivotal, structured, regulated settings in both large and small centres and are important focuses for Jewish identification. However, these institutions are not totally co-extensive with community although they express its existence, set the tone for communal life and provide its strength. The absence of such a framework in some communities, especially where it calls to mind loss of previous provision, may render communal life either very limited or unviable. In these circumstances, some older communities may be obliged to focus on the particular challenges of determining or providing fundamental Jewish services and they may need to reassess what they can expect of themselves. This could have the affect of re-inventing, or at least modifying, the institutions. Our data will show that in some places this process is well underway and the rhythm of Jewish life has changed. For many this rhythmic change will come to involve recalibrating their institutions so that they can continue to nourish communal culture and to provide social cement. It is noteworthy that those new, small loci of Jewish life, which are being developed as part of the outreach programmes of national organisations, already show a more fluid pattern. These communities began with different expectations of their Jewish life and their durability is less dependant on traditional Jewish weekly routines. We term this shift in rhythm and routine patterns 'relaxation' and the findings described below present a number of examples of this process

III. Research methods

In 1988 the Community Research Unit of the Board began to plan the first of what has become a longitudinal study of small Regional communities and three surveys have been conducted, in 1989, 1995 and 2001. The surveys covered communal memberships and a detailed description of their religious, social, welfare, cultural and educational facilities. The current report brings together the findings of the three studies concentrating in the main on 1989 and 2001 so as to delineate trends. It aims to contribute to the understanding of conditions in small communities and to provide community leaders with hard data to help inform their policy decisions.

In each of the three years, questionnaires were sent to all regional communities in the UK with a recorded Jewish population of less than 1500. As the study was linked to geographically wider reviews of synagogue membership,[11] questionnaires were addressed to all synagogue chairpersons and to heads of Representative Councils.

[11] See M Schmool and F Cohen, op. cit., 1996 and 2001

The questionnaires sought information on *congregational* size, organisational structure of the community, social and communal services available, accessibility of Jewish commodities and links to nearby large communities. The three consecutive studies allow us to show changes over time, e.g., in membership patterns, services offered locally or relationships with neighbouring communities.

The 1989 study, as the benchmark, was more detailed than the follow-ups; it set the scene on aspects of communal life and provided impressions of the community prior to the study. Congregations were asked then whether synagogue memberships had 'increased / decreased / remained unchanged during the 1980's', about the presence of a synagogue classes, whether a *mohel* lived locally, which other facilities were available locally, and whether there was a local Jewish cemetery. Because other Board studies[12] cover some of these original topics on an annual basis, the two later surveys were less detailed and focused on membership, communal organisations and services and links with neighbouring communities.

The questionnaires included two, alternative questions about congregational membership. These variations were adopted in order to allow for the different ways in which congregations define membership: while some synagogues have family memberships, some only count male heads of households. Others have separate memberships for men and women. The parallel questions were used in order to enable synagogue and communal administrators to report their membership numbers in the way they are collected. The responses over the years indicate that these formulations were understood by the different congregations which all answered one or other of the questions. Total membership numbers for congregations were calculated by standardising the replies into households and single members, and then by adding the two.

Analyses in this report relate to both *congregations* and *communities*. Congregations are single entities, communities in larger towns sometimes have more than one congregation where there is both an Orthodox and a Progressive congregation. Community memberships are arrived at by aggregating the memberships of the (never more than) two congregations. Most tables refer to congregations since our understanding is that congregations see themselves as a community even though we ourselves define community more widely as the combined memberships in a locality.

In 1989, 81 congregations were covered by the study, the 1995 survey included 83 congregations and in 2001 there were 84 congregations. Thus the change in totals is small but there were openings and closures over the decade. There are also Jews living in areas that have never had a

[12] Annual Education Survey; Review of Vital Statistics, (unpublished Board of Deputies papers)

synagogue or other community focus. They will not have been picked up by this study unless they belonged to one of the congregations we covered. Census data in Appendix B show just how widely Jews are spread throughout Great Britain; some 30,000 live away from main centres but we have no data on just how many are formally linked, perhaps as synagogue country members, to communal institutions.

Since from the outset one objective of this work has been to review change and adaptation to new external conditions, our study has never included the strictly Orthodox, self-contained, yeshiva-oriented community of Gateshead, a community of some 1,500 people. This community finds the skills to meet all ritual and communal requirements within its own membership and, indeed, as nearby mainstream communities have become more secular, has met their needs.

Response rates to the three stages of the study were high throughout: 100% in 1989, 87% in 1995 (97% for the question on details of membership) and 98% in 2001.

IV. Findings

Membership, distribution and change

The congregations and communities reviewed here are spread across the British Isles: from Aberdeen to Plymouth and Torbay. Those covered in the 2001 study are named according to Standard Region in AB. Tables 1 and 2 below set out the distribution of congregations by Region and synagogal affiliation.

Over the whole period more than a third of the small congregations (32 out of 84 in 2001) have been situated in the South-East. The net total increased from 81 congregations in 1989 to 84 in 2001 but this masks closures and openings. During the decade, six congregations closed: those of South Shields, Whitley Bay, Middlesborough, Wolverhampton, Wallasey and Epsom. At the same time, nine new groups were established: in Argyle and Bute, Eastbourne, Maidstone, St Albans, Norwich, Lincoln, Welshpool, Coventry, and Hereford. Geographically this has meant that the number of Northern congregations decreased while those of the East Midlands, West Midlands, East Anglia, Wales and Scotland and the South-East each increased slightly.

Table 1: Small congregations by Standard Region, 1989,1995, 2001

Standard Region	1989	1995	2001
North and North-East	7	6	4
Yorkshire and Humberside	9	9	9
East Midlands	5	5	6
East Anglia	5	6	6
South-East	30	32	32
South-West	7	7	7
West Midlands	4	5	5
North-West	7	6	6
Scotland	3	3	4
Wales	3	3	4
Northern Ireland	1	1	1
Total	**81**	**83**	**84**

As Table 2 shows, in 2001, 52 out of 84 (62%) congregations were Orthodox and the rest Progressive. The continuing predominance of Orthodox congregations is rooted in British Jewish history[13] and does not necessarily indicate levels of observance within either a congregation or a community. Perhaps a more appropriate label for these congregations would be 'Traditional' reflecting the one-third of Jewish adults who define their Jewish identity in this way[14] particularly as data from other questions suggest that members are 'Traditional' rather than fully observant of *halakha*.

Over the period, the number of Orthodox congregations fell from 57 to 52 while the others rose from 24 to 32. Of the newly established congregations five are Liberal, one is Reform, two are Masorti and one is Orthodox. This differential change is a result of the Progressive movements' Regional community development programmes. These locate and bring together non-affiliated individuals and families and provide an institutional setting in areas that may previously not have had such a focus. They particularly work through networking from their own, more established, congregations.

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[13] Most congregations were founded at the time of the late 19th century, Orthodox, immigration. A notable exception is the Bradford Reform Congregation, which was established in 1873.

[14] Schmool M and Frances Cohen, (1998), *Profile of British Jewry*. Board of Deputies of British Jews

Table 2: Small congregations by synagogal affiliation, 1989,1995, 2001

Synagogal Sector	1989	1995	2001
Orthodox	57	55	52
Reform	15	16	16
Liberal	9	11	14
Masorti and Independent	0	1	2
Total	**81**	**83**	**84**

Membership[15] numbers also show overall decline: in 1989 there were 9257 households affiliated to the small Regional congregations. By 2001, this had fallen to 7493, a decrease of 19%. This mirrors measured changes in British Jewish population since the Second World War which have, over the decade under review, fallen from 336,000 to some 283,000 people[16].

Table 3: Membership by Standard Region 1989,1995, 2001

Region	1989	1995	2001	% increase/decrease 1989-2001
North	1202	742	591	-51
Yorkshire and Humberside	1212	970	1006	-17
East Midlands	863	753	694	-19
East Anglia	263	343	346	31
South-East	3160	3084	2945	-7
South-West	489	404	451	-7
West Midlands	197	213	187	-5
North-West	1164	1117	767	-33
Scotland	294	206	200	-32
Wales	186	156	135	-27
North Ireland	227	205	171	-25
Total	**9257**	**8193**	**7493**	**-19**

The changes in membership according to Region underline the changes in congregations. Thus, the decline in the North was just over 50% but the fall in other areas was between 5% and 35%, with the smallest decreases being in southern regions. Only East Anglia experienced a small increase. These Jewish Regional variations are in line with general population movements in England and Wales where population has moved away from the North and to

[15] See Methodology for definition of membership

[16] Schmool and Cohen, (1998)

the South East and South. As regards synagogal affiliation, membership in Orthodox congregations decreased 32% while Progressive memberships rose by 17%. However, as Table 4 shows, the absolute increase in Progressive membership in small communities was only some 430 nationally.

Table 4: Membership by synagogal affiliation 1989,1995, 2001

Synagogal sector	**1989**	**1995**	**2001**	% increase/ decrease 1989-2001
Mainstream	6755	5213	4555	-32
Reform	2011	2368	2232	11
Liberal	491	577	631	28
Masorti and Independent	0	35	75	
Total	**9257**	**8193**	**7493**	**-19**

Additionally, the congregations reporting the most marked decline in membership are older congregations, founded before 1920. Those new congregations established after 1981, unsurprisingly, reported growth in membership.

Structure and facilities

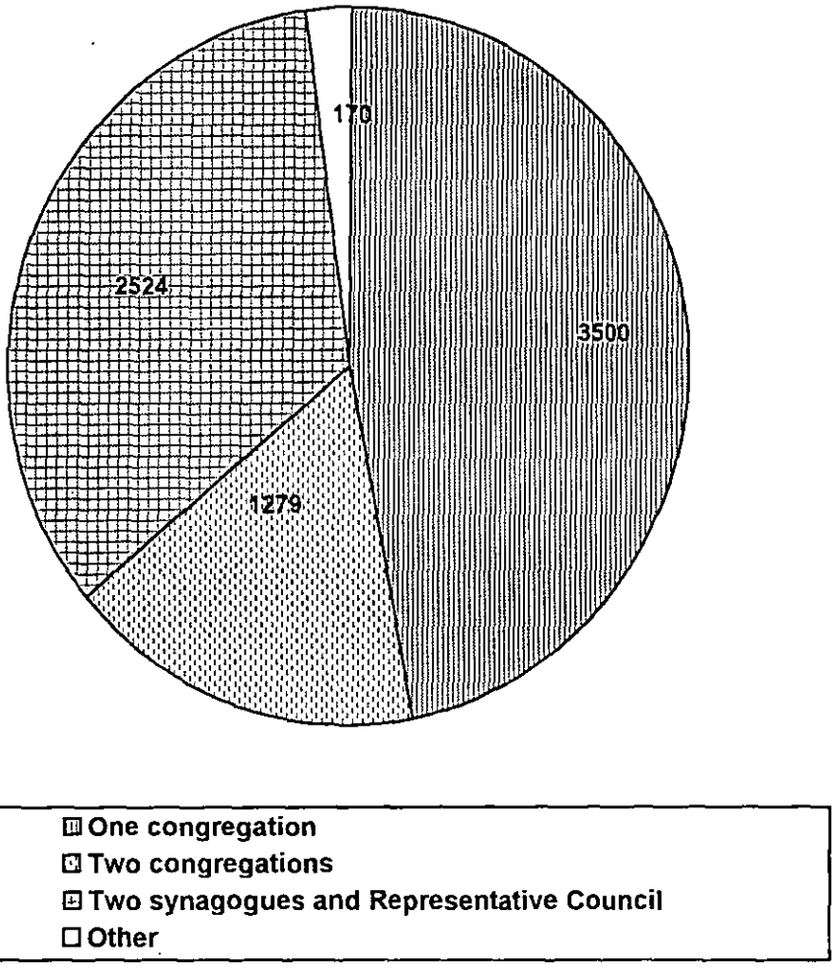
As we indicated in the methodological discussion, our report relates to both *congregations* and *communities* and we therefore first examine the make up of the small communities in terms of congregations present. This is followed by an analysis of organisations and facilities availability within the *communities* as a whole.

The diagram opposite sets out the congregational numbers and associated membership of the small communities in 2001. Four different community types are presented: 46 communities reporting a total of 3,500 memberships have one congregation; ten communities with 1,279 memberships have two congregations; seven communities (2,524 memberships) also have two synagogues and include a secondary communal level with a Representative Council that co-ordinates local events and services, and four communities (170 memberships) simply have a social group or similar organisation that acts as the focus for Jewish life.

In those 17 communities with more than one congregation, which account for approximately a quarter of the communities studied, there is invariably both an Orthodox and a Progressive congregation. As we have noted, seven also have a Representative Council. They are clearly the largest of the centres and had an average community household membership of 223 in 2001, which was nevertheless a fall of 27% from 278 in 1989. Each congregation in these

largest communities thus has on average 112 household members but this average conceals the fact that Orthodox congregations are invariably larger than Progressive.

Type of communities with congregational membership according to type



The major set is those 46 communities with only one congregation that account for more than two thirds (69%) of the communities in our study. 32 of these communities are Orthodox, and the other 14 are Progressive and 36 (80% of the whole grouping) were established before 1980. The average household membership of these congregations in 2001 was 76, therefore markedly smaller than the average congregation in those communities with two congregations. Again, the size of congregation has fallen over the decade: in 1989 it had been 94 (showing a 19% decrease). The past decade has seen changes in the make-up of this group as six communities closed over the period while nine, Progressive, were established. Both the closure of old and the establishment of new congregations are a result of appraisal. This may have been painful when, for example, it involved the closing or realignment of a long-standing congregation. In contrast new congregations may be a product of local or centrally-supported initiatives from all national

religious groups. Particularly there has been a strong outreach programme by the Progressive sector seeking to bring isolated Jews within the formal community. This has provided a Jewish focal point for individuals who may have moved, for many different reasons, from more Jewish environments to places where they may be the sole Jewish family. While there have always been such persons, until very recently the activities aimed at bringing them into contact with the community have been more spasmodic.

The smallest grouping, where there is no formal congregation but rather a social organisation, averages just over 40 households per location compared with just under 50 in 1989. These small communal enclaves have changed little over the period being studied.

Religious services

While it is appropriate to consider certain types of provision in a community context, when evaluating the extent of synagogue services we must return to the 84 separate congregations (which in most cases function out of a designated synagogue building).

In any congregation, the most important function is provision of regular services for prayer whether on a daily or less frequent basis. In the major Jewish centres most synagogues have a rabbi or a reader (*hazan*) who does this but, in the congregations being surveyed here, in 2001 only 15 (18%) had a full-time rabbi; neither this number nor proportion had changed since 1989.

Looking at the pattern of rabbinic assistance overall, in 1989 the number of congregations with no rabbinic support at all stood at 55 (67%) while by 2001 the position had improved as only 39 (45%) were without a rabbi at some level. However, this is because of a change in the level of intermediate provision within these communities[17] which involves the services of a part-time, visiting or shared rabbi (or minister-reverend) if not for weekly services then for major holidays or for special local events. The responses indicate that most visiting rabbis do not call on their congregations every week and are more likely to conduct services only on holidays (particularly High Holidays) or on special occasions.

In 2001, 31 congregations had a part-time rabbi or minister indicating a marked increase in this practice over the decade compared with twelve congregations which had such support in 1989. This accounts for the reduction in congregations reporting no support at all. When we examined the congregational returns case by case and compared individual

[17] Noted in all Board of Deputies studies undertaken since 1959. Our earliest study indicated the strong support that Reverend Malcolm Wiseman of the Jewish Memorial Council (JMC) provided. The JMC publication, *Menorah*, shows that this support is still forthcoming in different ways.

congregations over time we found that, while over the period some congregations had lost their rabbi, some without any rabbi in 1989 had the services of a part-time rabbi in 2001. The overall pattern of rabbinic provision is very similar across the religious sectors: in 2001 44% of Orthodox and 47% of Progressive congregations did not have a rabbi while 35% of Orthodox and 37% of Progressive had some part-time, shared or visiting help.

On grounds of career development it might be expected that a student rabbi would serve in a small congregation on an ongoing basis and thus learn the content and demands of the rabbinate when training. However, our findings suggest that students do not serve regional small communities[18] – although we do know that small congregations advertise specially for High Holyday support and may use rabbinical students then. As regards an on-going part-time relationship, in 1989, no congregation reported having a student rabbi and in 2001 only one community reported this.

Regardless of the size of congregation, ministers filled a variety of functions including conducting services, teaching, pastoral care, and officiating at burials. Nevertheless, those in smaller congregations were called upon for a wider range of skills than those in the larger centres where some tasks (especially teaching) may be delegated to others.

Synagogue services

The pattern we have described is of geographically spread, Traditional but not strictly observant congregations which for the most part do not have full-time religious leaders. It is therefore unsurprising that few congregations have regular daily services: in 2001 only six (7%) reported holding morning or evening services on a daily basis. In addition to Friday evening or Shabbat services, 41 of the 84 congregations held morning services on an occasional basis perhaps once a week or once a month, and ten synagogues (12%) held evening services occasionally. 35 congregations (43%) did not hold morning services at all, and 62 synagogues (77%) did not hold any evening services. This pattern has shown little change during the period of the study and no differences were found between sectors. In sum, over the last decade, synagogue services in the small communities have been weekly, rather than daily, occurrences.

Friday and Shabbat services are the most regular gathering but even here there has been a decline in frequency over the decade. In 1989, 43 congregations (42%) held **both** Friday and Shabbat services weekly, and 27 (33%) congregations had **either** Friday **or** Shabbat services regularly. In addition, 16 congregations (about 20%) held either Friday or Shabbat services

[18] It should be pointed out that small communities within the Greater London area are more likely to call on the services of student ministers. Our sense is that students, from all denominations, look for a fuller Jewish communal life than may be available away from the centres.

on an occasional basis. Only four (5%) congregations had neither Friday nor Shabbat services. By 2001 the frequency of Shabbat-linked services had decreased: 29 congregations (35%) had both Friday and Shabbat services regularly, and 31 (37%) offered either Friday or Shabbat services weekly. Additionally, twelve synagogues offered either Friday or Shabbat services occasionally. Twelve congregations (nearly 15%) did not offer Friday nor Shabbat services.

When the ageing and numerical decline of these communities is considered together with the decrease in Friday and Shabbat services and with the establishment of more informal groupings that do not have a synagogue building, it is not surprising that the nature of communal Shabbat observance is changing. Whereas in 1989 only 13 synagogues (16%) held a socially oriented Shabbat gathering, by 2001 43 congregations (51%) said they held one. In 27 (32%) communities these are held in addition to their weekly services. This may indicate an increasingly informal approach to communal life but may equally be the rational response of congregations to local social needs.

Since the majority of the congregations in our study do not have a full-time rabbi they are obliged to call upon the skills and resources available among their members for conducting services. The 2001 data show that in 60 congregations (70%) the regular (Shabbat) services were conducted by lay members of the community, and in 69 congregations (80%) the Torah was usually read by local lay people[19]. As hinted at in the review of rabbinic support above, some congregations find special help for the High Holydays; 60 congregations (70%) reported that High Holyday and festival services were led by a visiting rabbi. In both 1989 and 2001 80% of congregations held services on High Holydays. These figures were stable over the decade and no differences were found between sectors.

While the changes in frequency of services and the shift towards social gatherings in these small congregations may in part be a result of the lack of rabbinic support, as we have suggested earlier it may partly be a result of the reducing numbers and ageing of the communities. In the past, congregations often relied on specific people to lead or participate in services at different times; with the passage of time these ritually-able communal leaders may have moved away, died or just be too frail to carry on with the *mitzvah*. Anecdotal information suggests that this is happening and that congregations may be, for example, in the position where there is no-one to read from the Torah scroll and so the weekly *Parasha* is read from a *chumash* .

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[19] This is, of course, sometimes the practice in large congregations where any (wo)man with the necessary aptitude and experience may do so.

When we turn to the *Sh'losha Regalim*, we find that the number of congregations holding festival services fell by 15% from 66 to 56 (65% of congregations in 2001). However, taking a broader definition of festivals to include Hanukah and Purim, over the period 80% of congregations held gatherings, mostly and steadily over the period between three and five events annually. Hanukah, Purim and Simhat Torah parties are the most popular gathering (held in 60% of congregations in 2001) closely followed by the communal *seder* (held in 50% on congregations). These clearly have social as well as religious aspects and meaning (see section on social activities below)

Further analysis brought to light a negative correlation between the size of the congregation and the number of festive gatherings held annually; the smaller the congregation the more such gatherings it has. The data suggest that the newer, very small congregations are most likely to have this type of event rather than more traditional services. This seems to us to be in line with trends noted internationally in research into personal Jewish identity whereby the more public, less demanding expressions of Judaism are most frequently observed.[20] The less formal approach supports our notion of relaxation, one aspect of which is a shift in emphasis away from a religious community built around traditional institutions and regular prayer. From a psychological, rather than sociological perspective, it is possible that people in newer congregations are not seeking the opportunity for or quality of Jewish life provided in the major centres. On the other hand, for the more established communities, the social shift indicated by these communal gatherings could be that they are replacing family parties as children move away or it becomes difficult or inefficient for elderly people to prepare celebrations individually. In such situations, the community is stepping in – a phenomenon also noted in some ageing synagogues in larger centres.

Rites of passage and communal need

The 1989 questionnaire included an open-ended question asking what respondents considered were the basic needs of a community and which of them they felt were met locally. The question was not replicated in later rounds of the study because the Community Research Unit collected information annually in other studies on *mohelim* and burials – the two topics most frequently mentioned.

At the end of the 1980s, only 11 congregations (14%) felt that **all** their religio-communal needs were met locally. Among the others, 15 (19%) felt that **most** of their needs were met, and 55 (67%) felt that **few** or none of their needs were met locally. The need mentioned most frequently (53 congregations - 60%) was the absence of a rabbi followed by lack of a local *mohel* for *Brit Milah*, only three congregations (4%) had a *mohel* locally. More than half of the

[20] For example, Schmool, M and S.H. Miller, (1994) *Women in the Jewish Community*, showed that 86% of Jewish women attended a *seder* every year while only 42% only bought kosher meat (vegetarians were excluded from the analysis).

congregations (42) reported that the nearest *mohel* lived 50 miles away and the remaining congregations said he was more than 50 miles away.

We have described the changes with regard to rabbis but do not have information about whether or not communities still feel the need of a *mohel* locally. Congregations responding to the questionnaire in 1989 were mainly well established and had not yet reached a point in their demographic history where they rarely needed a *mohel*. Moreover, respondents then may have been remembering how their community had functioned in previous decades when services were more localised e.g. also in relation to shechita. With changes in modes of communication and travel it may be that 50 miles is nowadays regarded as relatively local. Further, the number of births in small communities is now such that no *mohel* could hope to support himself or maintain his skills in any one place. The lack of a *mikveh* was not mentioned although only seven of the communities in our study are currently noted as having one.[21]

At the closing of the life cycle, arrangements for burial become important and most congregations and communities have provision for Jewish burial but not necessarily for all the rites attached to it. In 1989, 20 (25%) congregations reported having their own cemetery, but most (33, 40%) had a section in the local municipal cemetery. Others (29, 35%) have turned to larger communities or national organisations for assistance. In addition, more than a third (33, 40%) of the congregations had a Chevra Kadisha locally, a quarter of the congregations (23, 28%) were served either by the nearest large community, or by one of the national organisations, but 26 (32%) had no arrangements for *Tahara*. The Community Research Unit's annual survey of burials indicates that the pattern of provision has not changed and that those communities functioning both in 1989 and 2001 still have the same arrangements. Where new communities are set up, they have support from London or national organisations or work with another nearby local community.

An ongoing concern of the small, and indeed larger regional, communities relates to the transfer of fees for burials, which are for the most part covered by payments to congregations and burial societies along with synagogue dues. As migration over the second half of the twentieth century has taken children away from regional localities, parents may now think about being buried where their children, rather than they themselves, live. Additionally, individuals may move when they retire. However, burial societies do not have reciprocal transfer arrangements with (all) others and actual fees and costs vary from place to place. This makes for an inflexible system whereby members of synagogues and burial societies are tied into organisations; having paid fees for a number of years they have little room for manoeuvre when personal circumstances change.

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[21] Jewish Year Book, 2002, p.101.

Education

While we sought information about Jewish education in the 1989 survey, since 1992 the Community Research Unit has carried out a regular, annual study of Jewish schools and *hedarim* and the resultant database has been used to provide information for later years. In 1992, 1210 pupils were enrolled in 36 congregations' classes giving an average school size of 33. By 2001 enrolment fell by 6% to 1140, while the number of classes increased to 44 bringing average school size to 26. About 50% of classes were run under Orthodox auspices. During this period, 20 synagogue classes were opened, mainly by the newly established Progressive congregations. However, seven functioned only for a few years and then closed. Additionally, five older congregations closed down their classes during this period. All Progressive congregations currently have some form of *heder* although this may not be weekly. There is also a small distance-learning scheme for children who, for whatever, reason, do not have reasonable access to a synagogue.

In 2001, most synagogue classes (39) were held on a weekly or twice weekly basis but in five cases they were held less frequently. Altogether 160 teachers were employed in these classes. More than two-thirds of the teachers were local lay people with no teaching qualifications, the remaining third (50) were reported as mostly being qualified Jewish studies teachers. Given that the wide range of responsibilities of rabbis in small communities includes teaching, we assume that they are part of this group. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that provision of properly qualified teachers was not seen as a local need. It could be that the numbers of children have been so consistently low that this was not an issue that would immediately occur to an administrator completing a form.

We turn now to consider informal youth activities within cities. Historically, youth clubs or 'uniform' groups have supplemented formal Jewish education and proved important in forming Jewish identity[22] but only a minority of the places covered in our surveys had youth groups or dedicated facilities for the young – perhaps reflecting the age structure of the communities under review.

In 1989, 27 youth groups were active in 20 locales (seven cities had two youth groups, each organised by a different congregation). Ten places reported having a dedicated youth 'facility' presumably a meeting hall, again mostly maintained by an Orthodox congregation within a larger community. Accordingly, most of the youth groups (17, 63%) were affiliated to the Orthodox synagogues and others (ten groups) were affiliated to the Reform or Liberal synagogues.

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[22] Miller, S., M Schmool and A Lerman, (1996) *Social and political attitudes of British Jews: some key findings of the JPR survey*, (Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

By 2001, one Reform and six Orthodox congregations had closed their youth group. Over the same period, ten new youth groups were established by the Reform, Liberal or Masorti congregations which suggests that these newer congregations have a membership with younger families. However by 2001 six of these had closed down. As a result, 24 congregations in 17 cities had youth groups in 2001. We must point out that these figures cover only local provision and do not reflect other activities, perhaps run by national organisations, in which young people in the area may participate.

One growth area in Jewish life over the last 15 or more years has been adult education. While new institutions for young and old have been established across the religious spectrum in the major centres, it is a greater challenge to organise classes and lectures in smaller locations where teachers and lecturers may not be so readily available. It is therefore encouraging to note an increase in classes in some of the places under review. Overall in 2001 more than a third of the communities covered had some form of adult education. In 1989, 25 communities had provided 32 adult education opportunities once a month or less frequently. Most of these (17 initiatives) were located in those communities with two congregations, where seven communities had more than one adult education group. By 2001 nine further groups had been established, mainly by Orthodox congregations, so that just under half the congregations (41) offered adult education classes with nine cities having more than one class. About half the congregations (21) offering adult education now did so more regularly either once a week or once a month. Education, however, is very broadly defined and a review of the newsletters from a range of congregations shows that topics range from the traditional Jewish studies such as Talmud, Ivrit, and Jewish history to business studies and computers. There is a tendency to general cultural areas such as literature and poetry, theatre, art, painting, and music and there are also exercise classes.

By the mid-1990s a new form of adult learning – the *Chavurah* – was appearing in some communities and in 1995 we found that seven *Chavurot* were operating in six cities, all except one were run by Progressive congregations. By 2001 there were eight *Chavurot* in seven locations and we found a degree of fluidity with the groups. Between 1995 and 2001 two Orthodox groups were established while, in Progressive congregations, three groups closed and two new groups were started.

Social activities

For most people, a Jewish community provides a social as well as a religious framework, with of course much social activity being part of congregational life. The degree of formal social structure and organisation in the small communities varies greatly between the older, more traditional and those more recently established. It is clear, from reading the Jewish Year Book 2002, from the write-in replies to our 1989 questionnaire as well as from reviewing the newsletters now published by 60% of the congregations, that some of the social activities were established at a time when a community was larger.

Responses to the question on social activity are not clear-cut[23] but nevertheless our survey shows that structures are expanding with twelve new social facilities launched between 1989 and 2001. Three of these were within Orthodox congregations, five by Progressive and four were in cities where two synagogues collaborated. Altogether, 33 (39%) congregations reported having *facilities* for social activity in 2001. Nevertheless, the actual number of social *groups* functioning fell from 1989 when 52 (64%) communities said they had them, to 35 (42%). The write-in answers on the 1989 questionnaires showed that groups and activities ranged from local branches of national organisations such as the League of Jewish Women through to Ladies Guilds, Zionist groups and the Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and women. Some communities have more ambitious undertakings such as a local Jewish library or theatre group.

Current newsletters show that much social activity today is in the form one-off events held in addition to more formal courses. As with adult education, a wide range is covered - in this instance including cultural activities, sports, arts and crafts, bridge and other games, gardening, philosophy and meditation. The advertising for events suggests that they are not held on a regular basis and, when read with the data from the surveys, we suggest this shows a gradual shift from regular social activities towards less frequent – even sporadic – events. Such a change may explain the seeming contradiction in reporting where we have an increase in social *facilities* but a drop in adult social *groups*. The newsletters clearly show how small communities continue to offer social events to their members, but the character of these events has changed. More stand-alone events require less regular commitment from members and simultaneously allow more choice. This is again in line with the findings of identity research showing that those spiritual and practical matters requiring discipline are less frequently maintained. While religious observance and communal commitment have always been on a continuum, more and more Jews are selecting the elements of Jewish life that they wish to observe. It has been called 'a boutique approach' to Judaism and some communities seem to be responding to changes in general and Jewish lifestyles by providing many gateways into community. This reaction to social change may be viewed as relaxation: a movement from a well-defined range of activities common to most communities to a broader interpretation of what a community should provide in order to retain its members.

Welfare

We asked about the welfare arrangements in communities, since this is a basic element of Jewish communal support. In 1989, eleven communities (16%) had a board or committee that concerned itself with welfare issues and seven (10%) maintained a residential home. In 2001, 19 communities reported having a welfare board or similar and nine (13%) had a residential home.

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[23] We asked initially about a social centre, which presupposed a meeting place - what we have called a facility. The 2001 questionnaire asked more specifically about social committees. Both studies asked about social groups.

Communities having these arrangements were for the most part the larger centres that have two congregations. Small communities that experience difficulty in running synagogue services more than once or twice a week would clearly not be expected to maintain the fuller communal welfare support found in larger centres and for the most part what local provision there is concentrates on the elderly. However, it is important to note that the lack of local Jewish provision in small communities may mean that elderly Jews have to choose between a non-Jewish environment or living some distance from friends and family.

Kosher Food

The second half of the twentieth century saw such vast changes in food retailing and manufacture that the Jewish community at large cannot be expected to have escaped their effects. Whereas in major centres the changes may have meant travelling a little further to obtain kosher meat or simply buying kosher goods at a supermarket which recognised the purchasing power of a large Jewish community[24], within small communities the decline in numbers, combined with other economic pressures, sometimes brought about the closure of the Jewish corner shop and butcher. The social aspects of this trend may be likened to the disappearance of the rural post-office. The effect is critical because kosher food is a sine qua non for a Jewish life[25] and it is therefore of note that as early as 1959 communities (some of which have now disappeared) recorded difficulties with obtaining kosher meat although at that time, enquiries were not made about other kosher foods – perhaps because the range of goods then available was smaller.

For the last decade there has been little change in local availability of kosher food. Already in 1989 more than half of the communities studied (35) reported that they could not buy kosher food locally giving impetus to the development of the question. At that time, twelve (17%) communities were able to buy **all** kosher food locally and 21 communities (31%) reported that only **some** kosher food was available locally. In 2001, 36 communities reported they were unable to buy kosher food in their area so one more community had no kosher food outlet. On the other hand, by then 18 small communities (27%) were able to shop for **all** their kosher food locally while 13 (19%) communities reported they were able to buy some kosher food locally. This change means that six communities that had some kosher food available in 1989, were able to shop for all their kosher food locally in 2001.

Changes in retailing patterns are clear when we consider **where** kosher food is sold. The most frequently mentioned source of kosher food was indeed a local

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[24] For example, a specialist Jewish grocer has only recently opened in the large community in Borehamwood and the growing community in Radlett uses a kosher counter in the local supermarket.

[25] With the increase of ready-prepared food, standards of kashrut have become more rigorously supervised. In a world accustomed to wide ranges of goods, the lack of a local outlet for supervised foods will restrict the choices of those who wish to keep a strictly kosher home

supermarket - 19 (28%) of communities had such provision in 2001. Nine communities (13%) had a kosher butcher where a variety of other kosher foods was sold and nine others had a kosher delicatessen. In five (7%) communities there was a kosher bakery, which also offered other kosher foods including meat. Only 6 communities had all three specialist shops and 13 had two specialist shops; they were mainly those with more than one congregation.

In contrast, seven communities (10%) reported they were able to obtain some kosher foods at a non-Jewish delicatessen, and three (5%) communities had a local (presumably non-Jewish) grocer who sold some kosher food. There are also communal initiatives with a synagogue shop or a mobile-shop which brings in food, particularly meat, at pre-arranged times: nine communities (13%) organised a synagogue shop and four (6%) organised mobile deliveries[26]. This system will be helped when a synagogue magazine encloses an order form for kosher food which we have noticed at Pesach.

Indeed, it is at Pesach that local availability of kosher food becomes extraordinarily important, not only because food is especially supervised then but also because many people who might manage without kosher food for the rest of the year do not wish to do so and particularly wish to purchase *matzah*. It is also pertinent that shopping for Pesach is of a different character than regular shopping. For those who keep a strictly kosher-for-Pesach home, it involves purchasing all foods and household commodities for a week. Nothing already started before Pesach may be used up. This makes the decision to shop in a nearby larger centre very rational.

Our study shows that availability of Pesach food in small communities has fallen off over the decade. While in 1989 six communities (9%) could not find Pesach food locally, by 2001 eleven (16%, nearly twice as many) could not do so. In both 1989 and 2001, for the most part, small communities shopped at the nearest large community: 25 communities (37%) in 1989 falling to 23 communities (34%) in 2001. London is a major source of Pesach food for small communities; in 1989 twelve communities (18%) ordered food from there rising to 19 communities (28%) in 2001. Also, communities may look to more than one place for a supply of Pesach food - 15 communities (22%) did so in 1989 and eleven (16%) in 2001. A reducing number of communities make collective arrangements for Pesach foods: three did so in 2001 as against nine in 1989. It would appear that, in sum, London and other large communities are becoming almost the only areas with a wide choice of Pesach foods and, while most communities that look to London are quite near the metropolis,

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[26] The situation with kosher meat today is markedly different from that in 1959 when it did not seem an insuperable problem. At that time, local ministers were often also *shochetim* even for *behemoth* as well as poultry.

people from others travel lengthy distances in order to make Pesach purchases.

Books and Artefacts

Jewish life has for centuries, if not millennia, required not only special food but also prayer and other holy books and items such as *mezuzot*, *tefillin*, and *talitot*. To these, in an increasingly consumerist society may be added Jewish recorded music and items such as *seder* dishes and *Hanukiot*.

Availability of books and other items was examined in both 1989 and 2001 and shows trends similar to those for kosher food. At the beginning of the period provision was variable, more than half of the communities (37, 56%) were unable to buy any type of Jewish book locally, and by 2001, nine communities, which may have had more than one book shop, reported that their local bookshops had closed down. As a result 51 (76%) communities reported that they were unable to buy Jewish books locally. In 1989, 17 (25%) communities had a local bookshop that offered prayer books and most (13) also sold other Jewish books - although residents in eleven communities (16%) were obliged to travel to an adjacent larger Jewish community to buy prayer books or other Jewish literature. But by 2001 only ten communities (15%) had a local bookshop with five having recourse to a larger community.

The patterns are similar for Jewish articles such as *tefillin*, *talitot* and *mezuzot* although the starting levels are different; during the past decade these have become less available in small communities. In the majority of communities (over 66%) in 1989 it was not possible to buy these items locally and by 2001 only in six (10%) communities was it possible to buy anything other than a *mezuzah*[27]. As with books, when these goods are needed, members of small communities usually shop in a nearby large community.

The picture is slightly different with regard to Jewish music. Although both in 1989 (66%) and 2001 (67%) communities reported that they could not buy Jewish discs and tapes locally, in 2001 five communities that were not able to buy locally in 1989 were then able to do so rather than go to an larger centre.

Thus, according to the three surveys, fewer communities can now buy Jewish books (including prayer books), locally. However, bearing in mind the recent changes in shopping patterns, specifically the increase in e-commerce and home-shopping, the actual presence of shops locally may be less problematic today than it was in the 1980s, as many commodities are accessible through these means.

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[27] Mezuzot were available in 13 communities.

Relationships

One stimulus for the now-historic 1959 review of small communities was a growing awareness that small communities needed 'assistance in providing religious, educational and Jewish communal facilities'.[28] Our questionnaire studies followed this concern beginning in 1989 when respondents were asked generally if they had help from any places or organisations. The replies were used, in 1995 and 2001, in framing questions to specify where help came from. The enquiry covered the availability and source of practical help in seven areas: synagogue services, social or cultural activities, burials, education, welfare or youth activities. Additionally, the 1995 questionnaires included a question on whether the community felt it needed external support.

In 1995, 44 (65%) congregations reported they were supported in one way or another either by a national organisation, nearby Representative Council or larger Jewish community. This level of support declined very slightly over the decade so that in 2001 42 (50%) reported they were helped. On average, most congregations reported being supported in three of the areas specified.

Our findings show that the Progressive congregations were better supported, probably because they can call on national bodies: 63% received assistance compared with 42% of Orthodox synagogues. The support given to Progressive congregations was in four categories on average while Orthodox congregations, again on average, received support in only two. The bald data cannot tell us whether support is not offered or whether it is offered and congregations do not take advantage of it. While two-thirds of congregations in 1995 recorded that they had help, the remaining third recorded a wish for practical help – either they were not obtaining any or it was needed for other activities. Only six (7%) believed themselves to be self-sufficient. We have no way of telling whether or not this wish for help was ever expressed outside the pages of our questionnaire.

Those 42 congregations (50%) which were helped in 2001 were supported in two or three of the seven areas specified. For example support with synagogue services was given to eight (10%) congregations by a national organisation, to six (7%) by a Representative Council and two (3%) by a larger community.

Small communities were helped most for burials. 28 congregations (33%) were assisted by larger congregations, a Representative Council or national organisation at this time because, while most communities have local arrangements for burial or cremation they do not always have facilities for *Tehara* and it is for this that help is sought. It is not surprising that communities that have difficulties in finding prayer-leaders should lack a *Chevra Kadisha* to

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carry through these last rites. Education is another area where help is given: 21 (25%) congregations reported that they received assistance from others (mainly from national organisations) in helping out with synagogue classes.

Support was available least for welfare activities. Until 1999, the Central Council for Jewish Communal Services acted as a focus for sharing concerns and issues. That Council is no longer functioning and only nine (11%) congregations received help from any source for their welfare activities. With ageing populations in many of the more established congregations, this could become an area where help is more frequently needed.

The issues of co-operation between large and small communities and of support by the former for the latter remain live. In discussions at the meetings of Regional Deputies of the Board they have been modernised into discussion of 'Mentoring' and linked to ideas of regionalisation – which were in fact the basis of the 1959 Report mentioned above. The objectives are to explore and define areas where support may be required by small communities, to identify the ways in which larger communities could support other communities, and to strengthen existing links by expanding areas of collaboration. Among the areas highlighted have been dissemination of information, sharing resources, best practice and dealing with political affairs locally. Our findings suggest that there are many more fundamental areas in which ongoing back up is required.

Communities may be helped in this by the growth and use of technology[29]. Just as it may no longer be necessary to have a local Jewish bookseller when computer retailing is growing, especially in areas such as bookselling, so sharing of information between small communities and with local or national organisations is facilitated by the use of email or websites. Computers are therefore important and it is interesting to note that at the start of the research the small congregations in our study seemed somewhat disadvantaged in this respect. In 1989, 49 congregations (60%) did *not* own a computer but by 2001 only 29 synagogues (34%) did not have one. Congregations with a computer use it mainly to store membership records and for mailings, which means that it is much easier for congregations to maintain links with their congregants (and potential congregants). But computers should also be viewed as a tool for developing relationships with neighbouring congregations and national centres[30]. This is especially true for those that are particularly geographically isolated from other congregations.

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[29] See Becher H., S. Waterman, B. Kosmin and K. Thomson (2002) *A portrait of Jews in London and the South-east: a community study*. (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

[30] For example, editors of communal magazines are enabled to keep in touch with one another by means of a consolidated email address list distributed by the Board at its regular annual Editors Seminar. This could be expanded into a community email directory for small communities.

V. Discussion

Writing this paper brings a feeling of *plus ça change, plus c'ést la même chose*. The areas of concern voiced in the earliest report are echoed in our 2001 findings. As we have pointed out, this is not surprising because it was recognition of the issues that prompted the 1959 review. That report began to chart a geo-demographic process that has not yet played itself out. Some participants in that first exercise are still involved in their local communities; some of the small communities have become very small or even disappeared; newer communities may confront, from the outset, issues faced more gradually by older ones. For many, the trends described in this paper are personal biographies because the pattern of movement and change is woven from many private decisions prompted not only, perhaps not even, by Jewish considerations.

The perceptions of some respondents will be coloured by ageing and nostalgia as well as by true memory and it is well to remember that they are activists who may have dedicated their lives to the community. Thus the impression gained from responses to the questions on synagogue services and kosher food is that many informants have looked back, possibly because the very fact of answering questions makes people do so; there is a sense that communities were seen as better in the past - most were certainly larger. This is undoubtedly a fair assessment for some communities but is paradoxical when viewed in the light of both the evidence of concern almost half-a-century ago and the consequent disappearance of a Jewish entity in places which expressed such concern. Moreover, when communities have endured, their members and affiliates have become older; local revitalisation would require creative input from (relatively) young, enthusiastic leaders who may not be available. Most importantly it must be stressed that the major long-term forces affecting community development and change are for the most part beyond the control of the communities we have been studying. Changes in retail patterns, in modes of transport and in communication are three that we have highlighted but probably the most important factor is job-opportunity, which contributes greatly to inter-generational change. In the words of one community development professional when asked the three most important influences on a community: 'employment, employment, employment'.

It is self-evident that people are the basis of community and if the number of Jews in an area becomes negligible, as for example happened in the Welsh valleys, communities fade away. The trend continues; communities still dwindle and can no longer sustain the Jewish panoply of their particular pasts. The survey data and discussions with both observers and with residents of some declining centres make clear that a community is as 'aged' as its members. Communities established before World War II have older members

while areas that show promise of a future, of whatever nature, are newer and appear to have a younger age profile. But that is only the pessimistic side, it must be filled out with the more positive developments exemplified by the establishment of groups and congregations in areas that until very recently have not had an organised Jewish focus, even though there may be isolated Jewish families in the area. These are small because they are new, emerging where people have moved because of employment and/or to enhance their standards of living – a well documented incentive for any migration.[31] For the most part they are supported by the central organisations of the Progressive synagogues which have made a special effort to bring together those who may otherwise remain Jewishly isolated.

Time-honoured Jewish communities may have expected to meet all the social and religious needs of their members, but the pattern must be different in newer, geographically-spread communities where Judaism, or more simply 'Jewishness', may be only an infrequent social experience enabled and sustained by distance-networking skills. In these places, community networks will not be reinforced by regular school-gate, synagogue or delicatessen shop encounters. We suggest that they will therefore be looser, more relaxed, and will depend more on a conscious effort of members to maintain even minimal communal ties. While this may be the starting pattern for new communities and groups, in the fullness of time established communities may also shift from being communities based on highly structured institutions to become more informal; in sociological terms they will be based on social capital rather than on the physical capital found in, e.g., buildings. This need not be surprising in the light of survey results that give greater salience to ethnic, rather than religious, elements of Jewish life - even though communal leadership has emphasised religion as the only reliable safeguard for Jewish continuity.[32]

As we have noted, simply returning a questionnaire can be a way of expressing the need for any help. While the research was not, and was never presented as, action research, communities *might* have felt that there would be some national reaction or response. We feel able to present this report as a call for action because it seems to us that there is scope for stronger ties between smaller and larger centres. All small communities will continue to need support from either larger local or national organisations. In an age where religious observance is reducing, support may be needed less for synagogue services, kosher food or buying *tefillin*, than for local Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies, Jewish education for children and counteracting anti-Israel and antisemitic media outbursts. This type of support is facilitated by modern technology and could be made available at a distance. The World Wide Web could be further exploited in developing relationships within and between small, more relaxed communities. The major general social change over the period covered by the Report has been the development of fast,

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[31] See for example, Bill Williams (1976), *The Making of Manchester Jewry*. (Manchester University Press).

[32] See Hart, R., M Schmool and F Cohen (2001), *Jewish Education at the Crossroads*. (London: Board of Deputies of British Jews).

cheap communication. This could be utilised to maintain personal links with isolated (groups of) Jews using e-mail, websites and chat rooms. Imaginatively, there could be a generic site for *all* geographically or socially isolated Jews – not simply for the missing generation that is so often targeted - and even an on-line, dedicated social contact/counselling/outreach service for individuals who might actually prefer to make contact (or initial contact) in this way rather than in person.

The findings suggest that relationships between centres and peripheries are not very strong. 'The community' repeatedly pays lip service to the need for co-operation but it seems that there may be more talk than action. There have been initiatives for inter- and intra-regional co-operation but they are not always maintained over time due to lack of will or resources.[33] While large communities say that they support their smaller neighbours, responses from small communities lead us to question how much action is either forthcoming or perceived as help. However, one force beyond the control of local communities is the government's current regionalisation policy. This provides an opportunity for small communities to think of themselves as part of a wider regional entity and, in order to ensure that Jewish communities do not lose out on whatever benefits may accrue to them, should be the spur to more liaison and activity. There is a recognised role here for both the Regional Council of the Board and for Representative Councils, either on their own on in conjunction with the Board. However, processes and action should be organised imaginatively and not simply insert another layer of meetings and committees for already over-laden communal leaders.

The coverage of our study has been relatively unchanged over the decade but the census data we have set out in Appendix B show that there are many more isolated Jewish pockets than have previously been apparent. At this stage we cannot describe these people – and indeed issues of census confidentiality may never permit complete analysis. However, as more information becomes available from the ONS we should be able to assess, e.g., whether they are younger or older, whether they are in Jewish or mixed-faith families, how educated they are. Comparing their characteristics with those of Jews in strong Jewish enclaves may suggest ways of promoting relaxed communities in remote localities and means of creating the new small communities of tomorrow. These processes involve existing organisations and institutions.

Our report has concentrated on small and some very small 'communities' but these are simply one end of a continuum of many different-sized communities which are facing like challenges. A number of middle-sized communities have declining numbers; Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Glasgow have all

[33] In the 1990s the Board organised a series of workshops in the Regions and there were many suggestions as to how large and small communities could work together, There were no resources to carry this further.

shown a significant reduction over the past two-to-three decades and have had to deal with the effects of this fall-off. Synagogues close, organisational structure changes and local facilities have to adapt. Nor can the Greater London Jewish community be viewed monolithically since it is clearly divided into areas of vibrant Jewish life in the North and many, quite separate smaller communities particularly south of the Thames. These may to all intents and purposes be likened to the small communities we have examined. Richmond or Kingston communities may be in London but Jews in those areas would have to send their children many miles for Jewish day-school education if they wanted it or more simply would not have a Jewish butcher on their local shopping parade. The patterns we have described for the Regional small communities are not restricted to Regional Britain nor are they relevant only to small communities, wherever they are found. Essentially, our analysis points to the future for other, presently larger, places.

Glossary

Behemoth	Beasts, cattle and sheep
Chavurah/ot	Informal prayer or discussion group(s)
Chevra Kadisha	society that arranges burial and *tahara* (lit: the holy society)
Chumash	The *Torah* in book form, used in the synagogue and the home
Diaspora	Jews who live outside Israel (lit: dispersion)
Halakha	Jewish law or a specific ruling within it
Hanukah	Eight-day celebration in December. Commemorates the Re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the second century BCE.
Hanukia/Hanukiot	Eight-branched candelabra used at Hanukah
Hazan	Cantor
Heder/hedarim	School teaching Jewish religion and history. Usually held on Sunday morning at a synagogue
Ivrit	Modern Hebrew
Kashrut	Jewish dietary laws
Kosher	Food permitted to Jews under Jewish dietary laws
Mezuzah	Parchment scroll containing biblical verses, fixed to right-hand doorpost in Jewish homes
Mikveh/Mikva'ot	Ritual bath(s)
Milah	Circumcision where the ceremony is performed according to *Halakha*
Mizvah/Mizvot	Commandment(s), obligation(s)
Mohel	Person trained to conduct *milah*
Parasha	Weekly portion of *Torah* read in the synagogue.
Pesach	Passover. Eight-day festival in early spring celebrating the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt
Purim	Minor Jewish festival one month before *Pesach*
Rabbi	Spiritual leader of a community (lit: My teacher)
Seder	Special meal and service in the home on the first evening of *Pesach*
Shabbat	Sabbath (Saturday).
Shavu'ot	Feast of Weeks. Seven weeks after *Pesach*
Sh'losha Regalim	Three biblical pilgrimage festivals. *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkot*

Simhat Torah	Rejoicing of the Law. Celebrates completion of annual cycle of reading of the *Torah*
Sukkot	Eight-day festival of Tabernacles, celebrated four days after *Yom Kippur*.
Tahara	Ritual cleansing of a body before burial
Tallit/ot	Prayer shawl(s); used by men at morning services
Talmud	Collection of writings of Jewish law and discussions; codification of oral Jewish law (Mishnah) and Gemarah (commentary on Mishnah) (lit: teaching)
Tefillin	Phylacteries; Leather box containing biblical passages worn on the head and arm by Jewish males during weekday morning prayers.
Torah	First five books of the bible: *The Five Books of Moses*. Also, written and oral laws of Judaism.

Appendix A:

Congregations and groups covered in 2001 study

NORTHEAST REGION

DURHAM	
Darlington	Hebrew Congregation
TYNE AND WEAR	
Newcastle	Reform Synagogue
	United Hebrew Congregation
Sunderland	Hebrew Congregation

NORTHWEST REGION

CHESHIRE	
Chester	Hebrew Congregation
LANCASHIRE	
Blackpool	Reform Synagogue
	United Hebrew Congregation
St. Annes	Hebrew Congregation
MERSEYSIDE	
Southport	Southport Synagogue
	New Synagogue

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION

EAST RIDING	
Hull	Reform Synagogue
	Western/Old Hebrew Cong
NORTH YORKSHIRE	
Harrogate	Hebrew Congregation
York	Hebrew Congregation

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Sheffield	United Hebrew Congregation
	Reform

WEST YORKSHIRE

Bradford	Synagogue
	Hebrew Congregation

EAST MIDLANDS REGION

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

Leicester	Hebrew Congregation
	Progressive Jewish Cong

LINCOLNSHIRE

Grimsby	Sir Moses Montefiore Synagogue
Lincoln	Lincolnshire Jewish Community

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Northampton	Hebrew Congregation

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Nottingham	Progressive Jewish Congregation
	Synagogue

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE

Hereford	Hereford Jewish Community

STAFFORDSHIRE

Stoke on Trent	Hebrew Congregation

WEST MIDLANDS

Coventry	Synagogue
	Reform Group
Leamington	Jewish Group

EAST ANGLIA REGION

CAMBRIDGESHIRE	
Cambridge	Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue
	Traditional Jewish Community
Peterborough	Hebrew Congregation
	Liberal Jewish Community
NORFOLK	
Norwich	Hebrew Congregation
	Progressive Jewish Community of East Anglia

SOUTHEAST REGION

BEDFORDSHIRE	
Luton	Luton & Dunstable
	Bedfordshire Progressive Synagogue
BERKSHIRE	
Maidenhead	Synagogue
Reading	Synagogue
	Thames Valley Progressive
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	
Chesham	South Bucks Jewish Community
High Wycombe	Hebrew Congregation
Milton Keynes	Reform Synagogue
EAST SUSSEX	
Bexhill	Hastings & Dist Jewish Society
Eastbourne	Hebrew Congregation
ESSEX	
Basildon	Hebrew Congregation
Chelmsford	Chelmsford Jewish Community
Colchester	Colchester & Dist Jewish Comm
Harlow	Harlow Jewish Community

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT	
Portsmouth	Synagogue
Southampton	Synagogue
	South Hampshire Reform
HERTFORDSHIRE	
Hemel Hemps'd	Hemel Hempstead & District Hebrew Cong.
St Albans	Hebrew Congregation
	Masorti
Welwyn Garden City	Synagogue
KENT	
Chatham	Magnus Memorial Synagogue
Kent	Liberal Jewish Community
Margate	Synagogue
Ramsgate	Thanet & District Reform
Canterbury	Jewish Community
OXFORDSHIRE	
Oxford	Jewish Congregation
SURREY	
Guildford	Guildford & District Jewish Community
Weybridge	North West Surrey Synagogue
WEST SUSSEX	
Bognor Regis	Jewish Community
Crawley	Crawley Progressive
East Grinstead	East Grinstead Jewish Community

SOUTHWEST REGION

DEVON	
Exeter	Hebrew Congregation
Plymouth	Hebrew Congregation
Torbay	Torquay & Paignton Synagogue
GLOUCESTERSHIRE	
Cheltenham	Hebrew Congregation

SOMERSET

Bristol	Synagogue
	Bristol & West Progressive

WILTSHIRE

Swindon	Mid-Wiltshire Jewish Community

WALES

Llandudno	Llandudno & Colwyn Bay Hebrew Congregation
Newport	Hebrew Congregation
Swansea	Hebrew Congregation
Welshpool	Welshpool Progressive Jewish Group

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen	Hebrew Congregation
Dundee	Hebrew Congregation
Dunoon	Argyll and Bute Jewish Community
Edinburgh	Hebrew Congregation

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast	Hebrew Congregation

Appendix B: Synagogue membership in small communities and the self-identifying Jewish population

The data presented in the body of the report cover the numbers of congregations and their members. However, the presentation of data in relation to the location of synagogues can only very skeletally indicate the residential distribution of Jewish population throughout the country for three reasons. First, synagogues and community groups may draw their membership from a wide local catchment area. Secondly, individuals may move from one area to another and retain membership in the first and thirdly large, particularly metropolitan, congregations have 'country' members who may never have lived near the synagogue to which they belong. All these factors, together with the absence of those Jews who do not formally affiliate in any way to communal groups, will distort a geographic picture built simply on institutional sources.

The national censuses of the Great Britain in April 2001 provided an opportunity and hard data to balance the impression that all Jews cluster round synagogues. For the first time the censuses of England and Wales and of Scotland included a **voluntary** question on religion and so provided a count of those who were prepared to self-identify on an official form as Jewish by religion.[1] Overall in England and Wales 7.7% of the population did not answer the question and 15% noted that they had 'no religion'. In Scotland the comparable figures were 5.5% and 27%. The census data presented in the following table are thus underestimates[2] but they nevertheless show how widely if thinly Jews are spread away from the major concentrations in North London and North Manchester.

The table in this appendix brings together data from both our small communities study and the census. It sets out counties and regions in Great Britain (Column A) and shows the number of congregations (Column C) and associated membership (Column D) for the small communities. The main towns within the Region are named (Column B) with the census count for Jews attached and Column E sets out the number those self-identifying as Jewish within the Region but living outside major centres. Towns printed in **bold** are major Jewish centres and their census counts are not included in Column E. The small community data include two places not examined in the report. They are Cardiff and Watford. Cardiff fell outside our definition of small community at the start of the study but is experiencing those changes we have described, and Watford, as part of the London-based United Synagogue, was considered to fall organisationally in the broader Greater London community.

[1] We are of course aware that some Jews would consider themselves Jewish by ethnicity but the census did not include this choice.

[2] Insofar as some Jews did not answer and others do not regard themselves as Jews by religion.

As regards counties and regions, there are two types of first tier local government: counties and unitary areas; within counties there are second tiers of local government but unitary authorities have no other tiers. In order to present a complete picture, where appropriate unitary areas have been included within the county. For example, Blackpool is a separate local Unitary Authority but has been added to Lancashire; six unitary areas have been combined to give the historic county of Berkshire.

Detailed counts of all local authority areas (even at the second tier level within counties) show that there are Jews in all such 376 areas except the Scilly Isles. If we consider the 44 areas in England given in Column A (rather than the finer administrative boundaries), we find that ten have no small congregation within the area although Dorset has the large centres of Bournemouth (together with Poole) and Warwickshire is near West Midlands which has the large centre of Birmingham and other small congregations.

The figures in Column E show the number of people who live in the county but are not in the centres given in **bold** in Column B. Accordingly for example, we can calculate that in the Metropolitan County of Tyne and Wear there are 235 self-identifying Jews who live in that county but are not in either Gateshead or Newcastle.[3] Similarly, Nottinghamshire has 808 Jews living in the county but outside the Nottingham Unitary Authority.

The figures of membership in Column D may be doubled to allow for individuals and thus show that just under 16,000 people belong to the slightly enlarged number of small communities that we have included in this Appendix. If we subtract that number from the Great Britain total of some 52,000 in Column E we can see that there are some 36,000 Jews outside main Jewish centres who do not affiliate to the small congregations in their region although, as we explained above, they may belong to other communities whether near or further away.

The county patterns have a further dimension. If we look at Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside together we see that there are over 3,000 Jews living in the immediate hinterlands of Greater Manchester and Liverpool. Even when – as here- we exclude those local authority areas of Essex and Hertfordshire (such as Epping Forest and Hertsmere) that are contiguous to Greater London, we find a similar pattern for Greater London with strong numbers in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Surrey. However, the local spread is less marked for Leeds and Glasgow.

[3] The arithmetic is simply to subtract the 837 for Newcastle from the 1072 for Jews outside main centres. The figure for Gateshead is not included in the latter figure.

County or Region	Main towns	Small Congs Members	Jews outside main centres
A	B	C	D	E
NORTHEAST REGION				
Durham				166
Northumberland				129
Teeside		1	27	220
Tyne and Wear	Newcastle (837);			
(Met County)	**Gateshead (1564)**	4	783	1072
NORTHWEST REGION				
Cheshire	Chester (132)	1	30	798
Cumbria				183
Lancashire	Blackpool (302);			
	Greater Manchester (21,733)	3	270	1297
Merseyside	**Liverpool (2,698)**; Southport (699)	2	395	2370
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION				
East Riding	Kingston upon Hull (403)	2	341	668
North Yorkshire	Harrogate (327); York (191)	2	100	767
South Yorkshire (Met County)	Sheffield (763)	2	301	933
West Yorkshire (Met County)	Bradford (356); **Leeds (8267)**	2	107	785
EAST MIDLANDS REGION				
Derbyshire	Derby (322)			463
Leicestershire and Rutland	Leicester (417)	2	201	1078
Lincolnshire		2	55	535
Northamptonshire	Northampton (322)	1	61	698
Nottinghamshire	Nottingham (627)	2	414	1435
WEST MIDLANDS REGION				
Herefordshire		1	35	130
Shropshire				181

County or Region	Main towns	Small Congs	Members	Jews outside main centres
A	B	C	D	E
Staffordshire	Stoke-on-Trent (83)	1	34	490
Warwickshire				461
West Midlands (Met County)	**Birmingham (2343)**; Solihull (389)	3	155	967
Worcestershire				405
EAST ANGLIA REGION				
Cambridgeshire	Cambridge (850); Peterborough (147)	4	242	659
Norfolk	Norwich (239)	2	102	865
Suffolk				654
SOUTHEAST REGION				
Bedfordshire	Luton (534)	2	118	1130
Berkshire	Maidenhead (570); Reading (415)	3	874	2124
Buckinghamshire	Milton Keynes (466)	3	169	2037
East Sussex	**Brighton (3358)**	2	104	1021
Essex	**Southend (2721)**	4	259	2743
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Portsmouth (235); Southampton (293)	3	195	1971
Hertfordshire		6	506	3825
Kent	Medway (210)	5	219	1884
Oxfordshire	Oxford (1091)	1	273	1990
Surrey	Guildford (383)	2	313	3229
West Sussex		1	20	1423
SOUTHWEST REGION				
Cornwall				435
Devon	Plymouth (181); Torbay (159)	3	150	992
Dorset	**Poole (440);Bournemouth (1667)**			558
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham (133)	1	70	656
Somerset	Bristol (823)	2	176	1539
Wiltshire	Swindon (127)	1	25	460

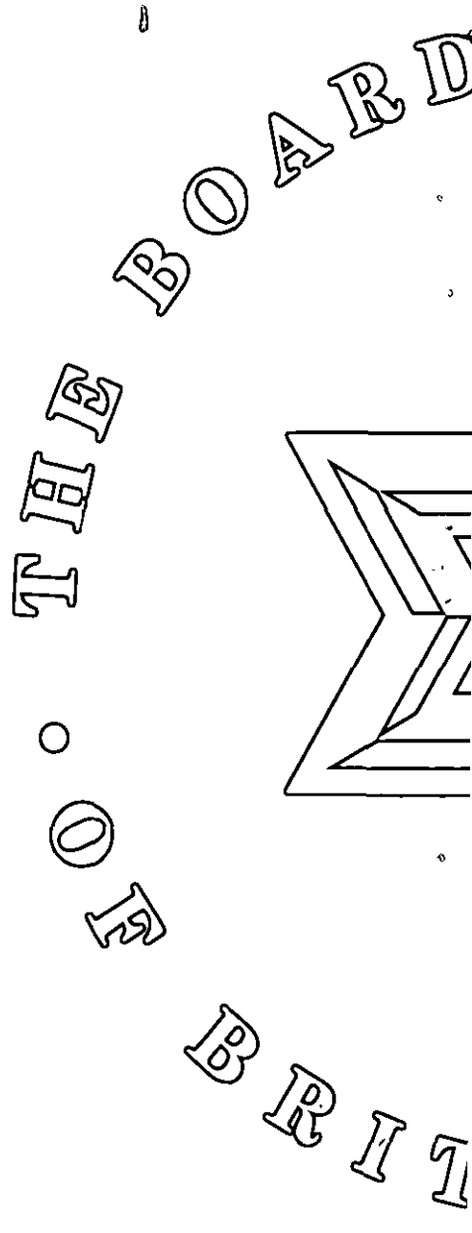
County or Region	Main towns	Small Congs	Members	Jews outside main centres
A	B	C	D	E
WALES	Cardiff (941); Swansea (170)	6	561	2256
SCOTLAND	Greater Glasgow (4224); Edinburgh (763)	4	199	2224
Total – Great Britain			7,884	51,906

We have called our report 'The Relaxation of Community' and the data presented in this appendix show how far people who can potentially be related to communal institutions have spread geographically. The Board's population estimates for areas[4], which drew on core population estimates and synagogue information, suggested that some 26,000 Jews live outside the large communities. Census data set out in Column E suggest that the figure should be doubled. Even if 50% of the census count are linked in some way to formal community structure, the communal fabric has indeed stretched. We cannot say what proportion of those self-identifying in the small communities in any way affiliates to the local or national structured community, but we submit that these numbers and patterns give scope for innovative and inventive outreach. The direct placing of population numbers against named Jewish centres and small community membership allows us to appreciate the potential for community development. Data on age structure, occupation and state of health that will gradually become available from the census will suggest how these programmes could best be designed and targeted.

4 Schmool and Cohen, (1998) op cit, p.11

6 Bloomsbury Square
London WC1A 2LP

Telephone: 020 7543 5400
Fax: 020 7543 0010
e-mail: info@bod.org.uk
www.bod.org.uk



The Board of Deputies of British Jews

The Voice of the Jewish Community