

“You’ll forget your head if it wasn’t screwed on” rings in my ears on an all too regular basis. At least that’s according to my wife.

Danny’s mention in conversation the other day that our reports tonight relate to our activities in 2016 brought my wife’s aforementioned opinion on my memory skills straight back, but after reviewing all of the minutes from 2016 I’ve managed to piece together this report on our activities.

Highlights of early 2016 were the affiliation of Shir Hatzafon Copenhagen and the first London based biennial of the EUPJ. Danny has been to Copenhagen to lead their Seder and it was wonderful to have a delegate from there at our recent weekend of celebration.

The EUPJ conference was my first (just my luck that it was in my home town) but never the less it was my first experience of how LJ influences so far above its weight at events such as this. Our Rabbis played a significant role and even I was dragged in to co lead one session. The services at WLS and the LJS were meaningful and poignant

The appointment of Rabbi Charley as our director of strategy and partnerships was a significant moment in 2016 and I don’t think any of us (including Charley) realised at the time the impact this would have in the following weeks and months.

My sentiments that a major change in culture at LJ was long overdue have been on record for a long time and our precarious finances during 2016 to an extent hijacked Charley into focussing on our patrons, donors and fund raising in general

This didn’t detract her from her work on the Alliance (more about that in a minute)

Probably the highlight for most of us during the year was an amazing Biennial Conference. New committee , new venue, exceptional sessions and speakers certainly in my opinion the best yet. Higher attendance numbers were probably a direct result of the lowering in cost but I’m sure that the success of the previous conferences has raised the interest of some who have not attended in the past. The bar has been set high so here’s looking forward to 2018 I know the planning has already started.

I touched on the Alliance and although my commitment remains strong I have to admit that I have despaired for various reasons and have doubted its worth on more than one occasion. I Andrew and Danny have met with our equivalents at MRJ as recently as yesterday and we still believe there have been benefits from the Alliance and there will be more. Watch this space

I have attended a number of meetings of and at the LBC. The fiscal challenges of the college still dominate deliberations.

If you attended council meetings during 2016 you will be aware of the perilous situation we found our finances in September. This will be discussed in due course. This was very much a wake up call for us and the subsequent officers meetings were long and loud. So loud was the voice of the officer group that our antiquated reliance on “chance” or “luck” to pay our way was no longer fit for purpose hence at last we have ditched our system of waiting for the next non-member funeral before we paid our bills and have now started to create reserves.

2016 was a challenging year for mainly good reasons. I hope that I have helped in some small way to ensure that we as a family of families are still strong, relevant, questioning, connected and empowering. Our youth movement is the envy of others. Our office staff have been loyal, hard working and flexible.

Thank you for all of your support and for allowing me to chair your movement