

MIRIAM'S 99TH BIRTHDAY



MIRIAM CELEBRATES HER 99TH BIRTHDAY

...and shares some of the highlights of her life!

I celebrated my 99th birthday this summer and thought I'd share some of my most memorable days over the past 99 years.

1951. The Festival of Britain was a national celebration held to showcase British achievements in arts, science, technology, and design. Its aim was to boost national morale after World War II. It was an outstanding success showcasing the best of British values. My sister Josephine, brother Myer and I took in all the sights and my favourite structure was the long slender Skylon.

We climbed up the 311 circular stone steps inside The Monument to the unglazed cage at the top, all for only sixpence (6d)! I wouldn't dare go there again.



▲ *Miriam and Josephine at the top of The Monument and Miriam at the futuristic Skylon Tower, built in 1951 and demolished in 1952*

Over a number of years, Evelyn and George Gee hosted fabulous barbecues and their famous strawberry tea for JDA members. We had the run of their huge garden and even used their swimming pool! The entertainment was always fascinating. At one event, a friend of theirs brought a heap of old iron objects and challenged us to say what they were for! Another time, a lovely lady showed her collection of beautiful fans of different materials from around the world, and one exhibited her stock of ravishing hats which I longed to own! The tea was scrumptious!

In 1992, thousands of Jewish people streamed into Hyde and Kensington Parks for a great walkabout led by the late Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks. The weather was glorious. A group of us from JDA were there with Pat Goldring, our former CEO, and it was wonderful to join this really peaceful rally. I still have the shirt with the JDA club logo that I wore that day.



▲ *Walkabout with the late former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks – left to right: Irene, Anthony, Angela and Tracey Spielsinger, Miriam, Harry Newman and Pat Goldring*



*Miriam and
Harold Woolfe
acting in the
JDA film*

One of my favourite JDA outings was to Whitchurch Silk Mill, a very old silk weaving mill on the bank of the River Test in rural Hampshire, owned and run by different generations of one family. Built in 1815 and now a working museum, it is still using traditional methods and historic machinery.

The noise inside from the machinery was so loud that we really had to stand back.



The weavers wore huge earmuffs. In contrast, the top floor was quiet, with rows and rows of spinning bobbins operated by pulleys connected to the massive water wheel. There was only one employee supervising this, and she asked me if I wanted a job. So, of course, I said yes!

A loom in a corner had a note inviting anybody to "HAVE A GO", so I did a piece of weaving. Anne Senchal took photos of me without my knowledge and gave them to me afterwards. The mill is still working!

Another lovely memory of mine is starring in two parts in a film with some past members, not perfect but funny and filmed in a real café and my school garden.

It was called "The Meal That Never Was". Acting with me in the film were Isadore (Issy) Schlissleman, Lydia Handscombe, David Hirshman, David Townsend, Bernard Polchar, Harry Newman, Gerald Goldsmith, Harold Woolf and Harold Fallman. Brenda Sterne also made a small appearance. The film is now on the Jewish Deaf History website.

When I was 98, I learnt to email. I also discovered I like curry. I have often thought about doing a skydive but, after a lot of thought, I've decided that at 99 I should be prudent and keep my feet firmly on earth!