



Kindertransport

A special interest group of the
Association of Jewish Refugees
SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE



JUBILEE HOUSE, MERRION AVENUE, STANMORE, MIDDLESEX HA7 4RL
Telephone: 020 8385 3070 Fax: 020 8385 3080 Email: kt@ajr.org.uk www.ajr.org.uk

**Contact: Andrea Goodmaker at AJR,
Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore,
Middlesex HA7 4RL
Tel : 44 (0) 20 8385 3070
Fax : 44 (0) 20 8385 3080
e-mail: andrea@ajr.org.uk**

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EDITOR:
Rev. Bernd Koschland
nisraf@compuchange.co.uk
Chairman:
Sir Erich Reich**

**Previous issues may also be viewed at:
www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport.htm**

Dear Kinder and Friends



From the Editor's Desk

Newsletter time comes round very quickly. A few weeks ago I thought we could manage about 5 pages with the material to hand. I need not have worried. As you will read, there is quite a variety of material. Whilst not including the articles, *Kinderlink*, the Newsletter of the American KT organisation, has two items on the recent unveiling of the statue in the Hook. It is always good to hear 'from across the pond!' Our next issue will be for Rosh Hashanah. Please alleviate my worries of having sufficient articles, letters, bits and pieces, by sending me stuff. I wish you and your families Chag Sameach and a pleasant year ahead.

Bernd.

PLEASURES OF AN EDITOR

In the time that I have been editing the KT Newsletter, my horizons widened considerably. Each edition somehow brings new contacts, be it in the UK or abroad. Whilst not meeting face to face, I have been able to forge a friendship with Kinder in various parts of the worlds, Israel, Australia, USA and New Zealand. As illustrated in this and previous editions contacts were also made with non-Kinder because of interest shown in the Kindertransport, be it

stamps from Danzig or, as in this issue, a piece from a college student in the USA. It certainly makes my life interesting.

Dear Kinder

Much has happened since the last News letter. We have moved from Cleve Rd to the Belsize Square Synagogue, the winter is slowly departing with the vision of a warmer spring ahead. I hope you have all visited our new lunch venue and find it pleasant and agreeable. Pesach is fast approaching so I will use this opportunity to wish you all Chag Sameach in advance.
Warm wishes.



Greta Burkill & The Cambridge Refugee Committee

The following is a short overview of a paper by Manpreet Sidhu (majoring in biology and chemistry) received at AJR (Michael Newman) via Professor Sepinwall at the College of Saint Elizabeth in Morristown, New Jersey. The paper attaches a short bibliography.

The paper focuses on the work of Greta Burkill who founded and led the Cambridge Refugee Committee; 12 regional and 65 area committees existed. Manpreet first describes the conditions in Germany from 1933, pointing out that emigration to the UK and elsewhere began so early and points out these refugee committees came into existence from that period. After describing the varied problems of emigration and immigration, she tells of the origins of the Kindertransport.

This leads on to the Cambridge Committee and a biography of Greta Burkill, born in Germany of Jewish parents who came to Cambridge where she married Charles Burkill, a professor of mathematics. After *Kristallnacht*, the local committee was formed with Greta Burkill as secretary. “*The primary purpose of the committees was to try and save as many refugees*” Manpreet points out the difficulties of finding refuge and homes for children not guaranteed; this meant going round personally to obtain help.

She then refers to the problems which we Kinder faced: to learn English, to acclimatise culturally to the new society and overcome the fright immigration brought. Then there were the issues of education, of obtaining release from internment, of trying to get help from the local and general Jewish community. There was the added problem of dealing with orthodox children in non-Jewish homes.

Greta Burkill worked tirelessly to ensure that ‘her’ children were well looked after. Many of ‘her’ charges did well in life in various areas.

Editor’s note: Much of the above is not new to many of us, as we experienced whatever Manpreet describes. What is interesting is that someone far removed from it all, should take an interest in a particular person and her committee. The study is a very interesting piece of work and to be commended. Manpreet, a biology major, planning a career as a physician, was inspired to do this research about Greta Burkill and the Cambridge Children's Refugee Committee after hearing the testimony that Siegmund Silber gave when

he came to speak in the College's History of the Holocaust course. No doubt a reader out there somewhere can recall Greta Burkill and Cambridge. If so, please send something in for publication in the next issue of the Newsletter.

5722 is not just a number!

Currently we are in the Jewish year 5772. Very often one can find some sort of message in the four Hebrew letters used for the date. For this year, the letters *tav, shi, ayin, bet* (can be used in any order to try and find some interesting thought. By switching the last two letters round, we get the Hebrew word *tishava*, which mean 'you shall swear.' The message for this year would therefore be to swear, but swear to what?

There are a variety of things to which we can swear allegiance: to our favourite football team, eternal friendship to one of our mates or whatever. On a more serious, thoughtful note, the allegiance for many of us Kinder has been to the State that welcomed us and, eventually, even allegiance to the King or Queen (depending on the date of naturalisation).

With the oncoming of Pesach, it could well be a further oath or affirmation to Judaism, of whatever brand: strong, weak or secular. Wherever the strength of our attachment lies, there are always or usually anchor points to being Jewish. It could be that Judaism, Jewish life, is in every part of our being, with us 24/7/365 (this year 366). It could be just highlights of the year, the Seder, or the High Holydays, or a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or marriage, or a child's birth. Death can also bring persons closer to Faith; for some the recital of Kaddish changes from being a daily burden to becoming an influence on firmer attachment to Jewish life with its long history.

As I write these words, there is the uproar by many against the decision to forbid prayers at Council meetings. Fortunately, according to a report in *The Times* (18th February), a means has been found by Mr Pickles, the Local Government Minister, to overcome the court ruling. While Faith may not be as strong as has been, though this is conjecture, it still exists in Christianity, Judaism, Islam and many other Faiths. The recent attacks on Faith, if ignored, could prove to be a bridgehead by a minority to destroy what a greater majority holds as important in their lives.

I heard an interesting point made in a sermon which distinguishes between the believer and the atheist. As the Rabbi put it, a man who worships to a totem pole – for many an idolatrous act - has a belief that there is something beyond the worshipper's existence. For the atheist there is nothing beyond the self. Rabbi Dr Isidore Epstein, Principal of Jews' College in my time, put it even more neatly: for the atheists, atheism is their religion!

Pesach recalls the Exodus from the slavery experienced in Egypt as Divine act. Whilst academics argue about the actuality of the Exodus, for us, as Jews, it symbolises our freedom, a freedom in many ways, but above all a freedom to worship and practise our beliefs, all of which Pharaoh denied to the Israelites, secular society wishes to do in our times.

I wish you and your family a Chag Sameach.

Bernd Koschland

HOSTELS

Some years ago I prepared an article and lecture on one of the hostels in which I lived for some years. In doing some research, I came across several other

hostels in the UK. Like a beginner collecting stamps, I gathered the names and where possible some details. Now some years on, my 'collection' has grown extensively. I now have the names, some addresses and other small details of some 80 hostels in the UK from just before the war to the closing of the last one in 1952. Stamps or photographs you can look at once set out properly, but this is not possible with just a list. The only way would be on a map. Again, added interest would be the organisations or individuals who set them up and or ran them. I have great details of one hostel, whose warden eventually worked with me when I started teaching at the JFS (then Secondary School, 1964). I did not know this of him until many years later and after his death – I have letters and other materials written by him. This material is part of an archive of materials in my possession. It contains a vast amount of material about two major hostels, under the auspices of the late and beloved Rabbi Eli Munk of Golders Green and some snippets about a hostel for post war survivors in Golders Green, known as the Freshwater Hostel in premises still owned to this day by the Freshwater Company.

Maybe, somewhere, somehow, the material could become a research project. The drift of research would be the types of hostel, organisations connected with them and something about life in them in general terms.

I do realise that there are many volumes of autobiographies or biographies of Kinder which relate life in the hostel or hostels in which the writers found themselves. What is sad however is that some of the records of organisations, which would have contained relevant materials, were destroyed, possibly with the thought *they are of no further use now*.

Of course they are of use as essential primary sources for the story of Anglo-Jewry and the way it helped, in some cases, did not help, the arrival and settling down of Kinder. Criticisms have been expressed that Jewish families were unwilling to open their doors to the children or in other instances unable to find the necessary financial guarantee required.

BK

Kindertransport Conference

Invitation to the Kindertransport Conference, November 2-4, 2012, Irvine California

The Kindertransport Association invites you and your families: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, and extended family to attend our next conference: **Kindertransport**

Conference 2012 – Generation to Generation; Honouring the Legacy, Transforming the Future.

This conference, the first to be organized by members of the second generation (with much input and advice from the first) is also the first intended to be a truly international gathering, and we are inviting Kinder and families living all over the world to attend.

The weekend-long conference programme will feature speakers, workshops, films, and time to socialize, and will be an opportunity for Kinder and children and grand-children to join together in celebrating and honouring the legacy of the Kindertransports with an eye to passing the torch to the next generations.

As many of you know, the Kindertransport Association, with members throughout the United States, owes its existence to Bertha Leverton and the ROK. 1989, the Reunion of Kinder (ROK) held its first gathering in London,

and inspired by what they saw, a group of Kinder in America founded the Kindertransport Association (KTA). The KTA has been hosting small local meetings and, every two years, a weekend-long conference, ever since. Many KTA members have family and friends in the Kindertransport Special Interest Group of the AJR, and we are bound together by a shared holocaust history. I was honoured to participate in the November 2008 commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Parliament's decision to admit 10,000 unaccompanied children to Britain at London's JFS, where I presented greetings from the KTA.

The next national conference, **Kindertransport Conference 2012 – Generation to Generation; Honouring the Legacy, Transforming the Future**, will be in Irvine, California, November 2–4, 2012. The hotel and conference centre is located in a beautiful part of Irvine California, near Los Angeles, which is offering a discounted rate that will extend before and after the conference. The location is easily accessible from three local airports and for those needing special assistance to or from the hotel or while in attendance, we will do everything possible to be of help. It is near many Attractions including Disneyland, Hollywood, many museums, The Long Beach Aquarium, Knotts Berry Farm, Lego Land, and is 10 miles from the Pacific Ocean.

Details and registration forms are available to download and print on the “events” page at <http://kindertransport.org>. if you would like registration materials emailed or mailed to you, or more information, please email kt2@kindertransport.org or write to the Kindertransport Association National Office, 36 Dean Street, Hicksville, NY 11801-5852

I look forward to meeting you in November!

Melissa Hacker, Vice President for the Second Generation, Kindertransport Association. mhacker@gmail.com

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2012

(The address given by Sir Erich Reich at the Borough of Barnet Holocaust Day)

Today is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the millions of victims who perish as a result of man-made barbaric catastrophes such as one of the most cold-blooded and horrendous episodes in human history - the Holocaust.

Undoubtedly the consequences for those murdered are by far the most disastrous, their lives cut short under horrific conditions.

At the same time we need to think of the refugees of the Holocaust who lost their families. Many were in their childhood, and had to live their remaining lives with ever-dimming memories of their parents who perished. Some also had to survive hardships as domestic helpers or were interned during the war.

Some as young as 3 or 4, like myself, arrived as refugees on the Kindertransport, a unique moment in history. Only because individuals spoke up and spoke out about what was happening in Nazi Europe did it lead to the British Government giving permission for up to 10,000 children to come to the UK, **without papers**. It took a lot of shouting but was worth it to save

these lives and I for one am eternally grateful to these wonderful people who cared enough to make a fuss. I was fortunate to have been fostered up to the age of 12 by a Christian couple who were themselves political refugees from Sudetenland, and who gave me the love and security to see me through my life.

We all had to start life afresh, foreigners in a new country, absorb a very different culture and an alien language with no parents to comfort us. Many were even afraid to speak in their native mother tongue as it was the one that belonged to the enemy.

At the same time despite the enormous emotional and cultural hurdles, it cannot be overemphasised the extraordinary contributions many refugees made to post-war Britain in the fields of science, art, music, and commerce. Through my work in the travel industry I have had the privilege over the last twenty years to find a way to give back to the country that gave me shelter, by helping to raise funds for those in need today.

As frequently happens in such circumstances heroes come to the forefront. We need only recall such names as Nicholas Winton, Rabbi Schonfeld or think of The Quakers. The real heroes, in my opinion however were undoubtedly the parents who had the foresight and emotional strength to let their young children go, not knowing if they would ever see them again, most didn't.

It is crucial not to hide the fact that hardships are being experienced by old and young across the world to this very day as a result of wars, conflicts, racism and prejudices. Let us strive and hope for a better and more humane future world.

Obituary

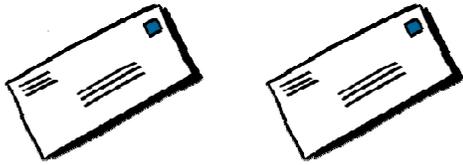
Isi Metzstein

Notices have been received regarding the death of Isi Metzstein. He was born in the Mitte district of Berlin in 1928. His parents had moved from Poland in the 1920's to seek a better life. His father died in 1933 and his mother was left to bring up five children. Isi was sent on the Kindertransport in 1939 on board the *SS George Washington*, with 40-50 other children as passengers. "Once we had got over the immediate trauma of separation, we enjoyed ourselves," he recalled. "...We ran wild, screaming through the corridors for three days." He was settled with a family in Harrogate. In 1945 he was reunited with his mother and siblings and they settled in Glasgow. Eventually he trained as an architect. Over the years he became a highly regarded architect in the UK and held in great affection. He is survived by his wife, three children, a brother and his twin sister.

(Details taken from several obituary notices)

(Editor's comment: Those of us, including me, who came on the *SS Manhattan*, as passengers no doubt behaved no differently than those on the *George Washington*. We Kinder who came on these ships must be thankful to

their owners for affording a more luxurious journey from Germany to the UK than those who came across from the Hook, who had to face traumas as they travelled across Germany to the border with Holland and over to freedom.)



Dear Editor
Steamship *Prague*

I duly received the Special Interest Supplement including my contribution re the steamship *Prague*. I am surprised that further research gave two other dates for the *Prague's* demise. Ships don't usually sink while being refitted. As for sinking off Normandy, I presume it could be D-Day as a blockship in 1944. It is surely not beyond the wit of man in this day of technology to ascertain what actually happened to this ship that helped to save some of our lives.

Nobody contacted me re the *Prague*; I assume nobody is interested anymore.

Ernest G Kolman

Editor's note: As mentioned in the last Newsletter, research on Google on my part gave two different 'deaths' for the ship.

Dear Editor

As a result of a note in a Newsletter of 2008, I have been writing regularly to Miriam Ravid (née Marianne Remak, born Breslau 1934) of Kibbutz Carmia near the Gaza border.

LH Brian

(It is always good to learn of contacts and contacts being kept up. Editor)

Oral History Society

Oral History Society Annual Conference: 2012 The next OHS annual conference, Displaced Childhoods: Oral history and traumatic experiences will take place in Reading on 13-14 July 2012.

The conference aims to bring together oral history practitioners who explore the topic of disturbed, disrupted and traumatic childhoods within academic, community and therapeutic settings.

Oral history interviewing has been increasingly utilised as a way of exploring the effects of war, evacuation and conflict on children, as well as former children; the treatment and welfare of children living in war zones and the wider disruption to family life. This conference aims to address both internal migration and the global movement of children from countries such as Spain, Germany, the former Yugoslavia and Iraq throughout the course of the twentieth century, in particular its long-term psychological and emotional impact. Other themes the conference will address include the 'Forgotten Children' forcibly migrated to Australia/USA/Canada, childhood experience of natural and civil disasters, disrupted childhoods, long-term separation and segregation including children's homes, hospitalisation, and the development

of therapeutic environments for children and young people with emotional, social and behavioural disorders. We'd like to hear from people who have worked with fostering, crime and juvenile delinquency, children of alcoholic or mentally disturbed parents, young people in mental institutions or those who have grown up in violent households. The event will be held in association with the Research Centre for Evacuee and War Child Studies, University of Reading

Papers are invited which draw on current projects or recently completed work using oral history and related methods which address these topics. We would particularly welcome papers on the methodological and ethical issues surrounding working with traumatic or potentially traumatic narratives of childhood? how to deal with sensitive issues, the question of interviewing adults recalling their childhood selves, reflection on the interview process and the experience of recording with children and the use of oral history within therapeutic contexts. The conference will be of interest to all those working in the field of oral history.

Please send an abstract of no more than 400 words to
Belinda Waterman: Department of History, University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ Belinda@essex.ac.uk +44
(0)1206 872313

Dr Wendy Ugolini
Lecturer in British History
University of Edinburgh
School of History, Classics and Archaeology Rm 1.29, William Robertson
Wing, Old Medical School Teviot Place, Edinburgh EH8 9AG
Tel: 0131 650 3766
Fax: 0131 650 3070

Reviews



Doris Bergen, *The Holocaust: A new History*, The History Press 2009

This is a new edition of the book originally published in 2003 under the title *War & Genocide: a concise history of the Holocaust*. In the preface the author states, "This book addresses some more modest yet important questions regarding the history of Nazism, the Second World War and the Holocaust." I found it fully covered the three specific areas mentioned.

The first 80 pages or so succinctly trace the steps to the Holocaust (Shoah) and yet are full of details, beginning with an account of anti-Semitism, racism and common prejudices in the early 20th century Europe. In the sections on racism and prejudices, Doris Bergen refers, not just to the Jews, but to the

Simti and Roma, the attitude to Slavs, to so-called asocial, homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, Freemasons and others. Carefully traced are the rise of Nazism, of Hitler and the steps leading ultimately to the Second World War. The remaining chapters speak of the Shoah, as well as the unleashing of terror against those regarded as sub-human and asocial. The author follows the stages of the war with its impact on the horrendous suffering of all victims, Jews and others. A few selected short quotes in the book bring out the horror, such as the indescribable life in the Warsaw Ghetto or the escape of a young lad standing on the edge of a pit waiting to be shot, but managed to escape by throwing himself into the pit Escaping naked, he found refuge and help, by telling an old lady he was the risen Christ! He finally found safety with the resistance to which a short section is devoted.

The final chapter highlights some of the post-war issues that had to be faced, such as that of the DP's, the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, the fates of survivors and so on. I quote just two references from the book. A young man moved from the Soviet Union to France before the war. During the hostilities he was caught and ended up in Bergen-Belsen where he survived. Under Allied-Soviet agreement, he, like other Russians were returned to Russia, where he was sent to Siberia, as one suspected of loyalty to Russia as he had been out of Russia and thus suspect in his loyalty. He died in a Siberian labour camp. To finish on a happier note, the author tells of a two week old baby who, unlike her parents, survived by various means in Holland and lived to be a grandmother.

The book has an outstanding collection of photographs and illustrations in colour and black and white, which fully back up and give life to the whole account of the Holocaust. The excellent bibliography is arranged according to the various chapters and refers to many works published in the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st.

I found the book most readable and not easy to put the down once engrossed in it. I highly recommend it as an essential study for the understanding the Shoah a little deeper and hopefully making the reader want to probe further.

Bernd Koschland

Life's Lesson

An important life lesson I have learned the intricate link between the past, the present and the future. The past is gone, I cannot relive it, for even if I allow it to flourish, it can only be explanatory. The word "if" cannot change anything, except at times to either make life sadder or even happier. The present is the gift of time – yesterday is gone, it lives in my memory having left home at the age of 8. It is the 'today' I have to grapple with, so that the 'tomorrow' is sunnier, happier and will make it a better 'tomorrow' for the world around me.

Menasseh (full name withheld)

The Haven

This was set up during WW2 for Jewish Kinder. My aunt, now aged 92, remembers playing with them in the Garden. If you have any information or contacts please email me.

Diana Abelson lollyfish@hotmail.co.uk

SEARCHES



Where are you?

Dr Hans Kaiser a teacher from Kempen in the Rhineland is writing a book, *Kempen under the Swastika*. Some 70 pages of it are devoted to the fate of the Jewish inhabitants of the town. He is interested in information about Herbert Bruch, Elsa Winter and Liesel Menden and how or through which organisation they came to Holland. Also has anyone information about Dr Ida Levisohn (a daughter of family Winter), who died in Israel in July 1989. The latter was active in the Cambridge Refugee Committee (*see the article about Mrs Burkill in this edition of the Newsletter*).

Dr Kaiser became interested as a result of information in the KT Newsletter August-October 2003. Strange how the Cambridge Refugee Committee features twice so suddenly. (Editor)

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A personal note to Eve, a Kind, a volunteer at the Royal Free Hospital where I am a Chaplain: "As a keen proof-reader, I do hope you won't find too many typos this time!" I always enjoy our conversation.

Rabbi Dr Schonfeld (of blessed memory)

In the presence of some 300 people, many of them Kinder with their children and grandchildren, Yad Vashem hosted an event in honour of Kindertransport. Most of the programme was devoted to Rabbi Schonfeld and initiated by Emmanuel Fischer, who had been brought out from Vienna by the Rabbi Schonfeld, as was Rabbi Rosin of Paris after the war. Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld (no relation) was the main speaker. He referred to life of the evacuated Avigdor School in Shefford during the war. Other speakers were Jonathan Schonfeld, a son, spoke about his father, Aliza, who heads the KT in Israel and Debby Spero, daughter of Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, who gave the official lecture on the Kindertransport. Also present was Bertha Leverton and her sister Inge Sadan. *A shortened report based on an email from Debby Spero, by Bernd Koschland (one of whose teachers was Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld in 1945-6 at the Hasmonean Grammar School)

Help for a Programme

I'm a researcher for Evans Woolfe Media, an educational production company. We are working with BBC Learning on resource for primary schools about childhood during WW2. For this project I am looking to speak with elderly people who were children during the war who would be willing to share their experiences with me. The aim of the resource is to follow the elderly person as they tell their story of war childhood to their own (great) grandchild as part of a short film, plus we will visit some of the places in their memories and more. I am keen to speak to those that were refugees from Europe and maybe used Kindertransport. If you can help please contact me, Celia Watson on celia@evanswoolfe.com

Views expressed in the Kindertransport Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Kindertransport Special Interest Group or of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.