



Kindertransport

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



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**JANURARY 2012
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**Previous issues may also be viewed at:
www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport.htm**

Dear Kinder and Friends



From the Editor's Desk

A report appears in the Newsletter of the unveiling of the statue at the Hook of Holland. Additionally the Newsletter roams over different parts of the world reflecting our experiences. It also records the work of the late Annette Saville. Please continue to send in your contributions – after all it is YOUR Newsletter. All good wishes for Chanukah and 2012.

Bernd.

Dear Kinder

Last week I attended what I assume will be the last Kindertransport Monument unveiling. It was an emotional but satisfying event. As we stood in front of Frank Meisler's creation and received roses from local school children we couldn't but be reminded how many of us were torn from the comfort of warm homes and loving parents at similar ages.

I myself was too young to remember and in fact came to this country on a different route. How ever I am constantly reminded that most of you were at an age where memories of a previous life and the images of parents are still very clear and consequently have continued to suffer your entire lives.

For me the real heroes were of course the parents who gave us life not once but by letting us go allowed us to resurrect our lives for a second time. Having said that we have all been forced to re adjust to the difficult circumstances we found ourselves in, build and create our own homes, families and careers. History has proved that despite this cruel start, by and large we have done so very successfully.

I would like to take this opportunity and thank all those who took part in organising the event so compassionately. In particular Frank Meisler, the Mayor of Rotterdam Mr Aboutaleb and Lisa Bechner for her tireless efforts to help obtain finances so that as many 'Kinder' as possible could attend.

I wish you and your families a successful and satisfying year ahead.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Erich Reich", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

STATUE AT THE HOOK OF HOLLAND

Supported by the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), a statue dedicated to the Kindertransport was unveiled at a moving ceremony in the Hook of Holland at the end of November. Designed by internationally acclaimed sculptor Frank Meisler, *Channel Crossing to Life*, commemorates the role played by Dutch people in helping to save the lives of Jewish children fleeing Nazi oppression.

Kinder who now live in Germany, Switzerland, USA and Israel as well as a group of 15 AJR members from the UK, joined school children from the Hook of Holland, who carried lanterns lighting the path to the statue and presented Kinder with roses.

After speeches from Frank Meisler and the Mayor of Rotterdam, Ahmed Aboutaleb, Sir Erich Reich, Chairman of the AJR Kindertransport committee, gave thanks to the Dutch people who helped ensure the safe passage of the children to Britain. Speaking ahead of the unveiling Sir Erich said, "This statue is a fitting memorial dedicated to all those who perished at the hands of the Nazis and will be a permanent reminder of the continuing need to fight intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism".

Guests at the unveiling included the Vice President of the Bundestag, Petra Pau, and the families of Kinder including their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The date of the unveiling was also symbolic, marking the eve of the 73rd anniversary of the first Kindertransport that left Europe.

Frank Meisler has also created statues commemorating the Kindertransport at Liverpool Street station in London, at Gdansk in Poland and at Berlin's Friedrichstrasse station.

AJR member Professor Leslie Baruch Brent, who attended the unveiling, gave an address at the opening of the plenary of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research which was meeting in The Hague the same week.

Michael Newman, Director, AJR



Statue at the Hook of Holland

OUR JUBILEE or A TRIBUTE TO BERTHA LEVERTON

From all the corners of the world
They came with joy and tears
We came to meet here once again
And leave behind our fears.
It was a wondrous meeting,
There was so much to be told
Of wondrous things that happened
Of lives as they unfold.
Then when we found a friend again,
Our hearts would almost burst,
We laughed, we hugged, we talked so much
T'was like quenching an old thirst.
The days were short – so much to see,
To hear and listen and absorb,

Just like a rhapsody.

And now that I am home once more
In the quiet and the still,
I think of these wondrous days
In Harrow-on-the-Hill.
And there was Bertha Leverton
A Giant in disguise
Who is not only beautiful
But also very wise.
With all her teams of helpers
She made our dream come true,
With all the tears of joy we shed
We came all smiling through.
And when at last I lay on my bier
And time has almost gone,
I'll still think of the days I had
In Harrow-on-the-Hill.

Geoffrey Dickson

(This ode, written after the 1st Reunion, was given to Edwina Currie at the 70th Kindertransport Reunion)

A Tribute to Annette Saville

Annette sadly passed away earlier this year after a long illness. She is sadly missed by many in the Jewish community as well as in the community as a whole. Her two interests were music, and in latter years, the Kindertransport. Annette was born in Vienna in 1923. Her parents were both musical, her father played the mandolin, her mother sang and played the piano. From an early she showed great musical ability and talent. At the age of 9 she received piano lessons, which continued even after the *Anschluss*. Conditions in Austria made the family want to leave. Initially she wanted to go to Palestine, but after *Kristallnacht* she joined a Kindertransport and came to England. Later, her parents went to Shanghai. Annette was reunited with them after the war; eventually they came to England where both died. Annette married twice. Her second husband is still in a home in South London, whom she would visit as long as she could, despite the long journey.

In England, her new homeland, Annette had a difficult life to say the least, which she describes in her book *Only a Kindertransportee*. Her book illustrates starkly that the conditions of *Kinder* were not always so rosy and happy. Music, and a strong will, sustained Annette and enabled her to obtain the ARCM (Royal College of Music). That same musical drive made her play for the Jewish Community; she also played the organ in a local Church. She accompanied the WIZO Choir, the Sobell (later JC) Singers and played for AJR events and many appreciative audiences.

I came to know her well in her later years through her major role in the JC Singers whose members took her close to their hearts. Her fingers were like magic as they played the piano, or on the accordion or keyboard, when a piano

was not available. Music was not just her life; it was a vital element of her being that made her life worth living.

The second stanza of John Dryden's *Song for St Cecilia's Day* contains a fitting tribute to her:

What passion cannot Music raise and quell/When Jubal struck the chorded shell/His listening brethren stood around/ And, wondering, on their faces fell/To worship that celestial sound.

(Jubal is mentioned in Genesis 4:21 as the first musician)

Bernd Koschland

JCORE

How can we keep alive the Kindertransport experience and make it relevant to young people now and in future? One way is *Journey to Safety*, an innovative oral history project devised and delivered by JCORE (The Jewish Council for Racial Equality), partnered by the Jewish Museum London and AJR, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the L.A. Pincus Fund.

JCORE has over 30 years' experience in delivering race-equality education and campaigning for and supporting refugees and asylum seekers. It draws on the Jewish refugee experience, Jewish teaching, and a tradition of Jewish social activism to engage the community in social action in the wider society.

Journey to Safety uses the Kindertransport story as a tool both for teaching children about their refugee heritage, and for giving them an insight into the predicament of refugees today. It also ensures the survival of the stories by recording them and making them available online.

Since December 2010, we have worked with almost 200 young people aged 10 to 14 in the following schools: Akiva School, Mathilda Marks Kennedy Primary School, King Solomon High School, Hasmonian Boys' School, Immanuel College and Copthall School.

Over a five-week period, the young people learn about the rise of Nazism, the events of Kristallnacht and the Kindertransport. They go on to look at asylum issues today, and explore the emotions and difficulties refugees face when moving to a new country. They then examine Jewish texts, considering the Jewish responsibility towards welcoming refugees, before being introduced to the idea of oral history. Working with a professional film-maker, the young people then go on to meet and film an interview with a Kind. The edited interviews, along with teachers' notes and factsheets, can be found on the website www.journeytosafety.org.uk.

This project would not have been such a success without the support of AJR, and the volunteers who kindly agreed to give up their time to take part in the interviews.

“Learning about refugees will stay with me forever – leaving homes, families, friends and everything behind and starting all over again in a different country. We must remember that so many Jews came here as refugees and now we must try and understand those who seek refuge in our country.”

If you would like to take part in the project or find out more, please contact Talya on 0208 455 0896.



[Photo caption: Bernd Koschland and Ruth Barnett at Hasmorean Boys' School with film-maker Jeremy Wootliff]



Reviews



Out of Place, Lois Keith

There are books you cannot put down but do and there are books you cannot put down because they grip you and you just carry on reading and reading. The novel *Out of Place* belongs to the latter group of 'can't put down.' A library of books, non-fiction and fiction, have been written about the Kindertransport, whether the main theme or sub-plot. Lois Keith's novel approaches the subject from quite a different and enthralling angle, with life before leaving Vienna and after arrival in England to live as full a life as was possible for the heroine Eva.

Life in pre-war Vienna changed with the *Anschluss*. One group of people affected as a result were those who suffered an infirmity, as does Eva in the book. The infirm were not to be part of the Third Reich. Through her friendship with Susi, she, though not-Jewish, escapes to England on the Kindertransport having taken on a borrowed identity. The book examines the relationship with the older, and later married Susi, and Eva's life as a disabled person, searching for a place in life.

The book is well researched, included in acknowledgements is *Little Grass Orphan Annie* by Annette Saville!* Many of the details of names, organisations and places struck a chord with me. Compayne Gardens, Lyons Corner House, Hendon Central (near where I live!) and many others to give the book reality, as I am sure it also does for life in pre-war Vienna.

As the blurb on the back states, the book is a remarkable and compassionate novel in which the author explores 'a forgotten past of the twentieth century.'

Lois Keith has published other works and is the first recipient of the national Sue Napolitano Award for Disabled Writers.

Lois Keith, Out of place, published by Crocus 2003

- see her obituary in this edition of the Newsletter

Copies of *Out of Place* by Lois Keith are available at the discounted price of £5.00 plus £2.50 P&P (UK). For details of how to make an online payment, email colinschofield@colinschofield.com or send a cheque for £7.50 to Colin Schofield Associates, 82 Aberdeen Park, London N5 2BE

Grandpa's Book, Frank Beck

Vienna once again features as the starting point of the book, which the author states was written for the benefit of his grandchildren. To know where they came from, Beck recounts the family history. *Kristallnacht* again became the catalyst for a new life. Frank Beck was put onto the Kindertransport, but at the last moment could not go because of a problem with papers. Instead he came to England with his family. His father had fled to France where he remained until he gave himself up to the police, was transferred to Drancy, then Auschwitz where he perished.

In England, Beck lived in a B'nai B'rith hostel. He makes an interesting point, that he and a few other Austrian boys had never met German boys, who seemed to have different outlooks. Evacuation followed and he was separated from his mother who had taken on domestic work. His life unfolded in ways similar to Kinder, school, family visits, return to London to another hostel, an orthodox one in Cricklewood and eventually a degree and work.

Some interesting points stand out. When able, he joined the RAF, to show that a refugee and now a British citizen could do his duty as anyone else. A cousin was rejected for Medicine because returning troops were cared for first before refugees?

Whatever difficulties Beck faced, he remained Jewish, as he writes at the end, "After a lifetime of deprivation and mere survival, I was thrilled to be in the homes of Jews whose families had escaped persecution for the two or three generations needed to build some prosperity." It was into one of these families when he married Louise. He worked as a computer scientist in Switzerland and the USA and now lives in London.

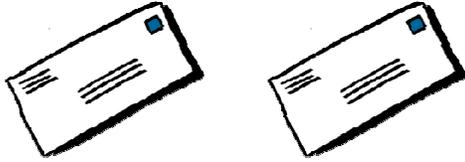
Grandpa's Story, Frank Beck ISBN 978-1-4452-1574-7 (private publication)

Bernd Koschland

Venlo Re-visited

Further to the report on Venlo in the last edition, an article in the Jewish Tribune (15th September) describes the finding of a Mikveh in Venlo. It is dated to the 13th century. This shows that Jews lived in Holland long before the arrival of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews who had fled the Inquisition. The Dutch Chief Rabbi, R. Benjamin Jacobs said that though the community may have been small, it was a testament to a flourishing and dedicated community. According to archaeologists, the mikveh was used only for a few decades and then put to other uses. It has been suggested that Jews were brought to Venlo by one of the landowners to improve the financial position of this trading settlement.





Beaconsfield School

In one of your Newsletters there was a reference to Beaconsfield College. I attended that school from 1940 to 1943. It was originally in Hove and later moved to Gloucestershire. I am trying to find the address of the school in Gloucestershire. The Newsletter mentioned that they had some girls at the school. I was seven years old and because one person, a lady, was very kind to me, I remembered her name. I recently used ancestors.com and was able to find her. I spoke to her about one month ago. She did not remember me after 70 years, but that is OK. I plan to be in England in a few weeks and plan to see her. She is 80 and I am 78.

I have lived in America since 1951.

Gerry Halpern, Aventura, Florida

A Book on Hostels

Some years or even year and a half ago, I had a call from someone who was writing a book about the hostels for Kinder who had come to England on the Kindertransport without parents or relations and who were living in hostels all over England. The gentleman was going to inform me further when he was going to be near publication. Although not a hostel inmate, I do know about a certain hostel where I was a frequent visitor and about which I informed him. Perhaps it may be possible, if anyone is aware of this gentleman and his project, to inform me so that I can contact him, as I am curious of the outcome of his research. I came on the Kindertransport in May 1939 from Vienna.

Hans Spielman

SS Prague

I don't email but I have a good memory and an original 1st Class ticket for the railway steamer *Prague* from Hook to Harwich for 18th November 1939. It may be of interest that some years ago, as I was browsing in a booklet of posh railway steamers, I discovered that the *Prague* was sunk while doing her duty during the evacuation from Dunkirk. If anyone researching this episode during the journey from Germany to England, I would gladly help with such information that I still remember.

Ernest G Kolman

[According to further research, the *SS Prague* was sunk off Normandy 1944 or sunk while being refitted in 1947. Editor]



SS Prague

See London and North Eastern Railway Services from Harwich

Four Days of Magic in New York

As I arrived in my Manhattan Hotel ‘Le Parker Meridien’, I was met by my friend Jon with bottles of water to combat 90 degrees heat and some fruit and made sure I was comfortably settled. Adam my nephew was unable to meet me, because he was on the stage on Broadway playing the English Lord Evelyn Oakley in Cole Porter’s *Anything Goes*.....Next day at 2 pm I had to be at the Stephen Sondheim Theatre for a matinee performance of Adam’s show. The New York critics had already reviewed the show very favourably. So I was looking forward to being well entertained; I was not disappointed. With the superb singing and dancing and Adam’s hilarious caricature of Lord Oakley, which had already won him two awards and a Toni nomination, I was treated to an afternoon of fun and laughter.....

On the fourth and last day, I had a wonderful reunion with Norbert Ripp and Werner Katz, two friends whom I last saw in the hostel in Manchester, after 80 of us children from the Burgerweeshuis in Amsterdam had escaped from the Nazis in 1940. We recalled our almost fatal voyage on the *SS Bodegraven*, an old Dutch steamship, while being shot at by German planes. We talked about our arrival in Liverpool and our life in Manchester. It was soon time to say farewell to Norbert and his wife Evelyn and Werner and his daughter Batya. I shall remember this meeting for the rest of my life. Next morning a wake-up call came at 5.30 in time for my flight home from JFK Airport.

Hans Levy



L to R Hans Levy, Norbert Ripp, Werner Katz

[The story of the SS Bodergraven also featured in article in the December 2010 issue of the Newsletter. Editor]

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Danzig

Thank-you for sight of Mr. Regamey's letter. Unfortunately his assertions are not all borne out by the facts and historical evidence.

Firstly, I cannot understand his point about the children being "German not Polish" - even if that were true what does it matter? In fact the Jewish children involved were of both Polish and German, and possibly Russian, extraction, and would mostly have been citizens of the Free City of Danzig.

Secondly, it is patently incorrect to say that "in 1938 all the Jewish population was expelled from the Free City of Danzig". After the emulsion in Danzig over the period 12-15 November 1938 of the odious *Kristallnacht* in Germany, the pressure intensified on the remaining Jews in Danzig to leave. Many did leave but up to 4000 remained, not least to organise the safe departure of children right up to August 1939. The Danzig Senate first tried to impose a deadline of May 1939 for all Jews to leave, but this was later extended to August. In fact the exodus continued until November 1941.

Whilst much Jewish property was destroyed in November 1938 in and around the city, the 'Great Synagogue' on the *An der Reitbahn* in Danzig was not demolished until May 1939. It survived until then only because of the concerted efforts of the then remaining Jewish community.

Mr. Regamey may care to extend his research by reading the published accounts of Gershon Bacon, Samuel Echt, Herbert Levine and Erwin Lichtenstein to name but a few.

Giles du Boulay

Danzig to London via the Quakers

The item Danzig Philatelist in your September issue stated that my brother, who came to England in March 1939 on a student's visa, obtained the financial guarantee which enabled me to come to Britain. This was not the case.

As the ill-treatment of my brother and myself grew progressively worse from November 1938 onwards, my parents heard about the formation of the first Kindertransport from Danzig but learned that its full complement of children had already been selected – quite understandably – from amongst the Jewish congregations and so there was no place for me.

In desperation, my mother contacted a young Englishman, a member of the Quaker mission in Berlin, whom she had met by chance on a train journey in October 1938 and begged him to help. He promptly found a guarantor in England who provided the necessary £50 bond for me, as well as the offer of a home from a family in Nelson, Lancashire, who had lost a boy to diphtheria and who wished to give shelter to a refugee child of similar age and of Christian faith.

He then contacted the Jewish authorities in Danzig who were finalising the details of the May 1939 Kindertransport to London and arranged to have my name added to those of the other children. Without the intervention of this kind man I might well not be here today to write to you.

When the head of my foster family became severely ill in early 1940 and I had to leave, the Manchester Quaker Office found lodgings for me and arranged for the owner of a small factory to take me on as an engineering apprentice.

So I am one of the many thousand refugees who owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to the Society of Friends. They also attempted – unfortunately in vain – to rescue my mother who had to suffer the consequences of refusing to

divorce my father. I want to take this opportunity to record my profound thanks to then once again.

KG Roome

[Apologies for the error contained in the September issue regarding your brother. Ed]



The Mystery of Chanukah

Lights and latkes, prayers of praise and presents, doughnuts and dreidels, (Chanukah) *gelt* and grub – that’s Chanukah. So what is the mystery? Old and young know the story, but the B’nei Israel of India did not; they did not observe the Festival because they fled from Judea before the events, as recorded in the Books of the Maccabees –the victory against the Syrian Greeks and the rededication of the Temple. The two books fix the date of the rededication to be observed at all times, but do not mention the miracle of the oil, as neither does another early Rabbinic writing which simply states that “On 25th (Kislev) was a dedication for eight days during which one must not give funeral orations.” No reason for the celebration is given

There is little mention of Chanukah in the later work, the Mishnah (3rd century CE), where it is referred to only in passing. The Talmud (*Gemara*) squeezes in the details of Chanukah in the second chapter of the Tractate *Shabbat*. That leads to three mysteries. Why is it squeezed in whereas Purim has a whole section to itself (Tractate Megillah)? The oils and process for lighting is discussed before the story or reason for Chanukah is given in an abbreviated form, quoting from the earlier source about funeral orations mentioned above and elaborating briefly on the Maccabean revolt and rededication of the Temple. Possibly a case of **do**, that is, fulfil the mitzvah of lighting and then ask why?

Lastly, where does the miracle of the miracle of the oil come from? From which source, as the first mention is in the Talmud some centuries later after the event? Possibly it is based on a tradition going back overtime, perhaps with some link to the Festival of Oil as described in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Whatever the explanation the miracle of the oil has become the major factor in the observance of Chanukah.

Purim has a whole tractate to itself because its main theme was intended genocide, “Whose (i.e. the Jews) customs are different...and (they) do not obey the king’s laws..let a decree be issued to destroy them...” (Esther 3:8-9). The message of Purim is therefore to celebrate and recall the failure of genocide! But that message has been unheeded; hence the *Shoah*, Biafra, etc.

Chanukah was ‘squeezed in’ because the Rabbis found serious faults with Maccabees and their Hasmonean descendants, e.g. a priest claiming kingship. However the underlying message of the Maccabees remains as has been exemplified over the centuries to our own days - martyrdom, to give up one’s life rather than submit to joining another faith. The sword or conversion! In the Talmud the Schools of Hillel and Shammai disagree about the way we light: 1,2,3...(Hillel), 8,7,6,....(Shammai). Whist reasons are given for their different views, I would suggest that Hillel’s increasing the lights represents

the small 'light' of Mattathias raising the revolt which became a blazing candelabrum as the Maccabees won victories which led to the re-dedication of the Temple. Shammai's view of decreasing the lights represents another view about the Maccabean revolt. It started with blazing lights and then began to fade as Judah was defeated and killed in battle. His brother Jonathan fled and all seemed lost. But the one little candle still burned as Jonathan was able to re-establish independence from Syria once again, but it was only to last for a couple of generations till 73 BCE.

Whatever the message, whatever the story of nearly 22 centuries ago, let us be joyful that we are able celebrate yet another Chanukah.

Bernd Koschland

Women at Chanukah

Apart from latkes (men can also make them!), women have a special role on Chanukah according to Jewish custom. They are part of the ceremony of lighting, they can also light candles, because they were part of the miracle of Chanukah. Antiochus' decree against the Jews included men, women and children. It became a custom to have a milky dish, because of the actions of Judith, the ancient heroine, who gave the enemy general milky foods and plenty of wine thus whilst asleep through alcoholic stupor, she decapitated him. (The full story is in the book of Judith in the Apocrypha) Anonymous women also defied the king by having their sons circumcised, as he had forbidden it; Hannah and sons were martyred because they refused to accede to the king's wish to worship idols.

MIK

Lamps of Dedication

Shine, lamps of Dedication, shine,
Your hallowed radiance be the sign
That still there burns undimmed by years,
Not quenched, but fed by blood and tears,
In Israel's heart, clear, steadfast, bright,
The flame it caught from Sinai's height.

Solomon Solis-Cohen (1857-1948)
American Physician and Poet



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.