



## **Association of Jewish Refugees**

SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES

AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE

[www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk)

### **PRESS RELEASE**

December 2011

#### **ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH REFUGEES (AJR) CENTRE RELOCATION**

**The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) is delighted to announce a new line-up of exciting activities to mark the re-launch of The Paul Balint AJR Centre on Tuesday 3 January 2012. The re-launch follows the decision of the AJR Charitable Trust to close down the Centre in Cleve Road, West Hampstead and relocate to the Belsize Square Synagogue, Belsize Park.**

Guests at the AJR Centre, which will open on Tuesdays and Thursdays for members of the AJR and Belsize Square Synagogue, will be invited to take part in regular book club meetings and a fortnightly discussion group. Every Tuesday the Centre will host a music and movement class and a volunteer will be on hand to give computer lessons and to teach people how to use the internet, email and Skype so that they can stay in touch with relatives and friends. We are also very excited to introduce a dedicated art appreciation group.

As at Cleve Road, the AJR will continue to arrange for transport for AJR members to and from the Synagogue and the Centre will also host the monthly Luncheon Club and Kindertransport Lunch gatherings, Chanukah parties and a Model Seder to celebrate Pesach.

Once a month all members in the North West London area will receive the new AJR Centre Newsletter which, as well as containing details of forthcoming events, will report on gatherings, celebrations and commemorations we organise and profile members and staff.

As part of the decision to relocate the AJR Centre, AJR Meals-on-Wheels will be replaced by a selection of kosher Hermolis meals. Members will be able to order from an excellent menu and the AJR will continue to deliver to the North West London area. Hermolis will also provide the non-meat catering for the Centre's lunches at Belsize Square.

A farewell party will be held at Cleve Road on 14 December and a re-launch celebration at Belsize Square Synagogue on 12 January 2012.

Announcing the move, AJR Chairman, Andrew Kaufman, said: "After almost a quarter of a century it is with a heavy heart that we leave our wonderful home at Cleve Road where our members enjoyed so many good times and built enduring friendships with each other and our dedicated staff. Through the extremely generous support of the Paul Balint Charitable Trust and the endeavours of our inspirational President and former Honorary Treasurer, Ludwig Spiro, who sadly passed away last month, we were able to create a bespoke atmosphere for AJR members that reflected the culture and heritage of the refugees.

We are though very excited to move to Belsize Square Synagogue with which we share a rich history and membership and where we believe we will be able to preserve the unique refugee spirit. Above all the Centre will continue to provide a warm and friendly setting for our members to meet and enjoy each other's company, kosher meals, activities and entertainment."

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#### Notes and background information about the AJR Centre:

The **Paul Balint AJR Centre** at Cleve Road, West Hampstead opened in June 1987 (the official opening was on 15 September 1987). The late AJR President and former Honorary Treasurer, **Ludwig Spiro**, oversaw the project to establish the Centre following a wide consultation with AJR members that began in 1984 about the need and desirability for a dedicated AJR Centre.

Work to adapt the premises at Cleve Road to the new requirements, including the creation of eight flats for AJR members, began in November 1985 following receipt of a generous donation from the Paul Balint Charitable Trust established by **Paul Balint** (1900-1978), who was born in Hungary and was awarded the OBE in 1974 for services to export and scientific innovation. He set up the **Paul Balint Charitable Trust** in 1977 for the benefit of deserving causes giving freely to Jewish charities, including the Jewish Welfare Board, the Blind Society, Old Age Homes as well as schools and hospitals in Israel. He also gave donations to national hospitals, medical research and institutions such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

The AJR Day Centre ran briefly, from January 1986 to April 1987, at the **Belsize Square Synagogue**, which was founded in 1939 by the Jewish refugees who escaped Nazi oppression and settled in Britain.

### Notes on the AJR for Editors:

The AJR is the leading national charitable organisation exclusively delivering social and welfare services, including financial assistance, to Jewish victims of Nazi oppression as well as their dependants and descendants living in Great Britain.

The AJR Charitable Trust supports Holocaust education and research projects and initiatives to commemorate the Holocaust.

The AJR has produced the ground-breaking audio-visual testimony archive, *Refugee Voices*. This collection of 150 filmed interviews creates a legacy of the experiences of the refugees and will advance and enhance Holocaust research for future generations. *Refugee Voices* enables Holocaust researchers and scholars to watch up to 450 hours of film and read fully edited and transcribed accounts. For the first time, researchers will also be assisted by time-codes that, together with a summary sheet and key words section, direct users to specific sections of the films. Details of Refugee Voices are at [www.refugeevoices.co.uk](http://www.refugeevoices.co.uk)

The AJR is part of the UK delegation to the [Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research \(ITF\)](#), which brings together governments and non-governmental organisations to raise awareness of the Holocaust and places political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research both nationally and internationally.