



# Kindertransport

A special interest group of the Association of Jewish Refugees

---

**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](mailto:andrea@ajr.org.uk)**

**AUTUMN/SEPTEMBER 2009  
EDITOR:  
Rev. Bernd Koschland  
[nisraf@compuchange.co.uk](mailto:nisraf@compuchange.co.uk)  
Chairman:  
Erich Reich**

**Previous issues may also be viewed at: [www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport.htm](http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport.htm)**

Dear Kinder and Friends

## ***From the Editor's Desk***

Newsletter time has come round *again quickly*. This issue marks the end and beginning of a new chapter for our beloved founder, Bertha. On behalf of all Kinder we wish you a very happy and healthy *Aliyah* – your third homeland! As one says: “Bis 120.” Bertha’s successors, Hermann and Erich have items in this edition. As such a Newsletter wants, we have contributions from Kinder. Please let us have your contributions for future editions. Searches, and we have several, are also a vital ingredient for these pages. I wish you and your families *Shanah Tovah*. May it be a year of peace and tranquillity for Israel and for the world all over.

*BK*

Dear Kinder and Friends

How time flies! It seems just yesterday we were talking about Pesach and spring and now here we are looking towards Rosh Hashanah and Autumn.

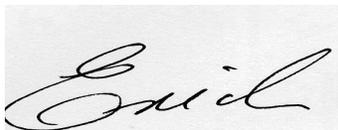
Undoubtedly the news touching us all is Bertha’s departure to pastures new in Israel. We all wish her a long and happy life there with her close family.

Meanwhile those who visited Bletchley Park will I hope, have had a wonderful and interesting time there.

At the beginning of May a new Kindertransport monument by Frank Meisler was unveiled in Gdansk (Danzig) in the company of the Mayor and many other dignitaries from the city including the Chief Rabbi of Poland.

There will no doubt be articles and documentaries marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the war. These may include mention of the last Kindertransport groups' arriving in England.

Meanwhile I wish you all *Chag Sameach* and *Shana Tova*.



CHAIRMAN – KINDERTRANSPORT

Dear Kinder

By the time you read this I should be settled in Israel, and would like to take this opportunity to say how much all your friendships have meant to me. All the activities, lunches and Reunions etc. over the years have kept me going. I am now ready to take it easy and look forward to any phone calls and to visitors when you come to Israel. My telephone number is 00972 97928150 (not Shabbat).

Wishing you all *Hag Sameach*.



### **Kindertransport Reunion founder Bertha Leverton to emigrate to Israel**

Bertha Leverton, founder and organiser of the Reunion of Kindertransport, has emigrated to Israel to live with her family there.

At a crowded and deeply moving farewell party at the AJR Centre in Cleve Road, members paid tribute to Bertha's contribution to the Kindertransport movement – which would not have existed without her efforts.

Over 20 years ago, against all odds, Bertha took it upon herself to bring about in London an international assembly of those who, like herself, had fled as children to Britain from Nazi persecution, in many cases never seeing their parents again.

The enormous success of the 1988 First Reunion was followed ten years later by a Second Reunion, and, last November, by a Third Reunion, when almost 600 people, including guests from Israel, the USA, Germany and elsewhere, were present. On the latter occasion, undoubtedly the highlight of the day for many Kinder was the attendance of HRH The Prince of Wales, as guest of honour.

At the farewell party, the present KT Chairman Erich Reich, the former KT Chairman Hermann Hirschberger and fellow Kindertransportee Rolf Penzias, a school contemporary of Bertha, reminisced about Bertha's legendary determination, paying tribute to her virtually single-handed achievement in forming the Kindertarnsport movement. 'You never argued with Bertha – you simply accepted what she said!', Hermann declared to much laughter.

Bertha was awarded the MBE in 2005: ‘To think that a child who lived through Nazi times in Germany, escaped on the Kindertransport to England, built a life here, raised a family, and was so very fortunate to have been reunited with her parents!’, Bertha remarked at the time. ‘I came as a bedraggled refugee – really, like we all came – and made it to Buckingham Palace to receive an honour from Her Majesty the Queen for the work I have done in reuniting those former refugee children. That is, I think, the pinnacle of my life.’

All members of the AJR and its Kindertransport special interest group wish Bertha well in her new life. ‘See you in Israel!’, member after member of the audience told Bertha: *Lehitraot*.



### THE MIRROR IMAGE

For many, this coming period of the Yamim Noraim (High Holydays) will bring back the first time we Kinder celebrated them in this country. As we think back to that year, the then Festivals no doubt made us reflect on what was happening at home. How were our parents celebrating (if that is the right word) these Festivals? What was happening in our home town? Reflection was the only way of ‘communicating’, as just 11 days before Rosh Hashanah 1939 the war had severed communication with our loved ones left behind.

70 years on, however, our lives have also moved on; they have had to do so. Reflection has taken on another dimension. Of course there are flashes of what Opa, Papa, Oma or Mama used to do. Some will want to blot and have blotted that out, whereas for many it will always remain fresh, despite 70 years. The other direction of reflecting is looking at **ourselves** in a ‘metaphorical’ mirror. What do we see? What kind of person are we? Do we detect any changes since last year? Since the last High Holydays, have we implemented any changes? What changes do we need to make in ourselves, in our lives this coming year?

As we spend a long period in the synagogue praying, let us at the same time allow our thoughts to take us over for a while. We must find answers to the questions just posed. The ritual of the *Shofar*, the apple and honey, *Tashlich* (casting of our sins), the overall whiteness of the Shul, the fasting of *Yom Kippur*, the haunting melody of *Kol Nidrei*, the emotional charging of the prayer *unetaneh tokef* – all these direct us, or should direct us, to answer the image in the mirror: “‘Yes, I’ll change that image, because I don’t really like what I see of **ME**.”

“So,” answers the image in the mirror, “Have you made your decisions for change? In that case, smile and rejoice.” Why rejoice? Because the solemnity of the High Holydays gives way to *Sukkot*, the Festival of ‘Joy’, as the prayers have it. Rejoice in the *Sukkah*, the *Lulav* and *Etrog*, reflect finally again on *Hoshana Rabbah*, and give way to full rejoicing with *Simchat Torah*. Rejoice? *Sukkot* is a harvest festival, but not only in an agricultural sense. *Sukkot* as it finishes is also the harvest of the outcome of our thoughts, of our self-searching over the High Holydays.

Has it been a good harvest for you? Only time will tell as the year moves on.

*Bernd Koschland*

## **Shalom lach, Bertha**

Bertha Leverton has gone on Alijah. The much loved and highly respected founder of the reunion of Kindertransport and our present organisation of KT/AJR has moved, and emigrated to Israel. At the age of 87, she has found the strength and the resolution to make Alijah and to join her younger daughter, Miri and family at Kadumim, one of the Stachim. If anybody deserves many years of healthy and happy retirement, it must be Bertha.

With great determination Bertha envisaged, organised and inspired the first reunion in Harrow, in 1988, attended by over 1,000 people, a meeting and a celebration which lasted several days. It was graced by the presence of many Jewish and non-Jewish dignitaries, Rabbis, politicians and historians. Fifty years after the dramatic events of 1938/39, Kindertransportees were brought together, with ghosts of the past appearing in front of them, associations rediscovered, and friendships renewed, an unforgettable experience.

This was followed in 1994 by a beautifully organised further reunion in Jerusalem, and no-one who took part will forget the emotional visit to Yad Vashem, the many outings and excursions in Israel, the lectures and debates.

Then came, billed as the last reunion, the largest of them in the Logan Hall in London. No opportunities were missed and no details unattended, with films, debates and many moving ceremonies, and concluded with a tremendous concert.

Was it the last reunion? Of course not. Once again the indefatigable Bertha awakened the enthusiasm of her friends and colleagues to have one more reunion in 2008, to celebrate our survival in the UK after 70 years. It was at the Jewish Free School in London. It was her idea, it looked formidable, but she insisted and it took place and was honoured by the presence of His Royal Highness, Te Prince of Wales.

Much more was done by Bertha throughout these years. She of course had her helpers and committees, but the inspiration and the leadership was hers. Mind you, she is no shrinking violet, and is proud to be a fully paid up member of the awkward squad but mostly what she said went, and she was the unquestioned moving spirit of it all. We love her like a sister.

To use her own words “It is hard to credit that before 1988 hardly anyone had heard of us, or was the least bit interested in Kindertransport. Yet today, we are researched, filmed, and written about and recognised as part of British history”.

Three years ago, Bertha was most deservedly decorated with the MBE by Her Majesty the Queen, at Buckingham Palace. We hope to see Bertha again, but in the meantime wish her a thousand pleasant memories of what she achieved, and a healthy, happy and long retirement.

*HH*

## Outstanding Contribution

### Erich Reich

There are not many people who can claim to have invented a new form of fundraising, but Erich Reich is of them. Over the past 17 years his charity challenge events have involved 30,000 participants and raised £50m.



one

When Erich Reich organised his first charity bike ride in Israel in 1992 he lacked two important things – participants, and bikes.

in

But Erich was certainly not lacking in enthusiasm, and set out to find 50 people willing to cycle a 400km route over five days for good causes.

His optimism paid off. In total 230 people signed up for his first event – leaving Erich with the slightly different, and more enjoyable, challenge of finding enough bikes and beds for all the participants.

All went well and in total £600,000 was raised for the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society and Ravenswood, a Jewish home for the disabled. Unsurprisingly, when other charities learned of the concept they began approaching Classic Tours for ideas.

Now – 17 years later – challenge events are a part of thousands of charities' fundraising plans and Classic Tours alone has helped raise £50m. And Erich's creative mind and innovative ideas have also broadened the challenge horizon, with the portfolio including horse treks, motorbike rides, car rallies, camel treks and more recently abseil events.

Classic Tours now operates more than 100 events each year, including bespoke challenges for specific charities, consortiums with groups of charities and open challenges available for anyone to join.

The fundraising benefit of events is matched by the ability to highlight causes and create a closer bond between participants and charities.

Professional Fundraiser Magazine Judge Michael Naidu said: "I've done two Classic Tours bike rides and they are an incredibly slick operation.

"The sector would be a lot worse off if we didn't have the ability to challenge ourselves. There's no way the internally-focused charity sector would put the time into trying to make this kind of thing work.

"To get 200 people to turn up for your first bike ride when you haven't got 200 bikes and you still make it happen, that's the kind of ingenuity that the sector needs. And they are still innovating now. They've not just stuck with the old bike-riding thing, there's so many different things they've turned their hand to."

In addition to Erich's role at Classic Tours he is currently chairman of the Kindertransport Committee, member of the A.J.R Management Committee and heavily involved with World Jewish Relief in raising the funds for the Liverpool St Station Kindertransport Monument.

*PF* Judge Andrew Scadding said: “Mr Reich has invented an entirely new form of fundraising – and not many people do that. His challenge events have benefited tens of thousands of people and involved tens of thousands more. It’s been a very far-reaching and successful innovation and I think that deserves recognition.

Erich, who is 74-years-old, said: “I am absolutely honoured and delighted to receive this award. “I came here as a four-year-old after we lost our parents in the holocaust, and I expect instinctively I am giving back to the country that basically saved me. I enjoy doing it.”

---

## **Book Review**

### **Throw your Feet over your Shoulders *Beyond the Kindertransport***

Frieda Stolzberg Korobkin, Devora 2008, illustrated

The author was born in Vienna and concludes her life story In Los Angeles, married to Lenny, an Attorney. She vividly paints the picture of life in Vienna as seen through the eyes of a six year old girl. We are taken into the family circle, an orthodox circle, that suffered under the brutality of the Nazi regime in the town. Eventually with the help of the then young Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld, she left home with his support to make her way to England. Her siblings also came and the book contains transcripts of letters exchanged between them over a period. She stayed with a family in the East End, who became her guardians, but eventually was evacuated. During this period, she moved a couple of times to different foster homes. After a while she joined her brother in a hostel in Cardiff from which she moved to Shefford, home of the Jewish Secondary School under the aegis of Rabbi Schonfeld. The head was Dr Judith Grunfeld, known to pupils as the ‘Queen.’ When Shefford closed down, she moved to the Woodberry Down Hostel in North London. Eventually she took herself to Israel where she worked and after a couple of years returned to London, where she worked. She was encouraged by her employer to join the firm in New York. Eventually she married and settled in Los Angeles.

Like many of us Kinder, she did not see her parents again, only to learn of their deaths at the hands of the Nazis; they and many others from Vienna were found in a mass grave in Yugoslavia and eventually were buried in Vienna, which she visited to see that re-burial spot. Throughout her early period in England she retained her strong attachment to Orthodoxy, which in later life never wavered.

Her tale is a poignant one, with which many a Kind can empathise with, having followed similar path patterns. The author is very open in her observations about family, friends and foster parents. Her attachment to Rabbi Dr Schonfeld as a father figure features strongly and as such is a valuable addition to the biographical material about him, as seen through the eyes of a young person.

The final pages take the reader to London again, this time for the 1999 KT Reunion, which she attended with two sons. It is interesting, I should say moving, to read her account of the reunion and its various speakers as set down in the programme of the Reunion. I fully concur with her statement that after the memorial Prayer and Kaddish recited by all there were no dry eyes – I, who was leading it, had to fight back my emotions and my own tears. Of the many biographies of Kinder, this one is one of the best and is difficult to put down, I highly recommend it.

*Bernd*

## NEW BOOKS

*Sunday's Child*, autobiography, Leslie Baruch Brent. See review in June 2009 issue of *AJR Journal*.

*Turning the Kay* by Lotte Kramer.

*My Darling Diary – Volume 111* by Ingrid Jacoby

## SEARCH NOTICES

**Erika and Elsa**, who were sisters, left their home in Vienna and came to Britain on the Kindertransport and came to live with my parents. My father was head teacher of Cotgrave Primary School and we lived in the School House. I was born in January 1939 and we left Cotgrave in 1942 so I have only the haziest memories of them. From their photographs, copies below, they would have been 12 and 14 or thereabouts. Erika is the one wearing spectacles. I know from my parents, who both died many years ago, that they were lovely girls, and I would very much like to trace them. Unfortunately I do not know their surname. Please contact Christine Jackson (née Riley) 110 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxford, OX3 1LU email: [christinejack34@hotmail.com](mailto:christinejack34@hotmail.com). Tel: 01865 873246.



**Are there any kinder** who arrived at Harwich on 16 March 1939, then the hostel in Woburn Road, Croydon. At outbreak of war evacuated to Horsham, Sussex. If interested to communicate, contact [richard.levi@ukgateway.net](mailto:richard.levi@ukgateway.net)

**Dr S. Karly Kehoe of the UHI Centre for History in Dornoch** would like anyone who was part of the Kindertransport and who lived in Scotland, particularly the Highland region, during the war years, to get in touch. She is developing a course entitled The Highlands at War, 1913-1945, and wants to ensure that the Jewish experience is included. Oral history and any other information will be most welcome. She can be contacted directly at [karly.kehoe@thurso.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:karly.kehoe@thurso.uhi.ac.uk) or 01847 889 621.

**Rolf Penzias** would like to hear from anyone who stayed in the hostel in Liverpool (19 Linnet Lane) in 1939. Please contact on 0208 505 1314 [penziasrolf@aol.com](mailto:penziasrolf@aol.com).

My dad **Kurt Beckhardt** came with a Kindertransport from Wiesbaden, Germany. He was a passenger on the "Europa" from Bremerhaven to Southampton on June 13th 1939. From there he was brought to a camp at Barham near Claydon (Suffolk) where he and many other boys stayed until the Battle of Britain began. Kurt then was brought first to Wallingford Farm Training Colony in Oxfordshire and a few weeks later to Sheffield. There he lived in a hostel at 7 Priory Place that was hit during Sheffield Blitz. The boys moved to the Great Synagogue at Wilson Road and then to a hostel that was run by a Mr. Robertson, a conscientious objector and member of the Peace Pledge Union. Kurt and his companions were taught at Pomona Street Elementary School, later they did war work at Gordon Tool Ltd. in Sheffield.

My dad, who returned to Germany in 1950 although he would have liked to stay in England, still remembers some of the names of the boys who were with him: Max Fuss from Vienna, Arthur Rosenbach from Kassel and Alfred Baumwollspinner from Hamburg. As I am writing a book (a kind of a documentary novel) on our family's history it would be extremely helpful if someone remembers either persons who knew my dad or stories about what happened in Barham or Sheffield at that time. Please contact [Lorenz.Beckhardt@WDR.DE](mailto:Lorenz.Beckhardt@WDR.DE)

**I arrived in England on the transport from Germany on 23 August 1939.** I would love to hear from anyone who was on that transport. My date of birth is 17 September 1934 and my name was formerly **Felsenfeld**. Please call Peppi Bennett on 01488 71718.

Searching for **Ruth Littman** who left Hamburg, Germany, 1938 on the Kindertransport and went with Hilde and Edith Simon to Harrogate, Yorkshire. Later she went to London to meet up with her mother, became a nurse and was never heard of again. Please contact Ruth Heinemann, who now lives in Florida, USA via Andrea at the AJR.



**1944 H Widawski**

**now John Pierce Aged 19**

**Berlin 1935 Aged 10**

John Pierce contacted the AJR after he saw himself in the film *Into the Arms of Strangers*. John arrived in Harwich on the 2 December 1938 aged 13 and stayed at the Dovercourt Camp. He stayed in the hostel until he was 16. All the boys in the hostel were interned except for him because he was stateless and his father was Polish.

John took the train to London and joined the Polish M.N. He went through the war serving on a ship called SS. Wilno sailing the Atlantic and taking part in the liberation of Europe on

D Day 6 June 1944.

He has had a very interesting life, and up till now he has had no contact with anyone from all those years ago. He lives in Bognor Regis with his wife, having raised two sons and two daughters, and now has an even larger family with 13 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren!

He has had a very interesting life and has now joined the AJR/KT to keep in touch with what is going on. If anyone remembers him please contact Andrea at the AJR and I will put you in touch.

---

## **Kindertransport Survey completed**

### **Going Public**

The ambitious project to create an archive and a database of the Kindertransportees' experience, and the historic act of rescue of 1938/39 is now complete. Much effort has been put in over recent months to improve many details of the statistics, to ensure the maximum integrity of the completed database, which is run on Microsoft Excel. We are now ready to go public.

The database can now be viewed in the Kindertransport section of the AJR website alongside a full description of the project at [www.AJR.org.uk/kindertransport](http://www.AJR.org.uk/kindertransport)

In order to view the database, you must have the Microsoft programme Excel or another spreadsheet programme allowing Excel to be opened on your computer.

(To explain, it is simply too expensive to create and send printed versions of the database, as it is so extensive with thousands of facts, and we live in the electronic, if cold, era)

We are hoping that those of you who do download the database will send us your comments and any feedback on possible errors, before end November 2009, after which the database will be made generally available to historians, research students, libraries and seats of learning.

### **Preserving the survey forms**

a. The scanning to digital file of all the forms we received, both the Main forms as well as the Supplementary ones, has been completed in order to preserve this material and make it as widely available as possible.

b. The scanning covered all aspects of the survey, every page, including all the anecdotal additions supplied by well over half the respondents.

c. This mammoth task, involving approximately 12000 pages was generously completed, totally free of charge, by a specialist document management company, ROLACE of Melton Mowbray, Bucks. See also acknowledgements below.

d. The original forms are now safely stored at the Wiener Library, and maintained for posterity, whilst the scanned records will be kept by the AJR and KT/AJR, with every word preserved.

### **Future Plans**

- a. Further work on the ancillary anecdotal information, sent with the questionnaires is being carried out, with the objective of making this material searchable. This will take time and cost money, but will reveal much more of the story of those days, now many years ago, for the benefit of historical knowledge.
- b. When funds or donor generosity permit, we hope to make available a version of the database that can be queried and analysed online.

### **Thanks and acknowledgements**

First and foremost, our highest appreciation is due to one and all of the erstwhile Kinder, wherever in the world, who have kindly and diligently worked with us by completing and returning the questionnaires. This was a great effort, and without your input, there would be no archive. Many thanks.

- a. It was my privilege to lead the team who did the work, and I wish to acknowledge in particular the following:
  - Bertha Leverton, who drafted the first attempt of the successful questionnaire,
  - Ronald Channing who gave unstinting support throughout the whole progress of the project,
  - Frances Williams, a PhD student at Edinburgh University, who was engaged in creating and completing the digitising of the database,
  - Kurt Taussig who spent many, many hours in editing the database
  - Tom Heinersdorff for all his help and computer expertise and for his unstinting efforts and many hours of devotion generously given.
  - The AJR Trustees for granting the necessary funding
  - All others who helped in supporting the successful outcome of the archive

### **Rolace**

b. The enormous task of scanning 12000 pages of original survey forms and ancillary material we received was most generously donated by a specialist document management company, Rolace of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. We would like to express our particular gratitude to Carole Lancaster, Managing Director of Rolace, and Karen Puryer, the Production Manager, because they recognized the importance of the historic event of the Kindertransport and the saving of our lives, and of preserving the record of the contribution we have made to our society. Rolace paid special attention to the data protection issues and to document assembly, so that the digital versions protect the identity of survey respondents and the originals were correctly reassembled. We elected not to take advantage of Rolace's Secure Document Shredding service, because of the historic relevance of the originals.

We hope you will find the database interesting. It is the first time, to our knowledge, that a statistical database with so much detail of what is now an important part of UK history and holocaust knowledge has been attempted.

Hermann Hirschberger

***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.***