

The JC

Kindertransport sculpture arrives at Liverpool Street

TWO DAYS before the outbreak of war in September 1939, 10-year-old Frank Meisler arrived at London's Liverpool Street Station with 15 other Jewish children from his home town of Danzig. They were part of the Kindertransport,

BY JENNI FRAZER

bringing more than 10,000 children from Austria, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia to start new lives in Britain.

Sixty-seven years on, Meisler — now an internationally famous artist and sculptor — returned to Liverpool Street to put the finishing touches to his bronze sculpture, commissioned by World Jewish Relief and the Association of Jewish

Refugees as a tribute to Britain for taking in the children. The sculpture is surrounded by 16 milestones, each bearing the name of a city from which the Kinder departed.

Meisler, who emigrated to Israel in 1960, hailed from a "not very religious family" in Danzig. Kristallnacht, when the Nazis burned synagogues in November 1938, convinced his parents that their only child had to leave the country.

"My father, who was a real Francophile, was certain that France would defeat Germany, and since he didn't want my schooling interrupted, the plan was that I was to go and stay in England until the French had beaten the Germans and then I could return home," he told the JC.

"My mother, who came from a Sephardi family of traders who had settled in Danzig, was much more pessimistic."

As it happened, two of Meisler's aunts and his grandmother were already living in London when he arrived, so — unlike many Kinder — he stayed with family until joining the air force when he was 16.

Within days of his leaving Germany, his parents were deported to the Warsaw Ghetto. For a time they were able to send him Red Cross postcards via some relations in still-neutral Lithuania, "but after I received three or four cards, they stopped."

The poignant five-figure sculpture,

showing the children and their suitcases and a fragment of train track, sits in the concourse of Liverpool Street Station. The fact that it will be passed daily by busy commuters pleases the artist. "The people who saved us were for the most part anonymous. They had the capacity to reach out to Jewish children and overcome intolerance [and] perhaps the same goes for today's commuters."

An earlier sculpture by Flor Kent on the same site, titled "For the Child," was unveiled in September 2003 but was controversially removed by World Jewish Relief last December after wartime artefacts inside a glass case next to the installation began to decay. Mrs Kent attempted unsuccessfully to summon WJR to a Beth Din hearing in April.



Photo: Vicky Alhadef

Frank Meisler's sculpture which was unveiled this week at Liverpool Street Station