

KINDERTRANSPORT NEWSLETTER

AJR Special Interest Section

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Editor: Bertha Leverton

Chairman:
Hermann Hirschberger

Dear Kinder/Friends

We had a very nice Chanukah party, which all 115 of us enjoyed very much, thanks to Eva Hirschberger, who obtained the many good prizes which made £181 on the raffle. I am sorry that some of you left earlier than expected and did not stay for doughnuts and tea and left without your nice Chanukah gifts. I have them in my place and you can collect them after arranging with me.

Sorry to tell you that Erich Reich, our Treasurer, had his briefcase stolen on 12 December 2003 AFTER I handed him the second batch of cheques for about 50 people plus many video cheques. Will you please check your statements and kindly send me a new cheque for the lost ones. Thank you. Any received LATER THAN 12 DECEMBER are safe; they had not been banked yet. Please wait until you see your February statement when you will see a complete overview of payments banked.

I must say I am very disappointed by the lack of orders for the SUITCASE video. To get them at the low price of £5.50 + post 80p each I had to contract for 200 and I still have 100 in my small flat waiting for you.

Alfred Buechler (without charging us) spent a great deal of time and money on it and you must realise that when he takes a video as he hopes to, for the Barmitzvah celebrations, which will probably be the last major function we will organise, I will NOT order any for distribution in quantity, which will make them much more expensive.

As for the BARMITZVAH ITSELF, organising such an event takes months of planning. Without a realistic idea of numbers I cannot be expected to go ahead. The synagogue in Stanmore has about 350 seats for a Lunch function but more in the synagogue itself if you only wish to watch. I cannot cope with last minute rushes. Though my arithmetic is not top notch, I reckon that the forward payment of £12.50 (WHICH WILL CERTAINLY NOT COVER ALL THE COSTS INVOLVED AND HAS A REPAYMENT PLEDGE FOR 8 DAYS NOTICE) will not cost you more than about 35p in lost interest charges if you pay early. £12.50 at 4% for three months will save me a big headache. I intend to buy ALL PRESENTATION GIFTS during Pesach in Israel and anyone not booked in by 1 April MIGHT BE LEFT OUT.

I have taken note of several complaints by our ladies (KINDER ONLY TO APPLY FOR THIS) that you would like a BATMITZVAH also. You will have one, although it is not as important as for men. WE ARE NOT EQUAL IN THAT RESPECT. We have NO ANCIENT LAW DEMANDING BRIT' OR REDEMPTION OF THE FIRST BORN. NOR ARE WE OBLIGED TO PRAY 3 TIMES A DAY OR LAY TEFILLIN.

In Jewish law a woman has to observe (apart from kashrut) only 3 things. The first does not apply to anyone not of childbearing age. The second is taking Challa (a small portion of

dough to burn or destroy on baking challa). The kosher baker does that for us. The third is to light candles on Shabbat/yomtov. So, please girls, book in for a wonderful address by our Rabbi and an interesting talk at lunch by Prof. of Judaica studies Judith Romney-Wegner from New York and I shall be very happy to order for those of you to undertake this mitzvah, a lovely pair of small candlesticks on a tray made of multi-coloured glass by a known Israeli artist, who hopes to get plenty of orders. Each pair is individually handcrafted and no two are exactly alike. You may of course just come and join in the festivities as long as we have seating in the hall.

We do want to keep the ticket cost at £12.50, which all can afford. We had two very generous donations towards the Bar Mitzvah presentations from two Kinder. But, as we are now completely without an income, we will need more funding for presentations for the ladies. Any donations should be made payable to KT Publications and will be acknowledged. Most important of all is your early booking and stating if you want to be a Bar or Bat Mitzvah participant. I myself and my daughters never had a Bat Mitzvah and I intend to be a Bat Mitzvah girl myself (my granddaughters did) and I do light my candles. So those of you who already observe this please don't refrain from joining in; a spare pair of candlesticks is always useful.

I know that a lot, but not all of you, are aware that I have an eye complaint called MD, which makes it necessary for me to use a reading machine with a good light and magnification. I can manage OK, but cannot use a keyboard and hence not type. Handwritten letters are difficult for me to decipher or write, so I do ALL MY CORRESPONDENCE BY PHONE.

So if you want a personal reply, I phone all over the world at the cheaper rate in the evening, PLEASE ENCLOSE YOUR PHONE NUMBER. Also another request. When you sign your letters PLEASE put your full first and second names. Also on your phone messages you'd be surprised how many Peters, Johns, Erichs, Bettys, Ruths, Evas etc we have among the Kinder. Many thanks and awaiting your bookings by return. With all best wishes for Purim.

They died - I survived!

My mother was the finest, kindest person you can imagine. As a child I was very lucky! In my old age I'm thinking deeper, it seems; maybe it will help my sanity.

Little did I realise on that fateful night when I said my good-byes at the concourse of the Wiener Westbahnhof, that I'd never see my poor parents again! All I knew was that new vistas were before me, when as an eleven-year-old boy I caught the Kindertransport in mid-January 1939 from Vienna. I was an only child, very likely spoiled, and now I was on my way to England. After having spent months in 1938 running around quite alone from one Govt. office to the other in Vienna, so that I could also go and apply for my passport at the end, arriving at the Prinz Strasse in the snow at an unearthly hour in the morning, I experienced a miracle which made it possible for me to get into the building in mid-morning (without queuing for a week or longer with all the others who stood outside shivering), run up the staircase and get past every one of the 21 examining tables, and successfully get my passport application completed! Later I returned to collect this document, a linen-bound book which bears my photo. My mother was so amazed that I'd managed it, neither she nor Frau Professor Tedesco, for whom she was cleaning to get enough for us to eat, could believe what I, an 11-year-old, had achieved. Our small sweetshop had been stolen from us shortly after the Anschluss, and my father was barred from teaching his 'students'. He, now suffering a massive nervous breakdown, which completely incapacitated him! I devoured the wonderful books of Frau Prof. Tedesco's extensive library in any spare moments; her flat was near ours at the Nussdorferstr./Alserbachstr. Junction, I think it was in the Sechsch. Gasse. I wonder what became of that kind, nice lady. Our own small flat was No 73

Liechtensteinstrasse, door 5. That was just round the corner from the Alserbachstrasse, where, in the Markthalle I often went to buy a little food as I looked the least Jewish of our family, and surreptitiously used my chromium swastika, the wearing of which became necessary to do any sort of shopping. My bicycle took me all over the city to get my various papers during that autumn. The restrictions on cycling had been lifted for children (in fact I had a permit from the police for which I had passed the test). Under Hitler and Vienna traffic had all changed from left to right as in the Reich. We had Schillings **and** Marks and for a time could use either!

Well, my Kindertransport train sped through the night, and when we neared the German/Dutch frontier the Nazis came and frightened all the children by shouting that if anyone was caught with valuables in the coming search the entire train would be returned to Vienna. There was a lot of crying from the children, but we rolled over the frontier without any kind of search at all. I could have carried anything. Finally, after a few more adventures I reached my destination in Wiltshire, on a huge farm, the Bruderhof! It was near Ashton Keynes, not far from Swindon. I was looked after very well, but in a simple fashion, at this religious Christian brotherhood community until January 1942, that is exactly 2 years. While I was safe in England, my poor parents were shunted around various unsatisfactory addresses in Vienna and somehow survived until 22 September 1942. The last address was Vienna II, Raimundgasse 4/4. Of course I never knew that at the time. Early in the morning of 22 September 1942 they were rudely woken and made to sign the Vermögens-Verzeichnis (which was a declaration of any money they possessed! Of course they had none!) and forced like cattle into trucks at a goods station, without food or water on the long journey to Minsk. It was the last fateful trip of their haunted lives, where many thousands of others had gone before them and others followed to their deaths on arrival near Minsk. These death trains were re-commenced soon after the Wannsee Conference in Germany, where Reinhard Heydrich was prominent and Hitler's Final Solution for the Jews was plotted. On 6 May 1942 a deportation train with over 990 Jewish men, women and children left the Vienna Aspang rail station for Minsk. The executions were carried out a few KM from Maly Trostinec, a former Communist farming commune, in the pine forests, where pits were ready dug for their arrival. Later, when gas was available, the murders were carried out in the wagons. Before I received this detailed report, I'd never even heard of Maly Trostinec, and hardly anybody I have spoken to had either! Dozens of regular trainloads followed in 1942 and all the Jews who were still in Vienna became victims. I think it was about 90,000 who went to Minsk that year, some also from other cities in Europe!

There are no records of any survivors, everything seems to have been hushed up until now. The previous reports I received 30 or 40 years ago from officialdom in Vienna gave a completely different version of my parents' fate.

Having received very many documents in photocopy format from Vienna, I am now able to form a picture of the truth, and this has made me doubly sad and caused me sleepless nights once again.

Having now reached over 75 years, I wonder if, as a child, I could have done anything to persuade my parents to try to save themselves. In 1938/39 this would still have been possible! It was very hard to find a safe haven, and I only know of Shanghai, which took almost anybody who could reach it. Some did of course manage it, but my father was impossible to move, and I'm sorry to say deluded himself that things would be alright!

As you will have seen, I was very lucky; also I was determined to help myself at 11 years of age. And I've had the good luck to find another good woman, who for the last 50 years has helped and supported me in marriage, without whom God knows what would have become of me! We also have a wonderful family, which is a great comfort.

*Alfred Terry
(Tery from Vienna)*

THE LEGEND OF THE JEWISH BRIGADE

On 20 September 1944 the British War Office issued an announcement, which was hailed by the entire Jewish people, namely, the formation of the Jewish Infantry brigade, which was followed by an intensive training programme. After that, the brigade was to be dispatched to the theatre of war.

On 28 September 1944, Winston Churchill, then Prime Minister, gave his full support to the idea: It seems to me appropriate that a special unit of that race which has suffered indescribable torments from the Nazis should be represented as a distinct formation amongst the allied forces for the final overthrow of Nazi Germany.

The bulk of volunteers came from Palestine and approximately 100 were from England. And this is where our story begins:

A phone call from Bill Oakfield, informing me that he was approached through e-mail, by a film team researching the part the Jewish Brigade played during the war. As Bill and I were members of the Brigade, he asked me to take part in this interview. Saturday 15 February 2003 we met at Bill and Trudie's flat, and one could immediately detect the professionalism of the three delightful young people who made up the film crew. Of course the most intimate job, i.e. the actual interview, was left to Susanne. Her skill was something to remember; she already had met two or three ex-Brigade veterans and had a very good picture of their activities. Bill first spoke about his activities in the brigade and later as a translator at the Nuremberg trials. Then I was interviewed about my experiences on active service, and contact with Germans as well as prisoners of war.

All this time, the two-man crew was filming away, and this film will eventually be show on Channel 127 ARTE. However, the message I would like to convey to Susanne is that the Jewish Infantry Brigade consisted of 6,000 volunteers, every soldier motivated by a sense of purpose and determination and mindful that it was the first Jewish fighting unit which after 2,000 years fought again under the Jewish flag.

If Susanne, through her interviews, can portray that atmosphere and uniqueness of the Jewish Brigade in her film, she will indeed have succeeded in producing an important document. Bill and I would like to feel that we have contributed to that success.

Philip Engelberg

SEARCH NOTICES

Would the person who was searching for information on INA NOTHMAN either contact Andrea at the AJR office on 020 8385 3070 as a short letter and photograph have been sent in by Mrs Edwards.

Micha Fuhrmann of Haifa is trying to locate his cousin Kaethe David, born Berlin 12 October 1926, who came to Teddington via KT on 20 June 1939. Her parents were Hilda and Willi David. Any information email: michaf@012.net.il

LETTERS

Dear Bertha – Thank you for posting a copy of your book *I Came Alone*, which arrived this morning, and I look forward to reading all the stories.

When I read the article in *My Weekly* dated 4 October 2003 it brought back memories of my life in the fifties working in Hull as a fashion buyer for Blooms of Brook Street.

My boss and good friend the late Phillip Bloom, a member of the Hebrew Board of Guardians, was very proud of the watch presented to him in memory of the night he became the father of 25 children; from that I assume 25 refugee children came to Hull.

I can remember two of those children whose lives were so very different. Bertha was placed with a very affluent Jewish family and as such was very well cared for. The other was Bella Topper who did not fair so well – she was placed with a non-Jewish family in East Hull and had a lot of problems – the last I heard of her was when I went with Phillip Bloom to meet her in Scarborough, where she was living in a council flat. I have no idea what took her to Scarborough but I understood she was having problems because she wanted to get married and for some reason could not get permission – that was in the mid-fifties.

Several years ago I read an article in the local press about the Kindertransportation by a Jack Lennards. I telephoned him to ask if he had any information on Bella Topper – he was unable to help – but he did keep in touch – he rang me several times and thought maybe I did not have her surname correct!

The Bloom family had come to Hull as Polish immigrants, the father being a ‘cap maker’ – the firm grew from that into furs, fashions and fabrics (no hats), sadly it no longer exists.

I was homeless myself when I first went to work for the firm – living with a friend’s family out of one tiny suitcase! The war came and destroyed us as a family, but we all survived including my father, who was in the army a regular soldier – but life was never the same. There must be many untold stories like mine of how the war destroyed lives – 8 years ago I started researching the lives of my ancestors but recently have devoted more time to putting down on paper my own memories of my life and that of my own generation – before it is lost in time. Writing this has brought back happy memories of chopped liver, salt beef, etc. and all the lovely Jewish food I enjoyed in the fifties on my trips to London. Best wishes.

Dorothy Smith

Dear Bertha – Reading about the kind Dutch people who looked after Kinder passing through Holland on their way to the UK (Newsletter, Nov/Dec 2003), I was reminded of the wonderfully kind people from the Jewish community in Hamburg, who looked after us so splendidly before embarking on an American ocean liner on our way to Southampton.

It is so sad to think that none of them may have survived what followed, but they will always be in my thoughts and prayers.

*R Goldberg
Birmingham*

Dear family and friends – We have sorely missed being in contact with many of you, but in 2003 health problems have taken up much of our time. If we have neglected to return a phone call or send a birthday card, we hope you will understand and keep trying to reach us. We wish Peace, Health and Happiness to all in 2004.

*Kurt and Connie Fuchel
USA*

Dear Bertha – It is my ambition to be able to ski on my 80th birthday, 23 February 2004. Having skied since my 12th birthday, this would make a thrilling FINALE to 68 years on the slopes. I seek your support to mark this occasion to raise funds for three charities with which I am associated, namely: **BRITISH LIMBLESS EX-SERVICE MEN’S ASSOCIATION, WORLD JEWISH RELIEF AND PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPICE.**

I am delighted to have been invited by the British Limbless Ex-Service Men’s association to ski on the glaciers of the OETZTAL on my birthday, with MY GROUP OF AMPUTEES. As their former Instructor in Chief, for 12 years, I helped to train and rehabilitate these courageous young men. Ingrid and I were both privileged to be involved in this annual event.

I am sure that you would like to be associated and sponsor this event, not per mile, height of mountain or steepness of slope, but simply to encourage an OLD SKIBOB INSTRUCTOR TO SKIBOB ONCE MORE WITH HIS BOYS and support my 3 special charities. Your contribution would make a wonderful birthday present. Best regards.

Henry M Wuga MBE

Cheques to WUGA CHARITIES A/C please email wuga@onetel.net.uk

Dear Bertha – Kindertransport talk at Museum of London

Many thanks for agreeing to speak at the Museum of London on Friday 13 February, I am delighted that you are able to do this. The talk will be in our Lecture Theatre and there is likely to be around 100 or so people there. The talk will be at 1.10pm and should last for 50 minutes, including 10 minutes for questions. I will contact you nearer the time about practical arrangements, but you will be able to show slides, video, DVD etc if you wish

For your information, here is the text we are putting in our events leaflet – I hope this is OK but if you would like to change any of it please let me know asap.

Memories of the Kindertransport – *Fri 13 Feb, 1.10 (50 mins)*

Just before the outbreak of World War II 10,000 Jewish and other children in lands held by Nazi Germany were saved from the horrors of the concentration camps and transported to Britain to begin a new life with foster parents. Join one of the children, Bertha Leverton, and hear her remarkable and moving story.

Frazer Swift – Deputy Head of Access & Learning – Museum of London

Dear Bertha – I was very pleased to received the November/December Newsletter including the insert inviting applications for an adult Barmitzvah ceremony at the Stanmore and Canons Park United Synagogue. This is highly commendable and I hope many Kinder who (unlike me) missed out on their Barmitzvah at the age of thirteen will take advantage of it.

However, since a large proportion of Kinder do not come from an Orthodox background and are not Orthodox, they should know that similar facilities are offered by many, if not all, Progressive (Reform and Liberal) synagogues, and not only for men but for women (Batmitzvah) as well. Anybody interested is welcome to get in touch with me.

Rabbi John D Rayner

e-mail: jdrayner@waitrose.com

Dear Bertha – With reference to the letter from Liesl Silverstone, *AJR Journal* Jan 04, regarding the forthcoming Barmitzvah ceremony for Kinder who missed out, Ms Silverstone asked what about the girls and alleges prejudice and self-imposed sexism.

In Judaism men and women are equal but have different roles to play. There are physical differences and boys require circumcision. For boys a Barmitzvah is obligatory, but a Batmitzvah is a newish custom observed by only a few, and even amongst the strictly orthodox most girls do not have a Batmitzvah ceremony.

Women are not obliged to observe commandments, which must be performed at a fixed time, as they are occupied with feeding babies and attending to small children. Would Ms Silverstone wish to attend synagogue every weekday morning and put on Tallit and Tefillin?

I am now reading the book I bought of the Reunion 1999 and find it most excellent in print, layout and, of course, content. I think that it will be a historic treasure in years to come.

Henry Schragenheim

Extract from a letter by Elisabeth Reinhuber

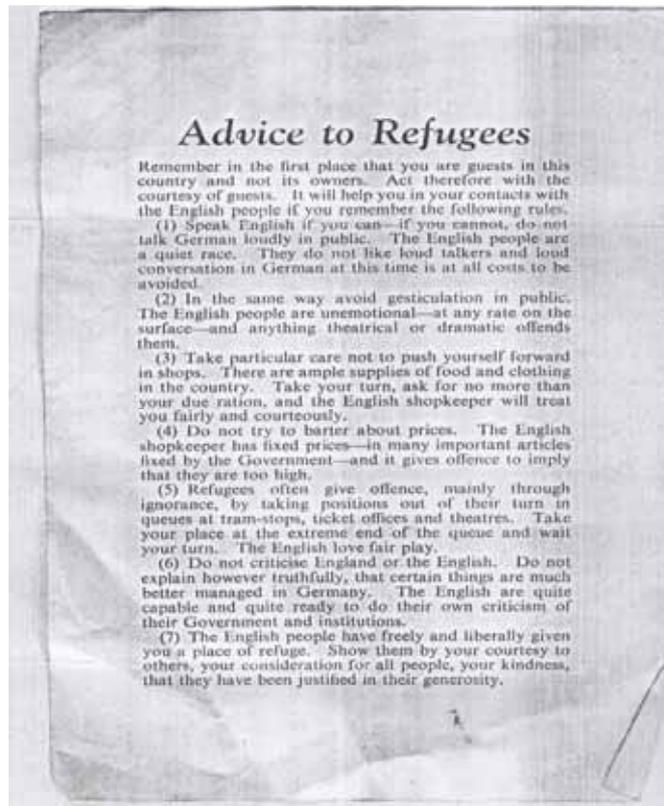
Dear Bertha – I was interested in the article about Anna Essinger. An old, old friend of ours, Miss Adelheid Keim, born about 1900, died a few years ago aged 93. She was Anna Essinger's secretary for a time while the school was still in Kent. Adelheid was a very forceful personality in

a ladylike way (her father had been a general: she never let us forget it and she tried always to improve my children's table manners). She was not Jewish, not even in part, and had followed a Jewish boy (man)-friend, a solicitor from Darmstadt, to England – but sadly nothing came of it. He later went to the US. She remained single, worked for the Americans in Germany after the war and was good at providing my parents with extra food as she could shop in the army stores. She often told us of Anna E.; she admired her, but I can imagine these two ladies having their differences, and Adelheid, of course, was only the assistant. Incidentally, she always thought (hoped?) her name derived from Chaim, and during the Nazi period, while still in Germany, she tried to persuade her family that they were really Jewish and that their ancestors had been compulsorily baptised (this happened in many villages); you can imagine how aghast they were - highranking Prussian officers, at a time when people were trying to prove that they were NOT Jewish or were illegitimate. I wonder whether Hans Meyer would remember a rather goodlooking, tall young woman who worked in Anna E's office??

ER

Would the author of a letter on green notepaper starting 'I read so many reminiscences of our unforgettable exodus in your much appreciated Newsletter that I thought I might add some of mine' please make themselves known to Andrea, as the letter was unsigned.

●●●



Do you remember this gem which was given to us at Dovercourt on our arrival



*Sent in by Sonia Broadley (nee Bauch) – her father was Erich Bauch (second from left) at
Gwrych Castle, Abergele
Were any of our readers at Gwrych Castle with him?*

RUCKSACK

(In Glass Suitcase)

**Rucksack, you have served me well 60 years, and lots to tell
Understanding our travel, plenty mysteries to unravel.
Cologne, Holland, Hook to Harwich, Liverpool Street Station we arrived.
Kindertransport, 10,000 children all survived.
School, next week from 9 to 5, thanks to Britain, were alive.
Artists, Professors and Musicians
Craftsmen, Soldiers, Politicians
Knowledge, Books and Receptions teaching future generations.**

Lore Heinemann (née Benjamin)

NEWS

***Lifesaving Letters* - a new book by Milena Roth
University of Washington Press, 2003
ISBN 0-295-98377-9
Available in most bookshops.**

NOTICES:

The **Memorial Stone** for David Jedwab will be consecrated at Waltham Abbey on Sunday 15 February 2004 at 10.30am.

Received by Bertha from America: the annual Nurnberg Newsletter from Frank Harris. Anyone interested may borrow it.

Henry Mayer from Florida, USA would like to let his friends in the UK know that he will be visiting during May and will be attending the KT Lunch on 10 May.

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80th Birthday Congratulations

Ernst Fraenkel OBE retired as Chairman of the Wiener Library on the occasion of his 80th Birthday.

Annette Saville in November 2003 (contact has just been made between a cousin in the USA and Annette).

Simon Werner Cassel in December 2003

Emil Lowenestein in December 2003 (Day of Chanukah party)

Leo Horn on 20 January 2004

Henry Wuga in February 2004

PLEASE NOTE DIARY DATES

2 FEBRUARY KINDER LUNCH AT THE DAY CENTRE WITH SPEAKER

**1 MARCH KINDER LUNCH AT THE DAY CENTRE WITH GENERAL DISCUSSION
WITH HERMANN HIRSCHBERGER IN THE CHAIR**

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BOOK IN TEL: 020 7328 0208

SPECIAL DATE SUNDAY 2 MAY 2004 - 2 O'CLOCK SHOWING OF *INTO THE ARMS OF STRANGERS* IN THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM CINEMA - FOLLOWED BY PANEL DISCUSSION. FURTHER DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED.