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Chairman:
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Kinder Statue Unveiled at Liverpool Street Station



Left to Right: Sir Nicholas Winton, Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sachs, Bertha Leverton,
Home Secretary Rt Hon David Blunkett M.P. and Nigel Layton, WJR Chairman



Kindertransport Commemoration Sculpture at Liverpool Street Station with a child viewing a large case containing items brought by the children in 1938-1939. *Photos: Ronald Channing*

Dear Kinder/Friends

I am writing this Newsletter in Israel where I have been since the 3rd October spending Yom Kippur and Succoth with my family and welcoming a new great-grandchild, a girl named Shuvaya. These new names take some getting used to for us English. The services are so meaningful and joyous, but solemn too. The dreadful massacre in Haifa was in everyone's mind. But life has to carry on. My children live in Kedumin, a medium sized settlement where every family has their own succah. Its wonderful to see so many happy children and during my twice yearly visits I have acquired many friends. It is so nice that the Israeli Kinder hold their annual big meeting during Succoth so I can participate (my children also) in Natanya. They are all looking forward to hearing about the suitcase ceremony and thanks to Ronald will be seeing the great photos of the occasion. I am also taking Alfred Buechler's video with me. Maybe they have a video player in the hotel where the meeting is held. I'll then spend a few days in Jerusalem with Inge.

What a wonderful occasion 16 September was. A moving and poignant one, in brilliant sunshine, perfectly organised by WJR. It was a great honour to participate and give the vote of thanks to the Home Secretary, in the presence of so many dignitaries on behalf of all the Kinder.

As there will be a full report in the AJR edition, I will just mention that Alfred Buechler very kindly made a video which has all the speeches and many individual short interviews on his tape. As he had to work without a tripod there is a little wobble here and there. Because he is not charging for his work, we will be able to produce this video at a very reasonable price. This is based on the assumption that many of you will order.

Statue and Suitcase Unveiling Video

Video tapes of this ceremony by Alfred Buechler will shortly be ready.

If you would like a copy please send an addressed label and 80p stamps (or four second class) together with cheque for £5.50 made payable to KT Publications to Bertha Leverton at the AJR office. Please allow up to four weeks for delivery. (Mark envelope Liverpool Street video).

MORE NEWS

Many of you will remember Mr Manfred Vanson who, with his wife, ran the Sunshine Hostel. He was also very much involved with the Jewish Blind Society in England. Settling in Israel many years ago and keeping in touch with his charges, he had many friends. He passed away recently in Jerusalem. We send our condolences to his family and friends. See full obituary in December's *AJR Journal*.

As you can see from the enclosed leaflet we, the committee have fixed a date for the Barmitzvah ceremony and we expect a good response. Everyone thinks it's a great idea, but without the groom, so to speak, there is no wedding. Some generous Kinder have offered finance, so we will be able to make special presentations to all our Barmitzvah boys and a great festive lunch for all (at a reasonable cost). Remember it is our 65th year.

Because our usual venue, AJR's Day Centre, this year can only cater for a very limited number, our Chanukah party 22 December will be held at the same venue as my 80th birthday party. See leaflet enclosed and please book early. Catering by Kinder's own Reunion caterer Simon Kalman (Kedassia) so you know what to expect. Seating for 150, entertainment, and you receive a present too.

ALSO please remember to book in good time for the monthly luncheon meeting by phoning the Day Centre, 0207 328 0208 so they know numbers for catering.

I hope this coming year will be one of good health for all of us, many joyous occasions and peace in Israel and the world. Many thanks for the many nice cards, letters and phone calls received for Rosh Hashanah. My warmest wishes to you all.

Photographs of the Suitcase Unveiling are on the website www.ajr.org.uk

On page 10 you will read the very moving poem composed by Ester Golan read out by her at the Natanya Kindertransport meeting.

IMPORTANT UPDATE

JEWISH PROPERTIES IN FORMER EASTERN GERMANY

When Eastern Germany was combined with the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1990s, several thousand erstwhile Jewish owned properties were identified. Many of these, presumed heirless, became the property of the Claims Conference. Recently it was agreed that a list of former owners would be published on the Internet, giving a further opportunity to register a claim with the Claims Conference. This opportunity is open for six months only, up to 31 March 2004. The list is published on the Website under the address "www.claimscon.org". Persons unable to access the internet site, can obtain help from the Central Office for Holocaust Claims, Tel No: 020 8385 3070.

Amongst our readers, there could well be individuals who can recall or know about properties or assets, which belong to their families, in the former East Germany (DDR). If so, do not miss the opportunity to give this your immediate and urgent consideration.

H Hirschberger

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Kinder – I suddenly realised that, all being well, on the 6 January 2004, Bertha and I and many other Kinder will have been in England 65 years. We all came on the same boat from Holland to Harwich and were put up, to start with, at Dovercourt Holiday Camp.

Bertha and I never found out that we had been together on that boat and train until about 50 years later. Anyway I thought it would be a nice idea if on the 5 January 2004, after lunch, those of us who were on that transport could get together in one of the rooms at the Day Centre and have a good natter over old times. It would be lovely to see some of the people we met all those years ago and have not forgotten.

*Henny Rednall
Birmingham*

Please when booking for your lunch mention to the Day Centre that you will be pleased to join Henny for this get-together.

Kindertransport database

Several members saw the reunion book and were impressed by the list of names together with the history. The Society would like to set up a database listing the names and details in the book together with any additional entries that people wish to add. We would be able to add the history and anything else appropriate.

This would be in partnership with the Kindertransport Association and members. If the association is interested in the proposal, then the way forward would be to have an exploratory meeting with Association officers.

Maurice Hoffman, The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain
If anyone objects to this idea please let us know, otherwise we can arrange to participate. Ed

Hi hello from Chicago – I want Bertha to know that I enjoy the KT Newsletter. At this point I would like to wish each and everyone best wishes for a healthy, peaceful and successful New Year.

Alice Fink

Dear Bertha – Referring to Peter Langford’s last letter. I do not think it is advisable for people to quote their address and phone number. Any Kinder who want to contact somebody can do so through the KT/AJR office.

Lore H

Dear Bertha – I have a feeling that one of my most precious memories about the Kindertransport journey itself is shared by many other *Kinder*. The kindness that “ordinary” Dutch people showered on us when the train stopped in Holland en route to England needs to be remembered. Is there any way in which KT could express official thanks to Holland for the way in which we children were comforted and fed by the kind people of Holland? Any suggestions of how this could be done would be welcome.

To my way of thinking, a collection of letters on the subject might be appreciated by the Dutch people and would make instructive reading material for school children. Another idea would be to locate a plaque at the train stations where the trains stopped. Such plaques would incur costs which letters would not. I certainly would be willing to write my recollections, even of the particular food we received. I could also help to put together and edit a collection of similar memoir pieces or of relevant letters. Perhaps as a preliminary step the KT could send an official letter of thanks to an appropriate official or organisation. I would be happy to try and find out where such a letter or letters could be sent. We thanked the British for allowing us in. For my part, I would love to thank the Dutch for easing our trip there. What do other members think? Please let me know through the UK AJR/KT office either by email to andrea@ajr.org.uk or post, Kindertransport, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL.

*Marion Walter
Eugene, Ore.*

Dear Editor – The KT Newsletter gave space quite some time ago to a nonsense complaint about British behaviour in 1939 by a Kind now living in Israel, but failed to publish my reply praising British hospitality. Well, controversy is stirred up by such articles and it would seem unbalanced to me not to give space to the other side.

*Eric Mark
Belgium*

Dear Bertha – It maybe of interest that one of my poems, *Exodus* will be displayed on London Underground October/November.

As it so happens, it will also be the time of my 80th birthday, a nice present! All good wishes – I enjoy your newsletter.

*Congratulations on **both** achievements. Ed*

*Lotte Kramer
Peterborough*

Dear Bertha – It was really wonderful to have you among us. Thank you for making the trip to Netanya. Only a day has passed and we are already looking forward to your next meeting with us. During our meeting I was only able to touch shortly on the small orphanage, in which I spent the last of my time in Berlin, in 1938. However, in March 2003 I was invited to take part at the unveiling ceremony of the memorial plaque outside the house to commemorate the death of the children that found refuge there until they were deported in 1942. Naturally, for me the ceremony was a very emotional experience.

*Monique & Gideon Behrendt
Netanya, Israel.*

The very moving report you enclosed with your letter I hope to include in the next KT Newsletter. I would like to do it in full because it is a very important document. Thanks for your kind remarks regarding the Natanya meeting. Bertha.

Dear Bertha – It really is great to have you back on the KT Newsletter! But sad for the reason. You're marvellous and I wish a bit of you would rub off on me!!!

Dear Elfie I'll soon have to buy hats a size larger owing to swelling head. Love Bertha.

*E Frohlich
Australia*

Dear Bertha – Greetings from Gerd Ledermann in Kathmandu. We keep enjoying your energy spreading around and your *joie de vivre*. Anyone in our part of the world please visit.

*Gerd, Kamala, Lea
Kathmandu, Nepal*

A fax arrived from Peter Woolf-Skinner in response to the picture sent in by Lilly Pollock that his wife together with her sister are in the picture. See story in Bertha's book *I Came Alone* of Mrs Woolf-Skinner.

KINDER LUNCHESES

Recent attendees from abroad at the Day Centre Kinder Lunches included Mr & Mrs Alfred Cotton from California and Mr & Mrs Frank Harris from New York.

In fact our lunch attendances are growing, **BUT PLEASE REMEMBER YOU MUST BOOK**, the Day Centre is very pleased to have us, but do need to know the numbers to cater for. Telephone 020 7328 0208.

Birthdays Congratulations

Fritz Stern on your 80th Birthday.

Peter Reiche in the USA on your 80th Birthday.

Fritzi Sessler, Haifa Israel, on your 75th Birthday

Congratulations to anybody we have not mentioned on any forthcoming birthdays

Lisa Seiden from Buenos Aeries was here for a visit and phoned to say hello, as did Elizabeth Reinhuber-Adorno (Germany).

Obituaries

Mr Gutwillig – (Israel) Condolences to his brother and sister in Switzerland, friends and family.

Leo Director, Israel – condolences to the families, I personally remember Leo, who with Ruth were my next door neighbours for many years in Birmingham. He was such a gentle man. *Bertha*

ACHIEVEMENTS

Eva Hirschberger is having a special exhibition of her colourful and exciting synagogue art and water colour paintings during December between 9am – 4pm. Inauguration 10th December 8pm at Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, Oakland Gate, Northwood, HA6 3AA. All Welcome.

Ernest Fraenkel retiring Chairman of the Wiener Library was honoured with a reception at the German Embassy to mark his retirement and also mark the occasion of his 80th birthday

WISH CHRONICLE SEPTEMBER 19 2003

Margaret Hallett recalls the origins of a special relationship started by the Kindertransport

Strength in 60-year sisterhood

Laura recently paid her annual visit to this country from her home in America. Last year, she and I attended a surprise (to her) 75th birthday party with our siblings, children and grandchildren in the Plaza Hotel, New York.

During the course of the evening, I reflected on the fact that, had my parents not taken her into our family all those years ago, none of her children and grandchildren joining in those happy celebrations would have existed.

In January 1939, I was not quite 12 years old and not greatly interested in what was happening outside my family circle and school. I had heard my parents talking about someone called Hitler who made speeches in Germany, and my father always had a serious face when listening to news broadcasts on the radio. But, to me, Germany was just a country where the people spoke a language which I had recently begun to study in addition to French at my school, Finchley County Grammar.

One day, my mother told me that we were going to have a refugee, a little girl, to live with us. I didn't know what "refugee" meant but I was very excited about having another girl in the family.

A few days later, my parents left to fetch our refugee, leaving an aunt to get me ready for the school dance in the late afternoon. Aunt Lily had just finished putting the finishing touches to the dress she had made for me when my parents arrived home with Lore (as she was then called) from Gelsenkirchen.

I went off to my party buzzing with excitement, and when I got home again we both got ready for bed. We had very little sleep that

night. We giggled a lot and managed to understand each other regardless of the different languages.

The next day, we went to the cinema to see Deanna Durbin in "That Certain Age." I enjoyed it but was quite unprepared for the effect it had on Lore. She appeared to be transported and spent the next few days reliving every moment of the film. She had been unable to enjoy a visit to the cinema in freedom for many months. We subsequently became great film fans and still get a thrill when recalling Laurence Olivier in "Rebecca," actors like Stewart Granger, James Mason, Margaret Lockwood and many other stars of those days.

On the first Monday, we went to school together and I felt very proud when the head-



Shakespeare at school (Laura on left) and smiles at 75 (Margaret on right)

master announced Lore's arrival in assembly. In almost no time at all, her command of English would be better than that of some of the English children and at home she would captivate my little brother and sister with her own fairy stories.

We discovered that we were born just nine days apart and celebrated our 12th birthdays together, went roller-skating together at weekends and, when summer came, my father would drive us all to the seaside on Sundays.

Then as summer drew to a close there arrived Paul and Ilse Eichengruen — Lore's parents — who had been able to get out of Germany in the nick of time. I learned later that this was largely due to help from my father. Only a few days after their arrival, it was September 3 and we were at war with Germany. All the lights went out, gas masks became part of our school uniform, boys at school dug trenches on our playing fields, food and clothing were rationed.

Life continued normally for us for the first

few months of the war. We were a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at school, our visits to the cinema were frequent family parties were great fun. Then the following September the Blitzkrieg began and London was the target of German bombing night after night, week after week. All these experiences Lore shared with me and my family. Then, in November 1940, when the Blitz was at its height, Lore left us to go with her parents to America.

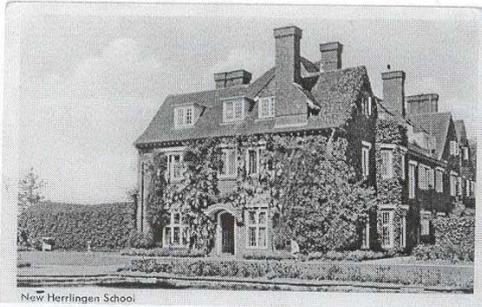
It seemed a long time before we got news that the family had arrived safely in New York after their convoy had been attacked by U-boats in the Atlantic. Lore Eichengruen later became Laura Oakes and we spent the next few years exchanging letters and photos.

In 1948, I married; Laura married in 1949 and became Laura Gabriel. In 1954, we both had our first children. In 1968, shortly after my first marriage collapsed, my parents celebrated their golden wedding and Laura was able to fly in to join in the celebrations. It was like the first time Laura had arrived at our home in 1939. We giggled all night like a couple of teenagers.

Laura visited again with her husband John in 1978 to celebrate my parents' 60th anniversary, then again in 1979 to witness my second marriage — and to accompany us on our honeymoon! Later that year, Tony and I visited Laura in America for the first time.

From then on, visits were frequently exchanged on both sides of the Atlantic. A few years ago Laura set up a business organisation in New York in which I have occasionally been able to help.

Now we are both widows. We have suffered pain and bereavement together as well as the joys of parenthood and becoming grandparents. I forever bless my parents for bringing Laura into my life that day in January 1939.



Bunce Court School

Photos supplied by Leslie Brent and Martin Lubowski



Anna Essinger

A remarkable reunion

One Sunday last July some 100-odd people, most of them in their seventies, descended on a small cottage on the North Downs of Kent. They came largely from the UK but some had travelled from the USA, South Africa, Israel, Spain, Australia and Germany. The cottage is the home of Hans Meyer, one of the very few surviving former teachers of Bunce Court School, originally known as New Herrlingen School – a German-Jewish boarding school that existed just a few miles away until it closed in 1948. It was no ordinary educational establishment.

The school opened its doors in 1933, when a farsighted German Jewish educationalist, Anna Essinger, decided that she could no longer hope to bring up children in what had by then become Nazi Germany. England was the country of her choice and she brought over with her some 70 children and some of the teachers from her *avant garde* coeducational boarding school near Ulm. A few English and non-Jewish children soon joined, as did some English staff, but it was a school that catered predominantly for refugee children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. As war ended in Europe it took in a dozen or so boys who had survived in dire circumstances in Poland.

When the Kindertransports began to arrive Anna Essinger was put in charge of the educational aspects of Dover Court Camp, which received many of the children who came over in 1938/39. She chose 50-60 to join her school (her criteria remain unfathomable but she did not select only the clever ones), thus almost doubling its size. I think it was the perceived needs of the children and the likelihood that they would fit into her school that determined her choice, though chance may have played a part. This expansion was a great logistic feat and required considerable ingenuity, for it could easily have turned into a disaster. And so it was that Bunce Court became the school and home, not to say Heimat, of a great many of us. There we received a very good education (even though the physical sciences were not taught) and, perhaps even more importantly, a safe and pleasant environment and the loving care of which we were all desperately in need.

In 1940 the school was forced to move from the North Downs, settled down quite happily in Shropshire, and returned to Kent after the war – all organised by a headmistress whose sight was diminishing rapidly! She was of course strongly supported by a loyal staff. Anna Essinger's achievements were recently celebrated by a BBC radio programme (curiously misnamed "Just

Wilhelm”) and, even more significantly, by her inclusion in next year’s edition of the Dictionary of National Biography – a signal honour for one who acquired British citizenship late in life. For many who were in the school it remains a focal point and there is an extraordinary feeling of kinship among us. Among the 100 there were some spouses and a few children and even grandchildren, and we had a happy afternoon talking about old times and reviving old and fond memories. How fortunate that Hans Meyer, at the age of 91, was well enough, supported by his wife, to be a gracious host, and that his cottage has extensive and beautiful grounds that easily accommodated a large marquee and that lent themselves so well to this remarkable reunion – probably, alas, the last.

Leslie Baruch Brent

My Aunt Bertha

My Aunt Bertha loved to hate the man she once loved.

She lived to a ripe old age and died just before her ninety first birthday. I was at her bedside when she passed away and her last words were clear and distinctive... “when I’ll meet him, I will...” At that point, she finally gave up, and nobody will ever know what she will ever say or do when she will meet him again.

I know her story so well. Many times she told me about the rich elderly American gentleman whom she married, and who left her on the third day of their honeymoon. It all took place before I was born, so I actually never met Julius Patek who swept her off her feet. It was a whirlwind romance and the wedding took place only weeks after she was introduced to him by the traditional marriage broker, of whom there were many in Vienna between the two world wars. From the photos I have seen, he was certainly a distinguished looking gentleman. He was also very rich. There were visible signs of his wealth, for his money belt was full of dollars. People did not trust banks in those days, it was still the custom to carry money on their person. “Bertel our honeymoon will never end” he told her as they left for the fashionable Spa of Karlsbad. Nothing was too good for her, and they checked into the finest hotel in the town.

He promised that in a few days her wedding present would arrive, which he was having especially made for her. That present never did arrive, for when she returned from the hairdresser, a brief note was waiting for her. “It was a mistake, am on my way back to Detroit”. The Hotel bill had been paid.

How dejected she must have been as she travelled back alone to Vienna. From Vienna to London then on to Luton where she and my Granny had lived for many years. She never married again, even when she had confirmation that Mr Patek had died in Michigan USA. She just lived with her memories tight until that day at the Luton & Dunstable Hospital where she uttered those last words... “when I’ll meet him I will...” No one will ever know what she will do or say, for I think she will forgive him. She was that kind of person.

Otto Deutsch