

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Duet for one

The spirit of Central European Jewry pervades the highly successful revival of Tom Kempinski's play *Duet for One*, which was originally staged in 1980 and is, at the time of writing, running at London's Vaudeville Theatre. The play has a cast of two: a psychologist, Dr Feldmann, and his patient, the world-famous violinist Stephanie Abrahams, who has been stricken by multiple sclerosis and is unable to play any more.

The production has two outstanding performances, by Henry Goodman as the German-accented Feldmann and Juliet Stevenson as the wheelchair-bound Abrahams. The play was inspired by the case of the cellist Jacqueline du Pré, though only in its outward details.

The drama consists of six sessions between doctor and patient, displaying many of the classic ingredients of the process of therapy. We witness open conflict, expressed as aggression and resistance on the part of the patient, but also the gradual building of a relationship with the psychologist. We experience Abrahams's moments of involuntary self-revelation and of genuine insight, as well as a crisis of despair that, by the end of the play, opens up the possibility that she may yet overcome the devastating loss of the music that has given meaning to her life. Kempinski's basic conception is pared down and highly dramatic: the play is restricted in place to the psychologist's consulting room, in time to six weekly one-hour sessions (three in each of the two acts), and in action to the encounter between doctor and patient.

Commentators on the play like Lisa Appignanesi have related *Duet for One* to the long tradition of plays and films centring on Freudian analysis, going back to Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) or even to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). But one aspect of the play that has not been investigated is its Jewish dimension. Dr Feldmann – we discover that his first name is Alfred – is characterised



Henry Goodman as Dr Alfred Feldmann and Juliet Stevenson as Stephanie Abrahams

as 'German'. In one of her fits of rage, Abrahams even accuses him of putting on his accent to increase his credibility as a psychologist. Any German-accented psychologist or psychoanalyst practising in the leafier parts of north-west London in the 1970s would almost certainly have been a Jewish refugee; the number of such refugee practitioners who settled in London was considerable, while non-Jewish German practitioners operating in London would have been few indeed.

Stephanie Abrahams is, to judge by her name and her marriage to another musical prodigy, David Liebermann, almost certainly also Jewish. (The marriage is modelled on the union of musical geniuses between Daniel Barenboim and Jacqueline du Pré.) Significantly, the film version of *Duet for One* (1986) was at pains to remove the Jewish dimension: Abrahams became Anderson and her husband became David Cornwallis, possibly because she was played by Julie Andrews, who is even less likely to appear Jewish than she is to convey musical genius or deep psychic distress. But the clearest evidence of Abrahams's Jewishness is that she lapses into Yiddish when she loses her temper with Feldmann, calling him 'a "pain in the tuches", which means the arse, for your information'.

From this one can deduce that she assumes Feldmann, though Jewish, to be unfamiliar with the Yiddish term. This

is a significant pointer to a clash of cultures that feeds into the central confrontation between the two characters, in that Feldmann is the product of his native German-Jewish culture, whereas Abrahams is the daughter of British Jews. The entire set of the play exudes evidence of the high culture that Feldmann, the refugee, has brought with him from Germany; his consulting room is full of books, works of art and, above all, recordings of classical music. Even the tastefully expensive carpets on the floor will be familiar to anyone who has frequented the living rooms of Jewish refugees from Central Europe, with their imposing ranks of bound volumes of German classics, from Goethe and Schiller to Lion Feuchtwanger and Stefan Zweig, their pianos, their fine walnut or mahogany furniture, and their programmes from the Wigmore Hall.

The Jews from the German-speaking lands were famous for their devotion to high culture. In the relatively brief period between the Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century, which marked the dawning emancipation of Germany's Jews and heralded their entry into mainstream society, and the advent of the Nazis in 1933, that Jewish community was responsible for a cultural efflorescence that ranks among the most impressive in modern European history, as well as contributing notably to the key intellectual advances of the period. ('Fin-de-siècle Vienna', that hothouse of pioneering intellectual trends, would have been unthinkable without Vienna's Jews.) One needs only to list such names as Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler and Albert Einstein, among many others, to make the point.

The assimilated German-speaking Jews, it has often been remarked, abandoned much of their traditional Judaism as they became secularised, adopting an almost religious veneration for German

continued overleaf

DUET FOR ONE *continued from page 1*

high culture and education – for *Bildung*, to use the German term, as a substitute for the Jewish faith. According to Amos Elon's study of the Jews in Germany, *The Pity of It All*, the writer Emil Ludwig (né Cohn) recalled that his parents practised neither Judaism nor Christianity, but the cult of *Bildung*. For the Cohns, the 'practical' substitute for religion was moral education, while the 'mystical' substitute was the worship of music. Similarly, George Clare, author of the celebrated family memoir *Last Waltz in Vienna*, declared in *Berlin Days* that his father had 'worshipped, never at a synagogue, but almost daily at the altar of German literature'.

But this love of German-language culture came at a cost: it helped to create a gulf between the assimilated, middle-class Westernised Jews of the German-speaking cities and the Jews of Eastern Europe, who still spoke Yiddish and stuck more closely to the traditional beliefs, practices and lifestyle of Eastern Jewry. The choice between German and Yiddish became a key indicator of communal identity and cultural allegiance: Lucie Kaye, who often wrote for *AJR Information* in bygone decades as Lucie Schachne, stated in an interview that her father had strictly forbidden her to speak Yiddish in their assimilated Berlin home. And when the boy Georg Klaar (George Clare) called his father 'Tate', the Yiddish word for 'Vater', his father hit him.

In *Pushing Time Away: My Grandfather and the Tragedy of Jewish Vienna*, the philosopher Peter Singer highlights the rift that developed between his grandfather, the scholar and humanist David Oppenheim, an exemplar of the Westernised Jew who loved German culture, and those who admired the Jews of the East for having maintained their distinctive Jewish culture, through the medium of Yiddish, and for having refused to acculturate to German society and its values. By contrast, Oppenheim, according to his grandson, 'was proud to speak the language of Goethe, and not the Yiddish of the shtetl'. He was one of the educated, Western Jews whose natural habitat was the coffee house or the opera house rather than the synagogue. Feldmann, in his book-lined Hampstead consulting room, is plainly one of those Jews from Central Europe who were at pains to preserve their inherited cultural values in Britain.

Stephanie Abrahams's family background, on the other hand, seems to have

had little of this veneration for culture. Her father, we learn, was a small businessman who earned a modest living from selling chocolates that were hand-made at the back of his shop. As a young girl, Abrahams had had to fight long and hard against her father's determined refusal to allow her to take up music seriously. Horrified at the prospect of his daughter 'scraping cat-gut for a living', he was utterly blind to the cultural advantages of a musical career, seeing a 'scrapper' as no better than a small shopkeeper.

As Abrahams's family are not refugees from Central Europe, one can assume that they were Jews who had arrived around the turn of the previous century from Tsarist Russia, and from a social culture very different to that of the Westernised Jews of Germany and Austria. Many of this wave of Jewish immigrants settled in areas like the East End, where the culture was again far removed from German high culture. One can readily imagine that Abrahams's father was a product of this environment. While it is possible that a child prodigy possessed of extraordinary musical genius might have faced a similar struggle in a family of refugees from Central Europe, it is, to judge by what is known of the high culture that flourished there, not so likely.

Of course, musical geniuses of Polish- and Russian-Jewish descent are very numerous indeed: from Rubinstein and Menuhin to Barenboim, Perlman and Ashkenazy, their names stand out among the best-known virtuosi of the modern era. And when it comes to manufacturers of fine chocolates in Britain, one of the most notable was a Jewish refugee from Germany, Werner Ackermann, founder of Ackerman's in Goldhurst Terrace, South Hampstead, a retail outlet that flourished for some 50 years, surviving proudly into the twenty-first century.

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AJR staff appointments

Sue Kurlander, who has joined the AJR as **Head of Social Services**, was brought up in Stamford Hill in north London, where her parents instilled in her the value of helping others. She is a qualified social worker with 35 years' experience



and has worked in residential childcare, social work in education, and Jewish social services. She has experience of supporting Holocaust survivors and refugees from Nazi persecution at both Jewish Care in London and Chicago Jewish Family Service.

Sue is dedicated to the needs of AJR members and their families. Her main goal at AJR is to raise the professional standards in the Social Services Department. She is very much a hands-on manager. She regularly visits the Cleve Road Day Centre and plans to attend as many group meetings as possible up and down the UK.

Sue is a down-to-earth, approachable person who can provide clear and informed advice on many health and social care issues.

To contact Sue, telephone 020 8385 3070 or email sue@ajr.org.uk

Agnes Isaacs has joined the AJR as **Scotland and Newcastle Groups Co-ordinator**. Originally from Budapest, Agnes shares a common bond with AJR members. The daughter of Holocaust survivors, she came to this country in 1965, leaving behind the constraints of communist Hungary, for, as she puts it, 'a free land where Judaism could be practised openly.'



Agnes, who lives in Glasgow, became involved in AJR activities while accompanying her mother to local AJR meetings and volunteered, along with Irene and Philip Mason, to take on the task of collating the Scotland Memorial Book. By contributing to the Memorial Book personally, Agnes believes that, like many others, she has left a legacy for her children and future generations. With the Memorial Book in print, Agnes was in need of a new challenge: joining the AJR as a Groups Co-ordinator seemed a natural path.

To contact Agnes, telephone 0755 1968 593 or email agnes@ajr.org.uk

HISTORY LIVED IN SELSEY-ON-SEA

There are certain public events – whether they affect our private lives directly or indirectly or not at all – that remain forever etched on our minds. For us Austrian Jews, one such was, of course, the Anschluss. More generally, in the second half of the 20th century, most people remember the exact circumstances in which they found themselves when they heard of John F. Kennedy's assassination and Princess Diana's death. And my guess is that Barack Obama's inauguration in the first decade of the 21st century will have a similar impact.

For all of us old enough to remember, 3 September 1939 will surely remain unforgettable. At the time, I had quite the most unpleasant job (my sixth) since my arrival in England. I was working as a house-parlour-maid for a family of three – an elderly couple and their gutless, unmarried daughter – in Claygate, Surrey. The cook-general, Paula, was a non-Jewish Austrian professional servant who helped me in every possible way. The couple actually referred to each other as 'the master' and 'the mistress' when they addressed us, the servants. The 'mistress' hated my guts. (The feeling was mutual.) It says much for the desperation for servants of the British middle class at the time that she put up with me at all.

Some time in August, the entire household moved to Selsey-on-Sea near Chichester for a break by the sea. At 11 o'clock on 3 September, Paula and I were summoned to the drawing room to listen to Mr Chamberlain's solemn announcement: 'This country is at war with Germany.' Barely a year earlier, the very same Mr Chamberlain had promised 'peace in our time.'

My feelings on hearing this news were confused. On the one hand, I knew that war was a bad thing – that people would get killed – and, on a personal level, I feared for the safety of my stepmother and that of my relatives and friends who were still in Vienna and with whom I would no longer be able to communicate. On the other hand, I reasoned, the Allies would surely defeat Hitler in no time and I would be able to return home, to a normal life. I believe my overriding emotion was one of relief. I had conveniently forgotten that the last war – *der Weltkrieg* as it was referred to in my childhood and in which my father had served – had lasted for four long years although everyone had expected it to be over by Christmas. Nor could I foresee the unspeakable horrors that awaited Jews in Nazi-occupied territories.

Shortly after the outbreak of war,

things came to a head between the 'mistress' and myself. Her constant nagging and bullying finally wore me down and, in today's parlance, I 'lost it.' The details escape me but somehow the police got involved and I remember sobbing 'She treats her dog better than she treats me.' Paula, to her credit, stood loyally by me although, politically naïve, she had complained, almost tearfully, that everyone 'had it in' for Germany. The police must have felt that I had a case and needed a rest. Incredibly, although I was technically already an enemy alien, they found me lodgings with a maternal woman, with whom I stayed until my money ran out.

The weather was perfect. I swam in the sea every day and became acquainted with the eating habits of the English working class. I came to love hot roast on Sunday, cold roast on Monday, and shepherd's pie on Tuesday.

My next stop was Exeter, where, a few months and three jobs later, my inglorious career as a domestic servant finally ended. At the same time, the war that was to claim 61 million lives, of which 6 million were European Jews murdered by the Nazis, started in earnest.

Edith Argy

Kindertransport Chairman receives award for charitable work

KT Chairman Erich Reich has been given the outstanding contribution award by *Professional Fundraising* magazine for his work in raising money for charitable causes.

Erich's company Classic Tours, set up in 1987, has helped 200 charities raise a total of £50 million through challenges involving motor-cycle rides and mountain climbs from Brazil to China.

Professional Fundraising judge Andrew Scadding said 'Mr Reich has invented an entirely new form of fundraising. His challenge events have benefited tens of thousands of people and involved tens of thousands more.'

Erich attributes his support for charities, especially those helping children and cancer research, to his brother's death from cancer at the age of 27.



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Wilton Park: A very special PoW camp

by Fritz Lustig

The use, after the war, of the Wilton Park estate near Beaconsfield for re-educating former German prisoners-of-war in the virtues of democracy was related in an article by Eric Bourne and a letter by Peter Hart in recent issues of the Journal.

However, Wilton Park was perhaps even more important *during* the war, albeit for different reasons. Before May 1945, it was a very special prisoner-of-war camp, where prisoners from whom it was hoped to obtain important information were sent. Wilton Park was one of three camps forming the intelligence unit CSDIC (UK) – Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre – as not only army, but also navy and RAF intelligence personnel were serving there.

The other two camps were at Trent Park near Cockfosters in north London, which housed German generals and other senior officers (recently the subject of a Radio 4 Afternoon Play, which was written by the son of an ex-refugee who served there), and at Latimer House in Buckinghamshire, where lower-ranking officers and other ranks were held, which was also the case at Wilton Park. At the latter camp, there was a Palladian mansion called 'The White House', originally built in 1779, in which a few Italian generals were housed and which also served as the mess of the British intelligence officers. It was demolished in 1968 (the prisoners' cells had disappeared a few years earlier) and now there are no buildings of the old camp left – instead, a 15-storey-high structure has been erected, which is claimed to be the highest building in Buckinghamshire. The camp is now the Defence School of Languages.

CSDIC was a highly secret unit; anybody working there had to sign the Official Secrets Act. I had been serving in the Pioneer Corps since September 1940 and, like most of my contemporaries, was very keen to be transferred to a more active unit. In early 1943 CSDIC was expanding and, although until then only commissioned officers had been working there, the War Office had decided to allow sergeants and warrant officers to do the same job. At that stage,

recruitment was by recommendation from people already working at CSDIC and, through a relative who was friendly with an officer serving there, I was recommended for transfer. After waiting about two months and having passed a day-long interview in London, I found myself at Latimer House, where I was at once promoted from private to sergeant. After further promotion



'The White House'

to WOII (company sergeant major) a few months later I was transferred to Wilton Park.

What were we all doing? Listening to the conversations of the prisoners! The POWs' cells were 'bugged' – a microphone was concealed in the light fitting – and we listened to their conversations, in the hope that they would discuss something that might be of interest to British intelligence. There were only two prisoners to a cell, as far as possible from different services or units, which made it likely that they would talk to each other about their experiences. We had to identify who was who by their voices and accents.

The monitors operated in teams of about six, each in a separate room with an officer in charge. Sitting at tables which were fitted with record-cutting equipment (this was before electronic tapes were invented!), we had a kind of old-fashioned telephone switchboard facing us, where we put plugs into numbered sockets in order to listen to the PoWs through our headphones. Each operator had to monitor two or three cells, switching from one to the other to see whether something 'interesting' was being discussed. As soon as the conversation touched on a subject we thought might be 'valuable',

we pushed a switch which started a turntable revolving, and pulled a small lever to lower the recording head onto the record. We had to keep a log in which we noted what our 'charges' had been doing or talking about, and specified at what times and about what subjects we had recorded their conversations.

As soon as a record had been cut, another operator had to take over the monitoring, and the person who had been listening went to a different room to transcribe what he had just recorded – not every word that was spoken, of course, but only those bits of the conversation which were important. After that, the officer in charge of the team (or later a sergeant major) had to check the transcription: correct errors (i.e. mis-hearings), fill in gaps if possible (often prisoners were 'security-conscious' and – suspecting a hidden microphone – started to whisper when talking about something important), and do some judicious editing, i.e. cutting out superfluous material.

There were a number of SPs ('stool pigeons'), i.e. prisoners who from political conviction or possibly practical considerations had decided to work for us. They were briefed on the subjects about which their cell-mate would be knowledgeable so that they could steer the conversation around to them. Of course, they did not know about the hidden microphones and were left in the belief that whatever information they managed to extract they would have to report to their 'handler'. One SP, however, was an ex-refugee officer, and we were full of admiration for him, for what he was doing clearly required exceptional nerve, courage and presence of mind, let alone acting ability. As far as I know, he never gave himself away or aroused the suspicion of any of his cell-mates. He posed as a (German) officer and was always paired with some particularly valuable officer-prisoner.

All PoWs were, of course, interrogated several times (always by officers not working in our 'monitoring' section called 'M-Room' – we operators never

continued opposite

Vienna: Past, present – and future?

In June this year, I returned to Vienna with my wife and older son to dedicate a brass tablet in memory of my grandfather and three aunts. The tablet was placed in front of the house from which they were deported in 1942 and which had been their home since 1913. I well remember visiting it as a child and the warm and loving welcome I had always received there. As far as I know, there were no protests from their neighbours of many years when they were thrown out on the first stage of their journey to Poland and the death camps.

Hopefully attitudes have changed. Very belatedly, many Austrians now recognise the crimes and indifference of previous generations, and some have taken practical steps in this respect. An organisation called *Steine der Erinnerung* (Stones of Remembrance) was formed to identify houses in which Jewish families lived before the war and, as far as possible, to inscribe the names, dates of birth and eventual fates of the victims on tablets placed on the wall or on the pavement in front of the house.

At the dedication ceremony, there were also families from America, Israel and Austria who had come to dedicate tablets in front of seven houses in the 9th District, where before the war about 30 per cent of the population was Jewish. The ceremony included live Jewish and Israeli music as well as speeches by the district mayor, some of the survivors and the organisers of the event. The group then visited each of the sites where tablets had been

newly laid and we said *Kaddish* in front of *Glaserstraße 4a*, where my relations had lived. It was a very moving occasion and was made particularly meaningful by the attendance of many non-Jews, including, in my case, the family now living in the flat where I spent my childhood. So far, there are now 23



Memorial tablet in front of *Glaserstraße 4a*, Vienna 9th District

plaques in the 9th District and many more in the 2nd District, which had, and again has, the largest Jewish population in Vienna.

We also visited an unusual but very relevant memorial consisting of 462 symbolic keys, each with a named label attached remembering the Jews of the *Servitengasse*. The keys are spread out

under a thick glass cover set into the pavement and surrounded by railings.

In the afternoon, there were more memories as we were invited back to the flat of my childhood for a Viennese *Jause* and I was able to show this to my son for the first time. My wife and I had been there previously and already had warm friendships with the present occupants and other people in the building.

In contrast to looking back at the past, we were fortunate in being able to visit a sign of hope for the future. This was a *Jüdisches Strassenfest* (Jewish street festival) in the centre of Vienna. It was a lively, vibrant event with Israeli music and dancing, many stands representing Jewish and Zionist organisations, and a good selection of Jewish/Austrian food, including an excellent homemade chocolate cake from WIZO! The festival was well attended and what was particularly encouraging was the presence of many young people and children. It was also encouraging to see a remarkable revival in Haredi Jewish life in the 2nd District; in one of the public playgrounds all the children seemed to be from Haredi families with their mothers. There are again kosher shops and restaurants and Jewish bookshops and, although there is no possibility that Jewish life in Vienna can return to what it was before 1938, it does seem likely that an active community is now well established and will continue into the future.

For further information, see www.steinedererinnerung.at and www.servitengasse1938.at

George Vulkan

Wilton Park *continued*

dealt with any of them face-to-face), and their reaction to the interrogation was often particularly 'fruitful'. They would tell their cell-mate what they had been asked about, what they had managed to conceal from the interrogating officer, how much we (the British) already knew, etc.

We recorded not only military intelligence, but also any atrocities the prisoners might have witnessed or taken part in (and those records were

kept in an archive, whereas others were scrapped after use); also stories about the German home front, when prisoners related what they had heard or experienced while on leave. Such material was useful for 'psychological warfare' purposes: there were several Allied radio stations purporting to be illegal German ones which broadcast stories calculated to undermine the morale of soldiers.

Until D-Day (6 June 1944) most of our prisoners were either shot-down Luftwaffe pilots or members of U-boat crews who had been rescued after

their U-boat was sunk. After the Allied invasion of the Continent, a steady stream of army prisoners arrived, and we got busy listening to them. The material we obtained was, of course, very different from what we had recorded until then, and we felt that what we were doing had suddenly assumed a far greater importance than before. The success of the invasion depended to a great extent on good intelligence, and the existence of the decoding centre at Bletchley Park and its successes was then completely unknown, even in intelligence circles.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

LITTLE BLUE BOOK

Sir – I found the 'Little Blue Book' among my late mother's papers. It was handed to her on arrival in the UK by the German Jewish Aid Committee at Woburn House in conjunction with the Jewish Board of Deputies. Your readers may be interested in its actual contents (in the following excerpts, italics, bold type and upper case are as in the original).

The cover reads: '*While you are in England HELPFUL INFORMATION and Guidance FOR EVERY REFUGEE*'. The book says, among other things:

The Jewish Community in Britain will do its very utmost to welcome and maintain all Refugees, to educate their Children, to care for the Aged and the Sick – and to assist in every possible way in creating new homes for them overseas. A great many Christians, in all walks of life, have spontaneously associated themselves with this work. All that we ask from you in return is to carry out to your utmost the following lines of conduct. Regard them, please, as **duties to which you are in honour bound**:

1. Spend your spare time immediately on learning the English language and its correct pronunciation.
2. Refrain from speaking German in the streets, in public conveyances and in public places such as restaurants. Talk halting English rather than fluent German – and *do not talk in a loud voice*. Do not read German newspapers in public.
3. Do not criticise any Government regulations, nor the way things are done over here. Do not speak of 'how much better this or that is done in Germany'. It may be true in some matters, but it weighs as nothing against the sympathy, freedom and liberty of England which are now given to you. Never forget that point.
4. Do not join any Political organisation or take part in any political activities.
5. Do not make yourselves conspicuous by speaking loudly, nor by your manner and dress. The Englishman greatly dislikes ostentation, loudness of dress or manner. The Englishman attaches very great importance to modesty, under-statement in speech rather than over-statement, and quietness of dress and manner. He values good manners far more than he values the evidence of wealth. (You will find that he says 'Thank you' for the slightest service – even for a penny 'bus ticket for which he has paid.)
6. Try to observe and follow the manners and customs and habits of this country, in social and business relations.

7. Do not spread the poison of 'It's bound to come in your country'. The British Jew greatly objects to the planting of this craven thought.

8. *Above all*, please realise that the Jewish Community is relying on you – **on each and every one of you** – to uphold in this country the highest Jewish qualities, to maintain dignity, and to help and serve others.

Like Mrs Saville in your June issue, I found this booklet deeply condescending and offensive. My mother arrived in Great Britain on a domestic permit with 10 Marks in her pocket, which was all she was allowed to take out of Germany. She worked hard throughout the war years and finally, in October 1945, after six long years of separation, was granted a permit for me to join her from the Continent, where I had spent the war years in hiding. My mother certainly 'acculturated' and one of the proudest days of her life was when she was granted British citizenship. She never failed to vote in a general election and was one of the monarchy's greatest admirers.

Betty Bloom, London NW3

Sir – I have just read what I consider to be the most disgraceful letter you have ever printed. I know there has been, for some reason or other, a discussion, after all this time, about the treatment of refugees from, in most cases, almost certain death who arrived in this country about 70 years ago.

I don't know anything about the 'little blue book' this lady, Mrs Saville, was issued with on arrival in this country but I assume it was information about this country, its customs and life. But to have the nerve and ignorance to say that she was so educated and cultured and that she tore it up is the height of ignorance and disrespect to the host country.

To compound the lady's ignorance, she makes the dismissive statement that 'All Lady Reading was prepared to do for me was to want to make me a kitchen maid in her house! Fortunately, the hostel warden came to my rescue.' It appears to me that, as far as the lady is concerned, she holds in contempt people like Lady Reading, who were willing to sponsor her and people like her, who otherwise would just as likely have ended up in the gas chamber.

S. Muller
Bloxham, near Banbury

'GOLD FOR IRON'

Sir – There is a small and insignificant-looking ring in my jewellery box, where it shares space with a fine collection of gold and silver, but this little ring is the most precious item I possess. It looks so plain and a little sad. Made of iron, it has a very meaningful message engraved into its centre: 'Ich gab Gold für Eisen' (I gave gold for iron).

The ring belonged to Laura Meyer, my grandmother, who was born in Berlin, but it is dated 1917. Proudly, patriotically German-Jewish as granny was, she made the sacrifice in vain, as Germany lost that war.

But time roared on relentlessly until, in 1933, Germany became politically criminal. My father, granny's only child, had fought for Germany in the Great War. By that time, Germany and its head henchman had gone so far in evil that no one would ever thank my father for his valiant effort to help win the First World War for Kaiser Wilhelm's country.

Just before Kristallnacht, which both my mother and I witnessed, all our family's important papers were snatched from us by the Brownshirts. This tipped the entire family into mortal danger. My father left Berlin at once, walking every step of the 500 km road to Prague. Once there, he was handed new papers and a passport by the freedom fighters of old Czechoslovakia. Having retraced his steps, he reached the Baltic Sea and boarded the very last boat for Liverpool.

That small, grey ring has travelled far, like me. But I have only to hold it in the palm of my hand to be filled with the indomitable spirit of the granny I never knew.

L. M. Levy, Wembley, Middx

BACK TO GERMANY AND DISASTER

Sir – Klaus Heymann's pre-emigration recollections in your June issue took me back to 1934 and Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně), where my father, the Yiddish playwright Abisz Meisels, had a summer cabaret at the Hotel National. Some of the audience were German Jews. My father would ask the German visitors why, now they were away from Hitler and Germany, they didn't take the opportunity to stay and try to get away to a safe country. The answer was always 'Er meint nicht uns, er meint die frommen Juden' (He doesn't mean us, he means the religious Jews) – the ones with the *peyot* and beards. They went back to Germany and disaster. I wonder how many of them survived.

Ruth Schneider, London N8

BACK TO VIENNA

Sir – I too was born in Vienna and, like Thea Valman (July), I benefited from the invitation of the Jewish Welcome Service. There is no doubt that Vienna is a beautiful city and we got a very warm welcome when I went. I am also aware of the great efforts made by Hannah Lessing and all

the other people who are concerned with getting compensation. But however good the Sachertorte and the Wiener Schnitzel, there is no mention of the present political situation – Austrian politics is no doubt taking a right turn – and I find this most disturbing.

Eva Frean, London N3

'GOD ON TRIAL'

Sir – Why is Peter Phillips (July) so scoffing and dismissive of the belief in the Divine and heavenly origins of the Torah? This belief has sustained Jews over the millennia, still does and will do so in the future. I suggest he looks at the various Principles of Belief as formulated by Maimonides, unless of course he also rejects out of hand the views of Moses Maimonides. Are not the views of Peter Phillips as divisive as those he claims Mrs Stern's are?

Bernd Koschland, London NW4

Sir – My father was an adherent of the Mizrahi movement in Poland, the forerunners of today's religious Zionists. He was also an ardent believer in *Torah im Derech Eretz* – following in the ways of the Torah combined with a worldly outlook. Like so many others during the war, he lost faith in God yet he conducted clandestine services in the camp we found ourselves in. He couldn't have done otherwise: there were no books and no rabbi left alive, but my father knew all the prayers by heart. He dearly wished to survive long enough to see Nazi Germany crushed, but his prayers were not answered. If only he and the six million could look down and see we have a state, a flag and a powerful army that will ensure the survival of the Jewish nation – no more lambs to the slaughter!

Peter Phillips talks about the Jewish race and the feeling of belonging yet he seems ready to exclude himself from the fold. I'm not orthodox – only a 'common-or-garden' traditional Jew – but I recognise that the Torah is an integral part of the nation of Israel and you cannot have one without the other. It was this faith that kept them together over the centuries, ensuring their survival as a people. It matters not, Mr Phillips, by whom or on what the Torah was written – it's the message that counts. It was not Liberal Judaism that sustained our people throughout their blood-soaked history. The assimilated Liberals of today are like the Hellenistic Jews of the Temple era, and we know how many of them survived as Jews

Rubin Katz, London NW11

'EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL'

Sir – Dorothea Shefer-Vanson is absolutely right about one thing in her July 'Letter from Israel' when she says 'Life ain't so simple.' It's a shame then that she

can't deal with its complexities, as she shows so clearly in her patronisingly simplistic piece. Dorothea is imperious in her condemnation of anyone whom she defines as a 'boycotter' or a 'protestor' and 'those who think that whatever Israel does is wrong'. Yet nowhere in her article does she manage to show the slightest shred of concern for the ordinary Palestinians, nor does she even imply any reservations over the actions of Israel. Her politics may be the exact mirror opposite of those she attacks, but it seems she's just as incapable of seeing the other side.

As Jews, we're proud to believe that Palestinians, like every people, deserve justice, to live in safety and with dignity. Does that mean that by default we are supporters of Hamas and Hezbollah? We're sickened by the rockets that are fired into Israel. Does that mean we think 'Cast Lead' is the appropriate response? We believe that the Palestinians have the right to their own state. Does that mean we are advocating the destruction of the State of Israel? Life is massively complicated and our responses have to be thoughtful and considered, not knee-jerk and childish.

The most disturbing aspect of the piece is a huge conflagration of ideas which are distilled down to the single belief that if you are critical of Israel you are *de facto* supporting the destruction of the State of Israel. Dorothea claims that the consequence of this would be another Holocaust and she attempts to bully us into supporting Israel by asking if we are ready to 'face the moral and physical consequences' of this. As daughters of a survivor of the Holocaust, we object to being emotionally blackmailed in this way.

Two 'poor, misguided souls'

*Ros and Jane Merkin
London N15*

Sir – I agree that Hamas and Hezbollah are, like Iran, anti-Semitic and wish to destroy Israel. But this does not excuse the mistreatment of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in the Territories. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson speaks of air raid shelters which the government has built and which have kept casualties low. However, after the recent Lebanon war, when Hezbollah shelled Jewish villages, Israeli-Arab spokesmen complained that the government had not bothered to build shelters for Israeli-Arab villages.

The former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak has slammed human rights violations in the Territories. According to *Ha'aretz*, 'When you think of human rights in Israel, you must also think of human rights in the Territories', he told a jurists' conference in Tel Aviv.

As a Jew, I am ashamed of Israel's treatment of Arabs. That is why I belong to Jews for Justice to Palestinians.

Peter Prager, London N12

Sir – Recently I reacted to a reader's somewhat fractious letter. My point was that the IDF's bombing of Gaza was playing into the hands of Hamas because evidently they were angling for sympathy and wished to cash in on the propaganda value as the bombardments were shown on TV all over the world. Nevertheless, you chose not to publish and I understand that the AJR follows the hard line of Netanyahu and Likud. To my mind, that can only be dependent on the US's attitude as exemplified in the past by George Bush. I suggest you might include, for instance, articles from *Ha'aretz* which may reflect moderate opinion in Israel. I hope you are not reverting to the line of Irgun Zvai Leumi, Jabotinsky *et al.*

*A.K. Mikkelsen
Richmond, Surrey*

BEUSCHL - WHAT'S THAT?

Sir – In the musical *The White Horse Inn*, a guest from Berlin studies the menu and asks 'Beuschl – what's that?' The waiter assures him it's very nice but, when it arrives, the German exclaims: 'Alles ess ich, nur nicht Lungenhasché!'.

In 1940 I landed in a Quaker refugee hostel near Newbury. One day, three English Quaker ladies announced they were going to visit us and asked to stay for lunch. Only 'lights' were available – 'off the ration' of course (the English fed them to dogs and cats). The two ladies working in the kitchen didn't know what to do so they decided to 'keep mum' and serve the food without comment. The ladies had three helpings each and even asked for the recipe. When they left, they wrote in the guest book: 'Enjoyed the "lights".'

Incidentally, I have found a recipe for 'Salon Beuschl' in my Franz Ruhm cookbook.

Annette Saville, London NW4

OUR LOYAL COOK IDA

Sir – You can almost hear the melody coursing through Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*:

Ida, wo kommst Du her

Wo gehst Du hin

Wann kommst Du wieder?

I hummed it as a child, thinking it was connected to our loyal cook Ida. She was with us for 18 years.

Laura Selo, London NW11

SPINACH ON THE ROOF

Sir – Like Frank Bright (July), I very much like spinach. However, it's over 70 years since I have had a decent plate of the vegetable. As I remember it from childhood, it was always served as a puree, so one could spread it out over one's plate and make 'Strassen' (streets) with a fork. What an exciting way of eating it!

Alas, the misguided view of 'foreigners' held by Mr Bright's devoted wife is as nothing compared with the ignorance of the 'English' in respect of the culinary arts.

Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Nymphs and mermaids, women of power and mystery – this is the vocabulary of the modern Pre-Raphaelite **J. W. Waterhouse**, whose first major UK retrospective for 30 years has opened at the **Royal Academy**. His paintings are so attractive that many have become fridge magnets and birthday cards. The Pre-Raphaelites were inspired by Shakespeare, Tennyson and Keats but Waterhouse drifted from its orthodoxy to embrace classical mythology. Yet his interpretation of Tennyson's *The Lady of*



John William Waterhouse, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*, 1891. Oil on canvas, 149 x 92 cm. Gallery Oldham

Shalott, a hopelessly ethereal girl adrift on a boat, is arguably his best-known work.

Waterhouse is well-named. The watery creatures that obsess him are beautiful adolescents emerging from their water lilies as though from a Saturday night gig. They may look friendly, but they are about to drag Hylas down to the depths. Then there is Circe, balancing on the waves and consulting her blue goblet-shaped Oracle. Next meet the Sirens, female-headed vultures who try unsuccessfully to lure Ulysses to a watery grave.

Waterhouse also surfs the Bible for pubescent Christian martyrs, who die elegantly and bloodlessly for him. One

of his most powerful works is the trial of Herod's wife, innocent of a charge of infidelity. Her dignity and tremulous pallor as she faces her accusers tells us she already knows her fate. In his time, Waterhouse saw the dawning of the New Woman, heralding equal rights, the suffragette movement and, ultimately, feminism itself. It clearly scared him. There is a morbidity within his gorgeous canvases – a languor and a sense of eternal waiting.

English Pre-Raphaelite art – narrative, sensual, sentimental – challenged the primly aristocratic Victorian taste for equestrian paintings. Less horsey, more commercially-minded Jewish businessmen who rose to wealth via the Industrial Revolution stimulated this taste with new art galleries in Manchester and Birmingham.

Tube drivers may strike, trains may run late, but in an unusual initiative the Mayor of London and Transport for London are helping disadvantaged young people illustrate the tube. In **Underground Heroes**, artist **David Blandy** helped 13-25-year-olds from a youth support group to express their personal identity through cartoon imagery. The charity Fairbridge offers one-on-one support to young people who reach them via the courts or social and education services.

In a true case of life imitating art, Blandy asked the children for their personal superheroes. Motivated by comic-strip heroism, their role models were brought to life by make-up, costumes and photography. So, if you travel to Embankment or Charing Cross Tube stations, look out for a pirate, a banana fairy, an urban chimp or a Cherryade girl – though after such commitment, it would have been better if they were featured more prominently.

The BP National Portrait Award was won this year by **Peter Monkman** for his portrait of his daughter, Anna, which shows a wistful girl staring back into childhood and out towards adulthood and even old age. **Michael Gaskell** took second prize for a Super-Realism view of his son, Tom. **Annalisa Avancini** won third prize for her more Impressionistic portrait of Manuel. I particularly liked **Isobel Peachey's** Ruth for its neo-Classical sensitivity.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

CINEMA

Ghosts of the past

FUGITIVE PIECES
directed and written by
Jeremy Podeswa
starring **Stephen Dillane**
and **Rade Serbedzija**
at selected cinemas

This year has seen a seemingly disproportionate number of films focusing on the Holocaust era with *The Reader*, *Defiance* and *Valkyrie* opening in swift succession. *Fugitive Pieces*, adapted from the award-winning novel by Anne Michaels, is yet another, but, unlike the previous three, has had minimum publicity and exposure. In my opinion, the story of Jakob, a writer and lecturer haunted by memories of the trauma he experienced as a small child in Nazi-occupied Poland, is the most powerful and moving of all these.

After witnessing the brutal murder of his parents in the family home and the abduction of Bella, his teenage sister, Jakob flees to the forest, where he lies, exhausted, buried in the undergrowth. He is spied by Athos Roussos, a Greek archaeologist, who rescues and adopts him. Their close relationship, a dominant feature of the film, is beautifully conveyed by Stephen Dillane as Jakob the man, Robbie Kay as his youthful incarnation, and Rade Serbedzija as Athos, while the constant flickering between past and present is convincing. The landscape of the film is also subject to frequent changes between Canada, where Athos is offered a lectureship after the war, his native Greek island, and the war-torn Poland Jakob can never forget. In a similar vein, the film is principally in English, interspersed with snippets of Greek and Yiddish.

On the surface, it would seem that Jakob could easily 'move on', achieving success both as a writer and in the romantic sphere, when he meets the beautiful Alex (Rosamund Pike) in a music library and they fall in love and marry. Yet Jakob is disturbed by her 'shameless vitality', which only serves to reinforce the hold of the ghosts of his past – not least his beautiful sister, whose unknown fate constantly preoccupies him and fills him with guilt. Indeed, after Athos's death, those with whom Jakob is most comfortable are their former Yiddish-speaking neighbours, also Holocaust survivors, whose son, Ben, sees Jakob as his mentor. Ultimately, Ben (Ed Stoppard) is to play a crucial role in helping Jakob find happiness and release.

Among many moving flashbacks, one of the most unusual was the sight of a small military jeep adorned with flags

driving along a road with the sea in the background. 'You can come out now – it's all over!', Athos tells the young Jakob as the island experiences the first taste of victory.

This is but one of the moments that brought tears to my eyes. Whether the film can stand as a true achievement in cinematic terms is an open question. Nevertheless, the emotional connection I experienced with what I was witnessing in that almost empty cinema hall will stay with me.

Emma Klein

CONCERT AND EXHIBITION

Lawyers without rights

HOLLYWOOD LIEDERBUCH

(LIEDER IN EXILE)

by Hanns Eisler

Christopher Maltman (baritone)

Julius Drake (piano)

at The Temple Church, London EC4

The Temple Church, this simple and venerable late-twelfth-century circular building in the heart of barristerial London, was the setting for a one-off recital (11 June) and an exhibition honouring the lives of 15 German-Jewish lawyers who were persecuted or murdered by the Third Reich. The event came to rest here as part of the international travelling exhibition *Lawyers Without Rights (The Fate of Jewish Lawyers in Germany after 1933)*. It was convened by the Temple Church, the German Federal Bar and the Jewish Museum, London.

There was a peculiar resonance to the choice of setting, not only due to the music. The Knights Templar, an order of military monks charged with protecting pilgrims to the Holy Land, were themselves briefly suppressed in the early-fourteenth-century, but rehabilitated in 1608, by which time the lawyers of Inner and Middle Temple were well established.

So, while British legislators and mediators listened to the elegiac strains of Hanns Eisler's *Hollywood Songbook*, as it is known, a song-cycle blend of Romantic, Blues and 12-tone music based on poems by Brecht, Goethe, Shakespeare, Mörike and Hölderlin, large posters bearing the histories of the 15 Jewish lawyers, some martyrs to Nazism, bore silent testimony to what their fellow professionals had to endure in the days of National Socialism.

The song cycle, hinting at both Schubert and Schoenberg, has been compared with the former's *Winterreise*, a piece of devastating beauty. A more modern, bluesier version, it was delivered with near-perfect precision by both singer and accompanist and clearly moved the audience. As with the Schubert, the *Liederbuch* describes a cold journey back to a lost homeland and you could not fail to be touched by the symbolism that a

subsequent glance at the photographs on the wall conveyed. Eisler, a German-Jewish composer, had a double experience of persecution: he escaped the Nazis and reached the USA in 1933, but later fell victim to McCarthyism and was expelled. This double exile had a powerful influence on his music.

In early 1933 nearly 30 per cent of Prussia's practising lawyers were Jewish, in Berlin more than half. But in March that year many judges, prosecuting attorneys and lawyers faced dismissal and by 1938 Jews were banned from practising law.

One of the four women featured in this exhibition was Anita Eisner from Berlin. Her admission to the Bar was revoked in 1933 and, after going into hiding to avoid deportation to a death camp, she had to wait until 1947 to be readmitted to the Bar. Persecution and the loss of her family led to illness and an early death.

Among others murdered were Munich lawyer and philosopher Dr Elisabeth Kohn, whose admission to the legal profession was also revoked in 1933, forcing her into menial work. She, her mother and sister died in the massacre in Kovno, Lithuania. Lawyer and notary Dr Moritz Galliner and his wife saw their two children to safety in the US and Britain and then committed suicide rather than suffer deportation. Robert Stern failed to emigrate and was finally deported to a small town near Lublin, where all trace of him was lost.

Pioneer democrat Dr Adolf Arndt, was luckier. A judge protected by his 'Aryan' wife, he managed to ride out the war despite forced labour and ill health. He eventually became a member of the SPD in the German Bundestag and in 1963 was Senator for the Arts and Sciences in Berlin for one year.

Yet there is a relatively happy ending to this story. Most of the 15 managed to escape to Britain, America or Israel. In his foreword to the exhibition brochure, Lord Phillips, Senior Law Lord, writes: 'The Exhibition tells the stories of ordinary men and women trying to keep their families and themselves safe and to maintain their professional life in terrible times. These stories are very moving; and the Temple Church, in the heart of legal London, is just the place where they should be told.'

Gloria Tessler

'As Jewish as the Chief Rabbi'

THE J-WORD

by Andrew Sanger

Snowbooks, 2009, £7.99,

352 pp. paper

Can you frequently come out with Yiddish words and believe you are English, rather than Jewish? Can you be plagued by the awareness that had you died in Auschwitz or another of the camps, you would be counted as one of the millions of dead Jews, whereas without

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY AUGUST 2009

Wed 5 Aug B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Israel Group. Speaker: Jason Caplin (Israeli Embassy), 8.15 pm. Tel 020 8954 6502

a Jewish mother you are not accepted as Jewish? Can you make a point of not eating 'treif' food yet be totally unfamiliar with Friday night prayers? These and other paradoxes are integral to *The J-Word*, the accomplished first novel of travel writer Andrew Sanger, which brings to life the vagaries of Jewish identity and adherence against a vivid north-west London backdrop.

They are also integral to three of the novel's protagonists: 80-year-old widower Jack Silver, aka Avram Zilberman but commonly known as 'Aloo', Simon, his son, a successful travel writer, and Danny, his 10-year-old grandson. It is when Simon suffers a nervous breakdown on assignment in Switzerland a few weeks after watching a programme about Auschwitz that his wife, Penny, calls 'Aloo' from his home outside the New Forest to look after Danny in Golders Green while she flies out to join her husband.

The close bonding between grandfather and grandson is reinforced by unexpected incidents in which Jack becomes involved. He gives the kiss of life to a man who has collapsed near Golders Green Station and, days later, rushes to the help of a Hasid who has been set upon by a gang of anti-Semitic thugs, only to be assaulted and injured himself. It is at this point that he is rescued by Villy Bernhardt, a former Kindertransport refugee from Vienna. The friendship Jack develops with Villy and his wife Ilse, traditional 'Masorti'-affiliated Jews, together with his direct experience of anti-Semitism and the way he deals with it, lead the secular Silver family towards a more Jewish way of life.

It is to Sanger's credit that, in addition to portraying a range of Jewish characters, he is able to depict as individuals members of the racist gang in the environs of their NW5 council estate and, furthermore, to introduce a hint of adventure into a tale of middle-class life. By alternating the voices of his principal protagonists with third-person narration, he achieves both variety and strong character depiction – not least of Jack's dead wife Mary, known as 'Miri' – who is constantly in his thoughts.

To finish on a personal note, as the author of *Lost Jews*, I was fascinated by the ludicrous contrast between the *halachic* situation of Simon Silver and that of Louise, the church-going mother of Danny's best friend, whose maternal great-grandmother was Jewish: 'You're as Jewish as the Chief Rabbi,' Jack tells her.

Emma Klein

Understanding the Anschluss

The Anschluss occurred just a few weeks before my seventh birthday. At first, I couldn't grasp what it really meant. On the actual day, it was 'explained' to me. I understood the bit about Austria no longer existing. I don't now remember what was in my mind at the time but my first reaction was to be pleased at the thought that we were Germans now. I was firmly told that that was not really true, but the reason given didn't make any sense to me. At various times in my young life I had simply 'switched off' when grown-ups spoke about things that were above my head. To me, this was just one of those occasions.

Of course, I had known that we were Jewish but this fact had never seemed important to me. I had never been made to feel that we were essentially different from our neighbours. We spoke in the same way as they did, wore the same sort of clothes, and ate exactly the same sort of food. (It was several months later before I even heard of the existence of kosher.) At my little local school, I hadn't been treated as being different either by the teachers or by my fellow pupils. So I really couldn't understand what the fuss was about.

Of course, I am now well aware that this state of affairs was far from typical. I suppose this different experience was due to living in a small, relatively affluent community just outside Vienna. Later, it became clear to me that I had been sheltered from the large amount of anti-Semitism that had prevailed in Austria well before the Anschluss. It may be that people made remarks about us behind our backs but, if they did, I was quite unaware of that.

Subsequent to the actual day, there was no perceived change in the attitude of neighbours, teachers or fellow pupils. However, I received enlightenment not from people but from an object – namely the ever-present swastika flag. These flags were on display on all houses and public buildings. Open spaces often had huge flags stretched between two poles. Everywhere I went there were these vast, bright red flags with the distinctive white circles filled with black crooked crosses.

Everywhere, that is, except our house. Though we were equipped for displaying



September 1937. My first day at school

a flag. Previously on public holidays, like everyone else, we had shown the Austrian red-white-red flag from a small opening in our attic. The flag was still there but we obviously couldn't display it. Equally obviously, we couldn't show the swastika flag since Jews weren't allowed to besmirch the 'sacred' red-white-black. So, alone among the other houses in our neighbourhood, we were flying no flag at all. I couldn't fail to understand the underlying symbolism. It

told me quite plainly that we really were different and that it really did matter. Far from being unimportant, now, suddenly, it had become the most important thing in the world.

I have another memory which illustrates the far from hostile attitude of our neighbours at that time. I have a picture in my mind of my mother talking in our kitchen to a teenage girl, aged roughly 16. Thinking about it, I feel sure she was being briefed before baby-sitting on some evening when my parents were going to be away from home. This wouldn't have been an onerous task since I was about seven and my brother was more than ten years old. I imagine that it would have given my mother peace of mind to know that someone was in the house who could cope, or call on outside help, should an emergency occur.

At some stage during the briefing session, the girl wanted to show my mother the present her boyfriend had just given her. This was a gold-plated swastika brooch which was, I imagine, the must-have fashion accessory that every girl would then long to have. Young as I was, I now fully understood what was going on in my mother's mind. Though far from pleased at the sight of this object, she knew that it was necessary to express admiration and that is exactly what she did.

I don't think that the girl personally subscribed to the Nazi ideology. I expect she showed the brooch to everyone she met. It wouldn't have occurred to her that it might be rather tactless to invite that nice, motherly Frau Schneider to admire a swastika. To her, the only thing that the brooch symbolised was how much she meant to the young Romeo who had given her this highly prized present. Indeed, if she really thought like

Obviously, this cosy little world could not and did not endure. By the summer of 1938, my father's business had been confiscated and our house commandeered so that it could be used as a clubhouse for the Hitler Youth. By then, I had begun to learn a lot more things which, in time, would culminate in British citizenship.

Leo Baeck MA in European Jewish History

Queen Mary, University of London, and the Leo Baeck Institute London are inviting applications for their 2009/10 Leo Baeck MA in European Jewish History.

The Leo Baeck MA trains scholars towards undertaking independent research on Jewish history, culture and thought in Europe. It provides a strong grounding in approaches and theories which have influenced the ways in which scholars understand Jewish history and introduces students to a wide range of sources. Particular attention is paid to the Jewish response to modernity; assimilation and identity; the role of anti-Semitism; the origins of the Holocaust; Jewish intellectual history.

The Leo Baeck Institute is the leading research institute in the field of the history and culture of German-speaking Jewry in Europe from the 17th century onwards. The Institute publishes the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* and organises a broad range of events and conferences.

The History Department at Queen Mary provides first-rate teaching within a friendly atmosphere and an emphasis on student support. RAE 2008 ranked Queen Mary among the top 15 research universities in the UK. The History Department performed very well with nearly a third of its research rated as 'world leading' and nearly two-thirds as 'internationally excellent' or better. Part-time study is also available.

Entry requirements: An upper second class honours undergraduate degree or higher in History (or overseas equivalent). Mature students from other academic backgrounds are encouraged to apply. The course costs £4,200 for UK/EU applicants, £9,900 for international students.

Deadline for receipt of applications: 31 August 2009

More information: <http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/postgraduate/masters>

Contact: Matt Latham, Assistant Administrator (Admissions) Tel: +44 (0)20 7882 8370 email: history@qmul.ac.uk

a Nazi she wouldn't even have entered our house. Furthermore, I would expect that in that far from permissive time, her parents would have known where she was going and would have forbidden the whole thing if they subscribed to the Nazi view of Jews.

Obviously, this cosy little world could not and did not endure. By the summer of 1938, my father's business had been confiscated and our house commandeered so that it could be used as a clubhouse for the Hitler Youth. By then, I had begun to learn a lot more things which, in time, would culminate in British citizenship and familiarity with the English language.

Erwin Schneider

Chairman praises 'amazing professionalism' of AJR services

Addressing a well-attended AGM at the AJR Centre, Chairman Andrew Kaufman told members that the organisation had – not surprisingly – been unable to escape the financial turbulence of recent months: its stock market investments had suffered; there had been a 'dramatic reduction' in investment income following the slashing of interest rates and the cutting of dividends; and legacy income had fallen by almost 50 per cent as against the previous year.

But the financial news wasn't all gloomy. Factors in our favour were: reason to believe that legacies would increase this year; the Claims Conference had stepped up grants to us; and the AJR would flourish due to the 'amazing professionalism' of all our services. Grant-giving to members last year had increased by nearly 20 per cent to over £1 million – 'a truly astonishing amount'.

Andrew went on to thank Sue Kurlander and her team of social workers for all their hard work: it was a hugely difficult task helping not only an ageing community but, increasingly, members of the Second Generation.

The number of regional groups had increased to 43, Andrew said, providing First and Second Generation members with an opportunity to socialise at group meetings, get-togethers and holidays.

Similarly, at the Centre attendances had increased – due, of course, to the superb

quality of the food – while the meals-on-wheels service continued to grow in popularity. Andrew thanked Susie Kaufman and her team, singling out 'our loyal chef Cassie'.

The AJR also relied on 'a wonderful bank of loyal volunteers' under the guidance of Carol Hart, Andrew added.

The Chairman noted that the *AJR Journal* was 'much respected' in the Jewish community and that *Refugee Voices*, the AJR's audio-visual testimony collection, had been formally launched at the Wiener Library just a few days earlier. The AJR continued to support Holocaust-related educational institutions, in particular the Wiener Library and Beth Shalom.

No one who was present would ever forget last year's 70th anniversary Kindertransport celebration, with the KT Committee 'so ably led' by Erich Reich, Andrew said. Finally, he paid tribute to AJR Directors Gordon Greenfield, Michael Newman and Carol Rossen and the whole of the rest of the team. Members of the Management Committee were re-elected unanimously.

There was positive news too with regard to the new care campus being built in Golders Green. Neil Taylor, Jewish Care's Director of



Jewish Care's Neil Taylor: 'The Golders Green care campus is due for completion next May'

Care and Community Services, and his colleague, Head of Strategy Cydonie Garfield, told the meeting there had been 'amazing progress': the development was due for completion in May 2010 and people would begin moving in in successive months. Of the 45 apartments, 37 would be available for private rent and the remaining 8 for affordable housing.

HS

Forward to the light

Earlier this year, a group comprising seven 'second generation' people from the North of England and four of their adult children paid a visit to Cracow. All wished to learn something about Poland, spending several days in Cracow before and after visiting the nearby camp.



The author, right, with social worker Ania Kalon at the new Jewish Community Centre in Cracow

The group visited the new Jewish Community Centre (opened by Prince Charles last year), meeting social worker Ania Kalon and Centre director Jonathan Orstein and attending the Centre's Friday night meal and an English lesson for seniors there.

At Birkenau, their guide was Bernard Offen, a survivor of five camps, who related memories of his experiences there in August-October 1944. Bernard had been most fortunate in managing to reunite with two of his brothers after the war. He owed his survival to his 'angels' – older prisoners who had helped him in various ways. He encouraged questions, finding it healing to pass on his story.

One member of the group commented: 'I find it very hard to describe the experience of visiting Auschwitz/Birkenau. What took place there in the war years is so unspeakable that it feels wrong to try to reduce it to mere words.' This response was echoed throughout the group.

One element that enhanced this experience for the older group members was the presence of the next generation: 'There was something of looking back at the bleak darkness but also forward to the light – represented for me by the presence of our four thoughtful, sensitive, and beautiful third-generation people.'

Barbara Dresner Dorrity

Barbara Dresner Dorrity is one of the AJR's Northern Social Workers and facilitates a Second Generation group in Leeds and Manchester.

Refugee Voices launched

Refugee Voices, the AJR's audio-visual Holocaust testimony collection, has been launched at the Wiener Library in London.

Besides hearing from Holocaust historians Professor Tony Kushner from Southampton University and Dr Olaf Jensen from the University of Leicester's Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust Studies, guests at the launch also heard from *Refugee Voices* Directors Dr Anthony Grenville and Dr Bea Lewkowicz.

Andrew Kaufman, Chairman of the AJR, told those present that 'Unless we act quickly, we are approaching a point where these testimonies – these witness statements – will be lost forever.' The AJR, he said, had created 'an innovative resource that will enable future generations to study a part of history that has had profound consequences for how we live today.'

During the evening, guests also heard from Trude Silman, one of the interviewees for the project.

In addition to the Wiener Library, the AJR is delighted to announce that this valuable collection will be deposited at the Universities of Leeds and Leicester as well as at the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris. We are also thrilled that visitors to the German Historical Institute in London will have access to the material. Furthermore, we hope to announce partnerships with other institutions over the coming months.

To coincide with the launch at the Wiener Library, we have created the *Refugee Voices*



Trude Silman speaks at launch of *Refugee Voices* project

website at www.refugeevoices.co.uk. Here visitors can watch excerpts from some of the 450 hours of film archive.

In recent weeks, I have also discussed the *Refugee Voices* project with representatives of various institutions, libraries, universities and research centres from around the world so that historians, scholars and students can watch the films, read the transcripts and make use of our groundbreaking resource.

Many of these opportunities have arisen out of the AJR's participation in the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, which consists of representatives of government as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations. In addition to calling for greater access to archives, the Task Force supports a number of teacher training seminars and other projects which commemorate the Holocaust.

Michael Newman

INSIDE the AJR

Nottingham (East Midlands) summer meeting

We held a summer meeting at a member's delightful country home in Mkt Bosworth. Our hosts made us very welcome and gave us a delicious lunch, accompanied by music from Naomi Hyamson and Harold Lester arranged by our co-ordinator Esther. Our two oldest members – Meta, 102, and Eva, in her late 90s – came despite the 100-mile round trip. *Bob Norton*

Ilford: Foiling the BNP

Our speaker having regrettably let us down, we discussed various topics, not least the need to vote in the European elections the following day to ensure the BNP was not elected. Who had been our inspiration was another subject raised – the consensus was that one learns from everyone one meets. *Meta RoseNeil*
Next meeting: 5 Aug. 6th birthday celebration, entertainment by Lynne Bradley

Sheffield CF: 'The Journey'

Fourteen of us enjoyed Karen van Coevorden's presentation 'The Journey', the primary school learning experience about the Kindertransport which she runs with a team at Beth Shalom. Among other things, Susanne briefed us on AJR events and we heard about a BBYO initiative which suggests an 'Adopt a Survivor Project' for young people. *Dorothy Fleming*
Next meeting: 18 Oct at Maitlis home. Prof Sue Vice, 'Holocaust Literature'

Hatfield House outing

Members from Temple Fortune, Radlett and Welwyn GC were taken on a tour of Hatfield House by a wonderful guide, Dorothy. After lunch, we had a little time to visit the glorious gardens. Our thanks to Hazel Beiny and Esther Rinkoff, who looked after us so well. *Harriet Hodes*

A treat at Pinner

Photographer Les Spitz enchanted us with a high-class audio-visual presentation of his pictures. Starting with a stunning 'Venetian Carnival', we were taken on tours of, among other areas, Buenos Aires and the Antarctic as well as given an Impressionist tour of Paris. A real treat – and that was before the tea!

Paul Samet

Next meeting: 6 Aug. Annual Garden Party (details being sent out separately)

Lunch in Essex

There were some 20 of us, including members from Cleve Road, who joined us for lunch. Ken Ward reported on attending the D-day remembrance service in Normandy and Otto Deutsch took some members on a guided tour of Southend.

Ken Ward

Next meeting: 11 Aug. Shirley Bilgora, 'A Soldier's Tale'



PHOTO BY JANET WESTON

Edwina with Kent Group member John Izbicki

Southern Region members had a wonderful day out thanks to the generous hospitality of Edwina Currie and her husband John. The couple welcomed into their homes members from Brighton, Bromley, Ilford, Kent, Kingston, South London and Surrey and worked tirelessly to make them feel incredibly welcome. After the delicious lunch, there was a medley of songs by Naomi Hyamson with Jenny Gould on the keyboard. Edwina then gave a talk on her charitable work, including her association with the Kindertransport movement.

Janet Weston

Cambridge: Jewish opera singers

Jewish opera singers, male and female, from the past were the subject of Alan Bilgora's talk, which was well augmented with memorable recordings. We look forward to a further selection next year.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 13 Aug. Ladislau Löb, 'A Jewish Schindler'?

Brighton & Hove Sarid follow-up report

We heard a follow-up report by Dr T. Scarlett Epstein on 'The Impact of Globalisation on Indian Villages'. Her film 'Back to the Village', made several years ago, has not caused a change in policies and there is now a 'pull migration' of 1,000 people a day to the slums of Bangalore. We were all shocked by the slow progress.

Susanne Dyke

Next meeting: 17 Aug. Janet Niam, 'Neve Shalom/Wahat Al Salaam – the Peace Village'

Leeds CF visit to Lotherton Hall

We asked for, and got, a rather different meeting with a visit to Lotherton Hall, just outside Leeds. Following a walk through the beautiful gardens, we toured the picturesque country house, now a museum, and strolled around the bird garden.

Barbara Cammerman

Wessex outing to New Forest

Once again, we had an enjoyable outing in the New Forest, where Herta Kammerling had arranged a trip to the large pre-Victorian Rhinefield House. The 26 of us chatted about our experiences, past and present. Then Myrna gave us an instructive talk about her work with AJR groups and about the AJR's valuable social service activities.

George Ettinger

Edgware: 'A Soldier's Tale'

We were fascinated by Shirley Bilgora's talk about her efforts to discover the wartime grave in Normandy of her beloved Uncle Max, which she finally succeeded in doing some 60 years after his death.

Eve Gllicksman

Next meeting: 18 Aug. David Lawson, 'The Jews of Ostrava'

Radlett: The Jewish communities of Kerala

Edna Fernandes discussed the reasons for the recent decline of the ancient Jewish communities in Kerala. Her talk led to a lively discussion, including on how to save the old and beautiful synagogues from falling into ruin.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 19 Aug. Shirley Bilgora, 'A Soldier's Tale'

Temple Fortune: Career of a disc jockey

Nicky Horne told us about his 40-year career as a disc jockey at Jewish charity dances and later at United Biscuits factory radio. Nicky eventually made his name at Capital Radio.

David Lang

Next meeting: 20 Aug. Gerald Curzon, 'A Strange Affair – Hannah Arendt and the Nazi Philosopher Martin Heidegger'

Bristol/Bath: Magen David Adom

Eli Benson of Magen David Adom in the UK told us about the largely unsung activities of this organisation, which has at long last become a member of the International Red Cross.

David Hackel

Coffee and chat at Café Imperial

The stalwarts coped with the hot weather to have their coffee and chat. It was agreed that with so many on holiday the next meeting would be on Tuesday 4 August.

Wembley CF get-together

We enjoyed our monthly get-together of discussion, refreshments and socialising. As usual, views were expressed on a variety of topics.

North London talk on Dutch Jewry

A well-attended meeting learned much from Rabbi Harry Jacobi's most interesting account of Dutch Jewry and Rembrandt's Amsterdam.

Hanne R. Freedman

Next meeting: 27 Aug. 8th birthday celebration. Ruth Bourne, 'The Life of Constable'

'Churchill's German Army'

It was an historic afternoon for the AJR when a full house of 80 people from 11 groups met for a special showing of 'Churchill's German Army', which was first shown on the National Geographic Channel in April. Short addresses by historian Helen Fry and Suzanne Bardgett from Imperial War Museum were much appreciated.

David Lang, RAF MEAF Command (1955-57)

Hull: Tour of Jewish Berlin

Most of our meeting was taken up by a report of a lecture tour of Jewish Berlin undertaken by one of our members which

continued on page 14

Celebration of Volunteering



Carol Hart, Head of Volunteer Services at AJR, George Layton, Andrew Kaufman, Lord Janner



'Immense' contribution made by volunteers

Over 70 AJR volunteers packed a House of Lords 'Celebration of Volunteering' evening hosted by Lord Janner of Braunstone. They were addressed by Lord Janner, AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman and George Layton. Andrew noted that the support of the volunteers was critical to the success of the increasing number of regional groups. Presenting certificates to all volunteers present, he praised their 'immense' contribution to the AJR.

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

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Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)
Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

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Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

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Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

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Hull
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Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

Liverpool annual lunch



(At front) Sonia Strong, Prof. Eve Rosenhaft, Inge Williams, Hanna Eardley, Kay Fyne (At back) Dorothee Smith, Susanne Green

Over 30 people attended our annual lunch, including members from Aberystwyth, Blackpool and the Wirral. Eve Rosenhaft, Professor of German Historical Studies at the University of Liverpool, gave an interesting and enlightening talk on 'Fight or Flight: Jews in Nazi Germany and the Decisions They Faced'.
Susanne Green
Next meeting: 20 August

Special Birthday Girl



Estelle Brookner with husband Harold at a staff party in her honour. Estelle is Administrator to the Social Services Department and has worked at the AJR for 14 years

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Norfolk (Norwich)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

Oxford
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Radlett
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Sheffield
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Temple Fortune
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent
Max and Jane Dickson
01892 541026

Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road, London NW6
Tel: 020 7328 0208

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

KINDLY NOTE THAT FROM
16 SEPTEMBER 2009,
WHEN WE HAVE OUR NEXT
LUNCHEON CLUB,

WE WILL HAVE OUR SPEAKER AT
12 NOON AND LUNCH AT 12.45 PM

Please be aware that members should not automatically assume that they are on the Luncheon Club list. It is now necessary, on receipt of your copy of the *AJR Journal*, to phone the Centre on 020 7328 0208 to book your place.

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special
interest group

Monday 3 August 2009

Rev Bernd Koschland

'Learning on the job'

KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH
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Reservations required

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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS
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August Afternoon Entertainment

Mon 3 KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub

Tue 4 CLOSED

Wed 5 Michael Heaton

Thur 6 Irving Hiller

Mon 10 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 11 CLOSED

Wed 12 Simon Gilbert

Thur 13 Sheila Games

Mon 17 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 18 CLOSED

Wed 19 Mike Mirandi

Thur 20 Chris Sausman

Mon 24 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 25 CLOSED

Wed 26 Roy Bass

Thur 27 Paul Coleman

Mon 31 CLOSED - BANK HOLIDAY

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone
Linda Kasimir on 020 8385 3070 to make an
appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue,
Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3070

Myrna Glass, London South and Midlands
Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070

Agnes Isaacs, Scotland and Newcastle
Co-ordinator
0755 1968 593

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

INSIDE THE AJR cont. from p12

included the Holocaust memorial and Room of Families, the Jewish Museum, Grunewald, and Wannsee. On the lighter side, we spent a morning in Potsdam, enjoying the over-the-top baroque architecture of Sans Souci.

Rose Abrahamson

Hendon: Holocaust testimonies

The film *Schindler's List* was a great success in 1994, the box office proceeds being donated to charity to help survivors. As a result, 56,000 testimonies were collected from Holocaust survivors by volunteers. Our speaker Bernice Krantz helped to interview many of these.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 24 Aug. Pamela Amdurer, 'World Jewish Relief'

Cleve Road: The Pears family

Andrea Cameron gave us fascinating insight into several generations of the Pears family and their famous soap, a story which began in the late 18th century. Though Pears soap is still available here, its manufacture has been outsourced to India.

David Lang

Next meeting: 25 Aug. A speaker from World Jewish Relief

Welwyn GC get-together

We enjoyed Monica's hospitality for a social get-together. Hazel told us about the many activities taking place in the Southern Region. Also, discussions among individual members uncovered a number of coincidences which led to members agreeing to help one another research their families.

Fred Simms

Next meeting: 25 Aug. Celebration of 4th anniversary, with music by Naomi Hyamson

ALSO MEETING IN AUGUST

Bromley CF 4 Aug. Details being sent out

Eastbourne CF 24 Aug. Inaugural meeting. Details being sent out

Norfolk 24 Aug. Details being sent out

THEATRE OUTINGS IN AUGUST

19 Aug. 'Great American Song Book'. New End Theatre, 7.30 pm

27 Aug. 'Hello Dolly'. Regents Park, 2.30 pm

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AJR ANNUAL TEA

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ELTON WAY, WATFORD
13 SEPTEMBER 2009**

If you wish to attend, please complete and return to us the form enclosed with this issue of the AJR Journal

AJR TRIP TO ISRAEL

29 November to 8 December 2009

We are arranging a 10-day trip to Israel this November

This will be a fantastic opportunity to visit various places of interest including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, the Dead Sea and Masada

We are planning to stay at the 4-star Ramat Rachel Hotel in Jerusalem on a half-board basis

Please note that there will be some walking involved

If you wish to go on this trip, please fill in the form enclosed with this issue of the Journal

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JOURNEY ABOARD THE WINTON TRAIN

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4 September 2009

If you would like to join us to meet the train please contact Andrea at the AJR on 0208 385 3070

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Please contact Head Office on 020 8385 3070 if you are in need of an electronic machine that magnifies documents.

The machine is ideal for members with impaired vision.

WANTED TO BUY German and English Books

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OBITUARIES

Hans Seelig, 1931-2009

Hans Seelig, who died from a heart attack on 23 June, was born into a middle class family in Mannheim. His father, self-taught, played the violin and was on friendly terms with musicians from Mannheim's prestigious opera house. While sharing this love of music, his mother was devoted to literature and wrote poetry. 'You attended your first concert at the age of minus nine months!', she told Hans.

At the age of five, Hans taught himself to read music. At the same time, he began to play the recorder. At the age of six, he began to play the piano and to compose. Later, he took up the flute, in which he was especially proficient. But his interest in music was not all-consuming: he didn't have the passion needed to devote his life to it. Besides, there was a living to make.

Having come over to England on the Kindertransport, Hans met up with his parents in Brighton. The family subsequently moved to Oxford. Having inherited from his father not only an unusual musical ability but also a linguistic gift, Hans decided on a career in modern languages. He entered Worcester College, Oxford – he remembered someone called



Rupert Murdoch occupying the room above his – in order to study German and French.

Hans didn't neglect his music. He wrote a number of compositions which were performed at college and, immediately on taking his degree, he took an advanced course in harmony and counterpoint at a Swiss conservatory.

Hans found a job teaching German together with some music at a grammar school in Manchester. He was happy there but, after eight years, to be closer to his family, he took a job as head of German in a school in Hemel Hempstead, where he was to remain for seven years.

He continued his musical studies,

having several of his compositions performed. But an old problem resurfaced time and again: self-doubt, panic before performances of his music – the fear of rejection he traced back to Germany.

Fifteen years was enough of teaching children. He obtained a job as head of German at Hendon College of Technology (later Middlesex University). He published German poetry and edited works of German literature. Here he remained for 18 years before obtaining an advantageous early retirement package.

In the late 1970s, Hans was asked to give a talk to a cultural association of former refugees, Jews and non-Jews, from Germany: Club 43 (the title indicating the year in which the group was formed). Some time later, he gave a second talk and, in 1993, finding himself increasingly drawn into the association, he took over the chairmanship. Under his steady hand, Club 43, meeting at Belsize Square Synagogue, went from strength to strength. The programme of weekly lectures provided an astonishing array of subject matter. Hans will be an exceptionally difficult chairman to replace. He was decorated by the German Government for his services to Anglo-German relations.

Besides his stewardship of Club 43, Hans was a long-time member of the Labour Party and an active anti-racist; Vice-Chairman and Social Secretary of Bedfordshire Progressive Synagogue; and a member of the U3A (University of the Third Age), where he co-ordinated the classical music group and was also a member of the philosophy, discussion, jazz and Shakespeare groups. Characteristically, his home was piled high with literally thousands of books and CDs.

Last but by no means least, Hans was a bon viveur: a fine cook and a wine lover. A genial, friendly man with a fine sense of humour, he will be much missed.

Howard Spier

Hans Joseph Meyer, 1913-2009

Hans Meyer was born of Jewish parents in Mainz, Germany. His father had a hardware shop and died in 1932 and his mother perished later in Theresienstadt.

Hans came to England in 1934 at the age of 21, after the Nazis had terminated his medical studies. He joined the staff of Anna Essinger's progressive co-educational boarding school at Bunce Court, on the North Downs of Kent, where he quickly developed into an outstanding teacher, specialising in woodwork and sports, and a mentor to many children. Most of the school's pupils were children whose parents had fled from, or had to remain in, Nazi Germany. Hans Meyer's great contribution lay in his ability to empathise with these uprooted children – we were among them. Together with his first wife Hannah, he helped to give the school an emotional stability that the other staff, excellent teachers though they were, could not always provide.

In 1940 he was interned and sent to the camp at Huyton, Liverpool. Hearing that some of 'his' boys were to be deported to Australia, he volunteered to accompany them on what proved to be the infamous voyage of the *Dunera*. He was returned to

this country in 1941, to be reunited with his wife and young son Joseph, who had meanwhile moved with the school to Shropshire. Unlike so many others, he remained philosophical about this panic measure. Tragically, his youngest son Tyll died at the age of 21 in a motoring accident in the USA.

When the school closed in 1948, Hans, together with a former English pupil of the school, set up a mobile repair business that dealt with plumbing, electrical repairs, carpentry, and even building work. Though highly skilled, neither was a shrewd businessman and the partnership ended in 1956. Hans then became a qualified teacher at Culham College, Abingdon and spent 20 immensely fulfilling years in the Special Unit for Boys at Shepway School, Maidstone. He retired in 1978, a year after Hannah had died, and subsequently lived happily, still in his delightful Kentish cottage, with Susanne Hein from Hamburg, whom he married in 2001. He developed his extensive land into a beautiful garden and planted a small



forest of conifers, which provided an ideal venue for several reunions of Old Bunce Courtians from all over the world.

Following the last reunion, in 2003, he privately published a book of reminiscences from those who had taken part: *Reflections: Bunce Court*. Survived by Susanne and his son Joseph, Hans will be remembered with deep affection.

**Leslie Baruch Brent
and Eric Bourne**



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



The grass is dying

Israel has been experiencing a drought for several years. Everyone knows that not a single drop of rain falls in Israel during the summer months – namely, from May to October – so that all the country's water requirements arrive in the form of precipitation during the rainy winter months. For the last five years, however, the rainfall has not been sufficient to replenish the rivers in the north, so that the level of Lake Tiberias, the principal fresh-water reservoir, has been dangerously depleted.

However, despite warnings in the Bible and human experience in the intervening thousands of years, it does not seem to have occurred to anyone that this might happen in modern times. Although Israeli scientists have been at the forefront of water desalination research, the various governments of Israel have been loth to embark on this long and expensive process. Considering the extensive use of water in agriculture, the 'greening' of the desert, and the growth of the population, the amount of water that was adequate in the past was obviously not going to be enough forever.

When the grim situation first became clear, last winter, 'they' announced that nobody would be allowed to water their gardens. And that no public parks could be watered either. This would be tantamount to turning Israel back into the desert it once was, the protest went up, and eventually 'they' crumbled. A new edict was published to the effect that public parks could be watered, but only during hours of darkness, and any garden that used the drip watering system could continue to do so. This did not last long either: it was recently announced on the radio that private gardens could be watered, even by sprinklers, but for no more than one hour a week.

The general populace was encouraged

to save water in various ways, and even to refrain from flushing toilets unless absolutely necessary. Suddenly, without further ado, saving water began to dominate our lives, and the people are being encouraged to employ various water-saving and recycling devices, in addition to installing special attachments to taps and double flushing systems on toilets. Advertisements on TV even remind people to turn the tap off while soaping dishes or themselves in the shower.

The first thing we did when we heard about the ban on watering gardens was to buy three large water butts and a bucket. The bucket was duly installed in our bathroom and the butts in the garden. This was during the winter, when there was still a chance of rain. The bucket in our bathroom is placed under the tap in the shower, so that all the water that usually runs down the drain while we wait for the hot water to come through is collected and eventually transferred to one of the butts.

When summer arrived, the bathroom bucket was complemented by a large laundry bowl. Now, after collecting the cold water in the bucket, the person who is taking a shower stands in the laundry bowl and thus the water from the shower is collected. Soapy water isn't very good for the garden, I'm told, but it's surely better than no water at all.

A tremendous amount of water gets wasted in the kitchen, it transpires. So now, when we wash dishes or rinse vegetables, we collect the water in a bowl and that goes to the garden too. Most of the plants seem to be surviving, though only just.

As for not flushing the toilet, it seems that there are some sacrifices for my country that even I am not prepared to make.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

Ghetto pensions

Following a court ruling in Germany, it is now possible for people whose applications for a ghetto pension were rejected to have their claims reviewed. The court has ruled that the previous eligibility criteria were too restrictive and that, as a result, people's claims were unjustly turned down.

Approximately 70,000 people applied for a ghetto pension but around 60,000 claims were rejected. The original eligibility criteria were extremely difficult to satisfy and the pension authorities came under immediate pressure to liberalise the conditions that must be met.

Matters were further complicated by the Ghetto Fund, introduced in response to the huge numbers of rejected claims for the ghetto pension. The Ghetto Fund paid a one-time award of 2,000 euros for those who worked in a ghetto. One of the conditions of receiving this payment is that anyone who was subsequently awarded the Ghetto pension would have to repay this sum.

We are advising those whose ghetto pension claims were rejected to write to the pension authority which turned down their claim and ask for a review. In circumstances in which a husband or wife who applied has since passed away, a widow/er can pursue the claim.

It is still possible for those who have not yet applied for a ghetto pension to do so.

Tax on German pensions

In response to the notice many members recently received about tax payable on German pensions, we can confirm that income tax is not payable on these annuities. German and Austrian pensions are exempt from tax in accordance with section 330 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, which states that 'Annuities and pensions payable under any special provision for victims of National-Socialist persecution which is made by the law of the Federal Republic of Germany or any part of it or of Austria shall not be regarded as income for any income tax purpose.'

Written enquiries should be sent to Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to mnewman@ajr.org.uk