

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## The rescue of refugee scholars

**S**eventy-five years ago, in 1933, the Academic Assistance Council, known from 1936 as the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, was founded. The AAC/SPSL was a remarkable body that played a unique part in the rescue of scholars and scientists, mostly Jewish, who had been dismissed by the Nazis from their posts at German and Austrian universities and whose livelihoods, and lives, were endangered.

After the passing of the Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums of 7 April 1933, aimed at removing racially and politically undesirable persons from the civil service, something like a quarter of the academic staff at German universities and research institutes were dismissed, of whom some 2,000, or about two thirds, emigrated. This exodus of academic talent was on a scale unprecedented in modern times; Germany lost its place at the forefront of science and scholarship, while the recipient countries, principally the USA but also Britain, benefited hugely.

The dazzling contribution that the Jewish refugees from Hitler made to British intellectual, cultural and scientific life is well known. Some academic disciplines, like art history and psychoanalysis, hardly existed in Britain before the arrival of the refugees, while many others, from philosophy and classics to musicology and economics, were transformed and enriched beyond measure by the intellectual stimulus from the German-speaking countries. In the natural sciences, one need only cite such names as Ernst Chain, Francis Simon, Rudolf Peierls, Hans Krebs and Max Perutz. By 1992, the displaced scholars and their children included 16 Nobel laureates, 18 knighthoods, 74 Fellows and 6 Foreign Members of the Royal Society (in the sciences) and 34 Fellows and 18 Corresponding Members of the British Academy (in the humanities and social



Esther Simpson OBE

sciences), an extraordinary record of academic achievement.

The two principal initiators of the AAC in 1933 were, in different ways, the Hungarian-born scientist Leo Szilard, who had left his university position in Berlin as soon as Hitler came to power, and Sir William (later Lord) Beveridge, Director of the London School of Economics and subsequently father of Britain's welfare state. In April 1933, Szilard, who was already hard at work persuading threatened colleagues to leave Nazi Germany for positions abroad, was in Vienna, where he met a young Englishwoman, Esther (Tess) Simpson; she became the devoted administrator of the AAC/SPSL, responsible for its day-to-day working.

Beveridge, who was visiting the same hotel in Vienna, lent a sympathetic ear to Szilard's concerns. Beveridge and the LSE economist Lionel Robbins (later Lord Robbins, responsible for the Robbins Report of 1963 that transformed Britain's system of higher education) met with the famous Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises, who arrived clutching a newspaper report of the first dismissals at the German universities. The need to provide for these early victims of Nazi persecution was immediately clear to Beveridge, and he outlined his plan to

Robbins on the spot. The AAC, which was essentially run from within the academic community in Britain, then came into being very quickly.

In May 1933, a letter signed by a list of leading figures in British university and intellectual life was published in *The Times*, proposing the establishment of an organisation to rescue the careers and lives of displaced academics. The Council's initial declaration was signed by over 40 of Britain's most eminent men of scholarship, including John Maynard Keynes, Gilbert Murray, the Presidents of the Royal Society and the British Academy, and 9 Chancellors or Vice-Chancellors of universities and 7 Masters or Directors of colleges. The celebrated scientist Lord Rutherford became the AAC's first president. The project received a notable boost on 3 October 1933, when a public meeting was held at the Albert Hall in support of the refugees from Germany. Among the speakers was Albert Einstein, whose speech on 'Science and Civilisation' generated enormous enthusiasm.

By summer 1933, the AAC was functioning in cramped offices in Burlington House, above the Royal Society. As its workload increased, it moved to premises in the LSE, to Gordon Square, then to Cambridge during the war. Walter Adams, a London University academic who later became director of the LSE, was its first general secretary, Szilard added his considerable energies, and Tess Simpson ran the office. The AAC faced the twin problems of funds and academic posts. Its funding was modest, consisting mainly of donations from individuals, membership subscriptions and some larger donations from organisations. The then considerable amount of £3,100 was raised from the academic staff at the LSE, who, in a remarkable demonstration of solidarity with their displaced German colleagues, agreed to donate a voluntary levy of 1.3 per cent of

*continued overleaf*

**THE RESCUE OF REFUGEE SCHOLARS** *continued from page 1*

their salaries.

These funds did not run to creating jobs for dismissed scholars. Instead, the AAC provided them with maintenance grants, to tide them over while it helped them to make contact with institutions where they might find posts. The grants were modest: £250 per annum for a married scholar, £182 for a single person. As the absorptive capacity of the British university system was limited, the SPSL paid travel grants to enable scholars to visit the USA, where often enough they found positions at universities with which the SPSL had put them in touch.

Tess Simpson's devoted work on behalf of the refugee academics encompassed the estimating of their means and needs, the registration of their qualifications and research expertise, and the painstaking work involved in fitting the right scholar to the right position. The individual attention that Simpson dispensed so generously to her charges earned her the lasting affection of entire sections of the British scientific establishment. She had to dovetail her work with that of other organisations in the field, particularly the *Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland*, a Zurich-based organisation created by refugees that later merged with the SPSL, and the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German/Foreign Scholars in the USA.

The AAC's work rapidly bore fruit: by July 1935, 57 refugee scholars had been found permanent positions in Britain, and 155 more were in temporary research and teaching posts. By 1936 it had become apparent that the AAC was not just facing a passing emergency, but that the persecution of 'undesirable' scholars in Germany was likely to continue and intensify. The Council was accordingly reconstituted on a more permanent basis as the SPSL, which aimed to provide research fellowships to the most distinguished refugee scholars, alongside its relief grants. By 1945, 2,541 scholars were registered with the SPSL, of whom some 1,500 had been in direct contact with it; 624 were known to be in the USA, 615 in Britain, and over 200 in other countries.

The SPSL's successes should not blind us to the bleaker aspects of the experience of the refugee scholars. Many suffered from the meagre pay and insecure temporary positions that were their initial lot, from the sudden loss of status and from the general

difficulty of adapting to a strange working environment. Some did not manage the transition at all and failed to re-establish themselves and their careers; there were even suicides. The bulk of those placed by the SPSL were established scholars of some distinction in their thirties and forties. Academics over 50 proved less willing to emigrate, while less assistance was provided to those under 30, since the host universities were reluctant to deprive young native scholars of job openings.

Scientists were at an advantage, since science spoke an international language and the benefits of attracting top-class scientists were obvious. Alfred Lindemann, later Lord Cherwell and Churchill's wartime scientific adviser, transformed science at Oxford by finding positions, often research fellowships funded by the chemicals giant ICI, for refugee scientists: with the arrival of Francis Simon, Kurt Mendelssohn, Nicolas Kurti and Heinz London, Oxford suddenly outclassed Cambridge in the field of low temperature physics. By contrast, history was a subject divided by national boundaries, and historians fared badly: Arthur Rosenberg, author of seminal studies of the fall of the Wilhelmine Empire and the birth of the Weimar Republic, held a temporary post at Liverpool University for three years, but then had to re-emigrate to America, while Hans Baron, an expert on the Italian Renaissance, stayed in Britain for two years jobless, before he too found a position in the USA.

Many refugee scholars passed through Britain, but found permanent positions in America. The wealth of talent lost to Britain has often been lamented: among the scientists who went on to America were such giants as Edward Teller, Hans Bethe and Leo Szilard. There is some truth in the charges that British universities were too insular, too unreceptive to foreign scholarship (and foreigners) and, during the Great Depression, too poorly funded to grasp the prizes waiting on their doorsteps. On the other hand, the SPSL saw the refugee scholars as human beings to be saved, not as an investment to be harvested. Tess Simpson, in particular, never approached them in the spirit of the president of an American university who declared: 'Hitler is my best friend. He shakes the tree and I collect the apples.'

**Anthony Grenville**



KT members enjoyed a splendid Chanukah Party at the AJR Centre. The Rev Bernd Koschland officiated.

### 'Beyond the Call of Duty'

**T**his 60-page booklet describes the work of British diplomats and other Britons who worked to help Jews leave Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938-39. It is based on Sir Martin Gilbert's archival research and his correspondence with many of those who were the beneficiaries of these acts of rescue.

Among those who gave refuge to Jews in their homes, Lady Thatcher and Lord Attenborough also contributed their recollections, as did the Duke of Edinburgh, who, as a schoolboy in Germany when Hitler came to power, made a courageous gesture to a fellow-schoolboy who was Jewish.

The booklet was written for the unveiling of a plaque at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 20 November 2008 by Foreign Secretary David Miliband in recognition of the work of the British diplomats in making a special effort to help Jews leave.

Dedicated to seven of the British diplomats, copies of 'Beyond the Call of Duty' can be obtained by sending a cheque for £5, made payable to 'Sir Martin Gilbert', to 'Beyond the Call of Duty' booklet, c/o Lydia Drukarz, The PR Office, 720 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TL. Only cheques can be accepted as payment for the booklet.

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## God on trial



Last September the BBC ran a programme called 'God on Trial' in which, fictionally, some of the prisoners in Auschwitz demanded to know the nature of a god that can allow so much suffering to take place. They decided to put God on trial.

An interesting assumption is made here. The prisoners, it seems, decided that there is a god. If I had been in Auschwitz, the first question I would have wanted to ask is whether God actually exists. The prisoners came to the conclusion that God had broken His covenant with the Jewish people and had become their enemy. But I couldn't help wondering why the author decided to portray the prisoners as believing in God's existence. Personally, I am not convinced God does exist.

The Jews are said to be the Chosen People. I think it is in *Fiddler on the Roof* that Tevye asks 'Why couldn't He have chosen someone else?' I do not want to offend any of my *frum* readers but how can they still pray to a God that is so heartless as to allow six million of His Chosen People to die in the Holocaust?

I had lunch with a Progressive rabbi recently. I challenged him on the stories in the Old Testament (and, for that matter, those in the New Testament and the Koran). To my surprise, he agreed that they were simply tales that were apt for the days when they were written. He didn't believe that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God but was saved from doing so in the last minute by a ram – any more than I believe in the story of Jonah and the whale. So, very puzzled, I asked him why he was a rabbi. His answer made everything much clearer to me: 'I believe that I must teach the *idea* of God.' So this means that my rabbinical friend does not believe, as the Orthodox do, that the Torah was written by God. To him, it was man-made because, like the Ten Commandments, the Torah was necessary for its time.

Now let's look at the animosity our

religion causes among ourselves. The Orthodox do not recognise the Progressives – many of their rabbis will not even greet ours as such. Our conversions are not acknowledged by most Orthodox rabbis. They will not come into our synagogues. Chief Rabbi

Sachs would not even go to the funeral of his friend, Reform Rabbi Hugo Gryn. Furthermore, look what is happening in Israel. The religious parties have more power in the Knesset than their seats warrant because they are usually needed to make up a coalition. Yet they do not see Israel as a secular state, wanting, in particular, power over education and justice. How different is their attitude to that of the fundamentalist Muslims in Saudi Arabia? And what about Neturei Karta, who do not recognise Israel at all? Remember, like Hitler, Ahmadinejad of Iran sees no difference between Jews of different persuasions.

Do our kosher laws make sense? Of course they *did*. But do they today? No meat goes off faster in hot climates than pork. We do not live in a hot climate. No fish goes off faster in hot climates than shellfish. As I said, we do not live in a hot climate. What have these dietary laws to do with religion? Anyway, we have refrigeration today. Why can I not have milk after meat? Why is halibut a kosher fish but turbot isn't? Should we not take a fresh look at what we believe? Eruvs? In 2008? May I remind my fellow Jews that we left our *shtetls* behind many years ago. No riding on the Sabbath? Why? Reform Rabbi Tony Bayfield was criticised recently for riding in the Lord Mayor's procession on the Sabbath. What nonsense!

'God on Trial.' I think that in the play He was found guilty. Does God exist? Richard Dawkins says 'no'. I do not know. Should there be more tolerance among the many different sects of Judaism? Yes, it is essential, because otherwise we will not survive as Jews.

Peter Phillips

*The prisoners came to the conclusion that God had broken His covenant with the Jewish people and had become their enemy. But I couldn't help wondering why the author decided to portray the prisoners as believing in God's existence. Personally, I am not convinced God does exist.*

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## Journey around my father

### Retracing my Jewish roots in Germany

In August 2008 my sisters, Judy Berle and Anne Sultoon, and I set out on a journey to learn more about our German-Jewish family on my father's side. It was significant in that it was the centenary year of the birth of my father, Curt David, and we all felt moved to explore our German-Jewish heritage. We each had memories from the tales my father had recounted, but he had been reluctant to talk about his experiences, except to speak warmly about his Jewish upbringing. We had all been born in the north of England in the shadows of the Second World War since my father had left Neisse, Germany, arriving in Manchester on his 28th birthday, 27 October 1936.

We had been invited to the opening of an exhibition, 'Fragments of Jewish History', in the Wetterau Museum in Friedberg to commemorate

the Jewish contribution to that medieval town. My paternal grandmother, Clementine Rothschild, was born in Friedberg in 1880, the second of seven children of Nathan and Jeanette Rothschild. The exhibition indeed provided memorabilia from my grandmother's family and, in particular, details of what became of cousins who had been born and brought up in Friedberg and forced to flee the Nazis in the late 1930s.

My grandmother had married Adolf David of Nieder Wöllstadt, a neighbouring village, in 1906, settling in Frankfurt am Main, where my grandfather was a wine merchant. His own father, Tobias, had been a beer merchant and was one of the town's Jewish elders. His gravestone is one of the few remaining in the small and now well preserved Jewish cemetery in Nieder Wöllstadt.

My father and his elder brother Ernst were born in Frankfurt am Main, in the Mittel Weg, ten minutes' walk from the old Opera House, and the Eschenheimer Tor on the old city wall. They were both barmitzvah at Unterlindau synagogue, my father on 5 November 1921. We saw the plaque to the synagogue, which was completely destroyed on Kristallnacht. We pondered how dreadful that night must have been since my grandfather and my uncle were transported to Buchenwald the following morning. My grandmother was forced to live in hiding with her mother-in-law Bertha, aged 83, and her sister-in-law Klara, who had been forcibly removed from Nieder Wöllstadt in August 1938.

Fortunately, by 1938 my father had met my mother Esther in Manchester, and my grandmother, Golda Lea, and her son-in-law, Maurice Blumenthal, acted as financial guarantors. This allowed my uncle, then my grandparents, great-grandmother and great aunt, to come to England in July 1939. (The AJR was very helpful in providing us with the records which gave us these precise details.)

The exhibition in Friedberg provided oral and written testimonies of similar journeys my father's cousins had taken. Especially memorable was the video account of my father's cousin, Kurt Rothschild, who narrated his own journey to the USA, and that of his parents, Uncle Louis and Aunt Recha, who were among the last to leave, departing on a ship from Portugal in 1941 and arriving in New York in early 1942.

Another moving memento was the university record of Erich Rothschild, Kurt's elder brother, which showed both courses taken and then deleted by the Nazis. He was forced to flee to Switzerland, where he spent the war in an agricultural work camp and playing international football. Their younger sister, Ingrid, was on the Kindertransport to London, where she spent the war years with another cousin, Lotte, living in Hull. Sadly, Ingrid, the youngest of my father's Rothschild cousins, had died in New York just months before the opening of this exhibition, which provided such moving accounts of the horrendous journeys of some of the key members of this vibrant Jewish community.

Manfred de Vries, son of Holocaust survivors, spoke movingly at the opening ceremony about the importance of remembrance and how the Jewish community in Hesse had now been revived. The *mikva*, at the end of the Judengasse, which had survived the Nazi era, is perhaps a fitting reminder of this enduring legacy, which had existed in Friedberg from medieval times.

Manfred is a member of the management team of the synagogue in neighbouring Bad Nauheim, an old spa town which many scientific and political luminaries visited in the early twentieth century. It was also home to Elvis Presley as a GI – the same weekend there was a very different tone in that 50-year anniversary music celebration.

Miriam E. David



University record of Erich Rothschild showing courses taken and deleted by the Nazis

## 'UNDERPAID, UNDERFED AND OVERWORKED'?

The article "Underpaid, Underfed and Overworked": Refugees in Domestic Service' by Anthony Grenville in our December edition provoked an exceptionally large response. Below is a selection of correspondence received. A further selection will appear next month (Ed.).

How disappointed I was to read your article 'Underpaid, Underfed and Overworked' – showing, however, a picture of a smiling 'drudge' Jewish domestic refugee doing the kind of work any housewife does in her own home.

Let us please remember that those left behind in Germany or any other Nazi-occupied country were starved, tortured and eventually murdered. We were allowed to enter this amazing country – now our England – and spared the horror of the death camps, which made the complaints in your article not worthy of the *AJR Journal*.

I worked as a domestic servant as a very young Jewish refugee in Bournemouth. While I was not the happiest domestic, my thoughts were filled with fear for my dearest parents, who were not able to escape. Sad to say, unhappiness and loneliness were completely ignored by the English Jewish residents of Bournemouth. Was there a synagogue in Bournemouth? We never knew of it or of any Jewish family. I think we were an embarrassment to them. **Ruth Lansley**  
Isle of Wight

Your article was so apt. One further example among so many. My aunt Elsie, my mother's sister and the only survivor of her family, was relieved to come down from Harrogate after toiling hard in domestic service. She worked there for an important official, probably the mayor. The moment she arrived in London she worked in a factory, run by Jews, making uniforms. No picnic either and only a short lunch break. Money was still short but she had her furnished room, which she later shared with a lady friend.

Although I came over on a Kindertransport, the death of our caring saviour forced me into domestic service at the age of 16. My salary was 16 shillings a week. I shared the room with the pleasant Viennese cook. She and her husband were employed as a couple, but then he was interned and replaced by me!

Unfortunately my employer had a drinking problem. His behaviour was most erratic – frightening for a young girl. One day I was accused of stealing cheese. So my employment there ceased. However, I was still in domestic service with a refugee family. Once I was 18 I joined the ATS. My younger sisters were exploited in unregistered children's homes. Aged 13 to 14, they had to work long hours and sleep in the room with all the children.

There was no help. Finding out that we had left behind a total void and that most of those close to us had perished was still to come .... **Laura Selo**  
London NW11

Why was it so awful for the refugee domestics to have had to empty chamber pots? Those of us who became nurses had to carry out far more unpleasant tasks.

**Annette Saville**  
London NW4

Sir – I was most upset by the view taken of refugees overworked and underpaid in their domestic work places. I came from a middle-class household in Berlin to Britain in October 1939. My middle sister too. She worked for a doctor before being interned on the Isle of Man and I was employed in a refugee children's home.

We did the work we were given and we were grateful for it. Without which, we would have been condemned to slave labour along with our elder sister or to the gas chambers along with many more from our family. It is a dreadful thing to accuse the country which saved me, and so many, by taking us in during our desperate time of need. Certainly, some refugees must have had an unhappy experience – but please don't overshadow the gratitude that the vast majority of refugees must, like me, feel towards a country and its people which had no responsibility towards us, apart from a humanitarian one.

**Margot Allan (née Brauer)**  
New Malden, Surrey

My mother, from Linz, was one of the teenage girls who came to England with 'domestic' visas about whom Anthony Grenville writes so eloquently in your December issue. She recalls that her experiences at the hands of Anglo-Jewish families were especially unpleasant, made even more so perhaps because the 'host' families had no understanding of the secular and largely non-Jewish world from which she (though not her three Jewish grandparents) came. She obtained her freedom – and a decent wage – by joining the WRAC!

**David Kernek**  
Bath

I am very sorry for the young refugees who found themselves in domestic service in this country, having themselves come from affluent middle class homes where domestic servants were employed. Added to this demeaning and frighten-

ing experience, it appears that many young people were exploited and abused. However, I cannot help thinking 'Better a living abused domestic servant in England than a dead one in Auschwitz.' Whatever the ulterior motives were for permitting young people to come to this country, at least their lives were saved.

**Bronia Snow**  
Esher

My parents and I (a six-year-old boy) were allowed to come to England from Germany on a domestic visa on one of the last boats to leave the Hook of Holland to Harwich, on 29 August 1939. My mother had managed to obtain the release of my father from the Oranienburg concentration camp a few weeks before. He had come home badly injured and with double pneumonia.

They obtained a job with the Dixon family in Beulah Hill, Croydon, my mother as a cook/maid, my father as a butler/handyman. The family consisted of the parents and four children and they had also opened up their very large house to about six refugee lodgers.

My mother and father adapted very well to their new-found occupation, considering that they themselves had had their own domestic staff in Germany. We stayed with the Dixons till my parents were interned, my father being sent to Australia on the infamous *Dunera* and my mother to the Isle of Man via a six-week stay in Holloway prison. In the meantime, the Dixons looked after me as one of their own until I was allowed to join my mother on the Isle of Man two or three months later.

Whilst many people did help by sponsoring these refugees, I still feel that many more desperate people could have been saved had more Jewish families opened their homes to them.

**Gerry Gruneberg**  
Stanmore, Middx

I was most distraught reading Anthony Grenville's article regarding the treatment of the Jews who were admitted to Britain for manual purposes. It may have seemed a humanitarian gesture to some, but to the people concerned it was a life saver and gratefully accepted.

The article generalises that all these refugees were underpaid, under-fed and overworked and were exposed to callous and inhuman treatment by employers.

*continued on page 10*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### FROM KRISTALLNACHT TO KINDERTRANSPORT

Sir – Like your correspondents (January), I too remember that November night. It was followed a short time afterwards by my Barmitzvah, in a burnt-out synagogue and conducted by a young rabbi with a shaved head who had only a few days earlier been released from Sachsenhausen. I was discussing these events with a Jewish friend of Swiss nationality. She was then eight years old and remembers her parents taking her to a Zurich synagogue for a special memorial service which resembled the Yom Kippur *Yizkor* service (no shoes, dressed in white).

We wondered what had been the reactions of Jewish communities in the UK. It is now difficult to locate individuals, not former refugees themselves, who might remember the impact Kristallnacht had on their families. Were special services held? Where? By which communities?

The Kindertransports brought many of us witnesses to this country. Were the Kinder regarded as an inconvenience? What percentage of Kinder found their way into Jewish families? I know of none among my friends. It is all very well that, 70 years on, there should be stories in the media commemorating the terrible events of 1938, but what about the time when these events were actually happening? It was a bewildering time for most of us youngsters, alone in a strange land.

Felix Franks, London N3

Sir – *The Prince and the Kinder – a modern fable* Once upon a time, about 10,000 children escaped to the shores of England. Seventy years later, we Kinder commemorated that episode with a reunion of the Kindertransport, the third after intervals of two decades. We greatly appreciated these reunions and our thanks go out to the organisers. Though Bertha voiced doubts ten years ago about her presence at this event, we were very pleased to see her again. Without her efforts, we Kinder would have suffered our own diaspora.

The speeches from the podium were inspiring, the Chief Rabbi citing Moses gently gliding down the Nile as the very first Kind. Lord Attenborough told us again of his hospitality to two refugee sisters. We are reminded of the good people who hid us over there and those who rescued us over here. Hermann Hirschberger's statistics on countries which gave refuge to individuals were well prepared. The one Labour MP on

the platform could not help sneaking in a plea for 'asylum seekers' in the few words he spoke.

We then made for the dining room and wondered why it was so cold. I suppressed my discomfort with the thought that many of our relatives and friends suffered a degrading existence for years in unheated huts in Dachau, Buchenwald and Auschwitz and were often humiliated, standing naked outside for long periods in the bitterly cold weather in the camps.

The organisers ushered in The Prince of Wales for an informal tea party – the highlight of the day. He engaged in conversations with Kinder as he walked between the tables. When he neared our table, he shook hands with several of us, asking me where I came from and expressing delight on hearing about the city of song and palaces. He wondered if I was now retired and I affirmed, saying I thought I deserved it after 42 years of service to industry in the country which had opened its doors to us. He amazed me, saying he would not have wished to have missed the opportunity of meeting so many Kinder who came to this country.

A memorable day. I am now saving up for the 80th reunion, hoping it won't exceed 700 euros, assuming I will be fit enough to travel from Israel for that event, possibly my last one, and looking forward to reminding the King of our previous meeting. Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx

Sir – When I was little, my parents were to have given a home to a refugee girl who, I understand, was to have come through the Kindertransport, but she never arrived. We were living in Eastbourne at the time. I would only have been seven or nine years old but I still remember her name, which I believe was Gerda Langer. I have always wondered what happened to her. It has been an unanswered question all these years. Betty Edwards, Isle of Wight

### KINDERTRANSPORTS 70 YEARS ON

Sir – Regarding Anthony Grenville's November article 'The Kindertransports 70 Years On', my life was saved from the Nazis by my parents, my uncle, Sir Nicholas Winton and his team, my wonderful Scottish guardian, Jean Barbour, and, not least, by Great Britain. Therefore, perhaps not surprisingly, I do not share Dr Grenville's reservations about British immigration policy and official attitudes in 1938-39. These may have been less than perfect but,

compared to the rest of the world, Britain stood out like a beacon and it is irrelevant to say that it may have been mainly on account of guilt over Munich. If you study the efforts made by Nicholas Winton, Britain and Sweden were the only countries willing to take endangered Czechoslovak children.

I have always thought that the Winton rescue mission was not part of the main 10,000 Kindertransport effort, which was created for children from within the German Reich, of which the rump of Bohemia and Moravia became a part only after 15 March 1939. The conditions applying to the 'Winton children' were different as they had to have a guardian who had signed for them in advance and a £50 fee was due – a lot of money at that time. This meant that all the 'Winton children' were picked sight unseen by their prospective foster parents, which made their actions all the more praiseworthy.

Nicky Winton does not like to be called 'Britain's Schindler'. That does not surprise me: Schindler was a very ambiguous character, which is partly what attracted Thomas Keneally and Steven Spielberg. Certainly, both Winton and Schindler were instrumental in saving hundreds of Jewish lives and there was a list of people saved in both cases, but that is where the comparison ends. (I should add that Winton was not only concerned with saving Jewish children but any child that was in danger.)

Regarding Bea Green's letter (December):

1. Winton was not visiting friends with whom he intended to go on a skiing holiday but had cancelled his skiing holiday to visit Prague, at the request of Martin Blake, to help with the refugee problems.
2. On arrival, he saw that nothing was being done for the endangered children and he was told that nothing could be done. He ignored this advice and set up a Children's Section as part of the British Committee for Refugees. (By the way, he returned to London in January not March 1939.)
3. Trevor Chadwick and Bill Barazetti were not working to get children out at that time, though later they, and others, did wonderful work in helping to save the children.
4. The key point is that without Winton's initiative, UK negotiations and the organisation he put in place, the rescue mission would probably (in my opinion almost certainly) not have occurred. To say Winton was no more than 'a valuable link' is a complete distortion.
5. Finally, as indicated earlier, I do agree with Bea Green that it is totally inappropriate to call him Britain's Schindler – but not for the reasons she implies!

Tom Schrecker, Val d'Isère, France

### MISSING ROSSTORY

Sir – Jan issue just come in. Dull without the usual Rosstory. When comes the next?

Dave Finer, Aviemore

The next article by Victor Ross will appear in the March edition (Ed.).

### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Sir – In an otherwise fine review of the Kaddish commemorative concert (December), Gloria Tessler failed to mention Stephen Smith's introduction in which he stated that this date was chosen because on that day Hitler ordered the expulsion of 17,000 Polish Jews (my father among them). In Berlin it affected adult males, whereas elsewhere in Germany it was entire families. It left a chink of opportunity which my eldest sister Ruth, then only 13, suggested to my mother and to which my mother bravely agreed, to put her and my sister Betty (9) illegally on a train to Belgium.

I wonder what happened to the other families left fatherless and destitute in Berlin. Circumstances would surely have forced them to go to Poland, where they had not lived since the First World War.

I was invited by the Berlin Senate for a week's visit in September 2006. On our visit to the Jewish Museum, Aubrey Pomeranz of the Berlin Leo Baeck Institute told me there was little material on *Ostjuden*: we seemed not to have been recorded. This is illustrated yet again by the general failure here (except for Stephen Smith) to mention the *Polenaktion* now and in the past.

John Farrago (also December) seems not to have read my article in the September issue in which I pointed out that Brussels is bilingual. It is located in Flemish Brabant and its original inhabitants are Flemish-speaking. They have a dialect, Marollien, which is a 'minestrone', if you know both languages, of Flemish and French – impossible to unscramble but comic to hear.

Jews were hidden throughout Belgium regardless of the linguistic divide – those who were heroic in rescuing Jews said they had done nothing special. They wished they could have helped more. Unlike in other occupied countries, 94 per cent of Belgium's Jews were not nationals.

Stella Mann, in the same edition, mentions erroneously that Malines was a concentration camp. Caserne Dossin Malines was a transit camp for Jews and Roma to be transported to Auschwitz and entire families were deported from there. Lone children were no longer deported from Caserne Dossin after we 56 children in Wezembeek were raided by the Gestapo on 30 October 1942, a 'promise' having been given to Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians after her successful intercession for us. However, lone children remained hostages in the Association of Jews in Belgium (Judenrat) Children's Homes and the 'promise' could be rescinded at any time. There was a concentration camp – the first the Allies came across – at Fort Breendonk which was for political prisoners, some of whom were Jewish.

Bronia Veitch, Shipley, Yorks

### A REFUGEE COMPLEX

Sir – Jack Lynes (December, Letters) is right that he has a 'refugee complex' but I would not call it a 'non-refugee complex'. If the Battle of Britain had 'gone the other way' – as it very nearly did – Hitler would have

invaded Britain and Mosley's Blackshirts would have furnished the Nazis with lists of Jews to deport. Jack and I would then either not exist or be refugees.

According to the Nazis, no European Jew has the right to be alive today. This fantasy of a *Judenfrei* Europe did not end with the defeat of the Nazis but 'went underground'. Today, there are people in every country of Europe, including Britain, who harbour hopes that someone will succeed where the Nazis failed and rid the world of Jews. There are even people willing to believe that the current economic crisis was planned by 'The Jews' as a prelude to taking over the world as forecast in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*!

This is the reality that all Jews live with, whether they fled the land of their birth or remained there. In rational external terms, Jack is not technically a refugee; in terms of the inner world – the non-rational sphere of emotional life – every Jew is a refugee, particularly in the face of the current mixture of mounting anti-Semitism and disinformation about Israel.

Jack is one of the few who is aware of this refugee-complex, and even more special in putting it into words. For most Jews whose families were not directly involved in the Holocaust, the effect on their emotional inner world operates below their awareness. This has led to a sort of deference to camp survivors on the one hand, and outrage on the other, at anything that could be interpreted as irreverent, such as voiced by those who object to *Stolpersteine* or Benjamin Wilkomirski's book *Fragments*. This book was written by a classical musician about fragments of memory which, as proved later, could not have been his own. But they came from somewhere, in the collective unconscious memory of an entire people on whom the Holocaust had been inflicted. The book was recognised as a literary masterpiece. Perhaps a sensitive musician, whose boundary between the personal and the collective unconscious may have been more permeable than that of most people, was able to bring to our conscious awareness fragments of the untold stories of those who did not live to tell them. Those fragments are carried by the Jewish people generation by generation, although only a few, like Jack Lynes, are aware of it.

Ruth Barnett  
Clinical Director  
Raphael Jewish Counselling Service  
London NW6

### A TOUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD

Sir – Peter Prager (December) suggests I outline my peace plan. Just as I know he stands for appeasement and peace-at-any-price, he is aware of my sentiments too. So it may surprise him to learn that politically I'm with Gordon Brown but, when it comes to Israel, mindful of the nature of the enemy, I'm to the right of

Genghis Khan!

Abbas has no real power base and the noises Olmert has been making are intended to salvage his tarnished image. It all hinges on Iran – a country that cannot be placated, with Israel threatened by its proxies from three sides. So I must ask for a moratorium on this, until the threat from the 'mad mullahs' recedes. The next US presidential term should settle it one way or another. I would have been happier with McCain but, if Obama fails to act, Israel will. With Iran out of the equation, Palestinian resistance would decline, creating an atmosphere for peace. In the meantime, I pray that Israel will not endanger its security by pulling back to what Abba Eban termed 'Auschwitz borders'. So far, it has been a case of trading land for rockets, both in the north and in the south. Giving up territory may impress the wider world for a while but, as Golda Meir once said, 'Looking good is important, but it comes a distant second to staying alive.'

Israel finds itself in a tough neighbourhood, where agreements count for little. One also needs to be aware of what is meant by 'peace' in that part of the world. Only in Arabic are there two words for it. One is *Salaam*, which is full peace that can exist only between Muslim states. There can never be *Salaam* with the Infidel – only a *Hudna*, a cessation of hostilities the Muslim side can terminate at will. In any event, this is meant to last for only up to ten years, to buy time for the next round. One should also bear in mind that Islam is not only a religion but an ideology, and peace is not one of its tenets. *Jihad* is.

As for Peter Jordan's derisory piece, the separation barrier Israel was forced to erect is, as I described it, mostly fencing. Adjacent to heavily populated trouble spots, they had to resort to a defensive wall. I can think of many countries that have them for security reasons or to keep undesirables out. He only seems to have a problem with a 'Jewish wall'. Would Mr Jordan rather see Israeli women and children blown to shreds? As for the 'settlers', were it not for settlers there would not have been a Jewish state – or perhaps he would have preferred that too. I'm sure the countless refugees who found a haven there think otherwise. Finally, I wonder why a disproportionate number of your readers cling to these views. The Arabs are united – at least on this score. Why aren't we?

Rubin Katz  
London NW11

### DER HUND MIT DER WURST

Sir – Vienna's New Year Concert finished, as usual, with the *Radetzky March*. My father used to sing words to this, at the bit where the audience starts clapping, beginning 'Wenn der Hund mit der Wurst übers Eckstein springt, da gibts a' große Hetz!', but I can't remember any more. Can any of your readers help?

Paul Samet, Pinner

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

After Europe's long dark night of the soul, a post-war artistic boom ignited Paris. The spirit of Modernism, fostered by art mogul Aimée Maeght's Galerie Maeght in 1945, brought a sparkling array of artists out of the cold. Miro, Calder, Giacometti and Braque introduced colour, energy, mythology and surrealism to counter the gloom of war.

The Royal Academy of Arts, sponsored by BNP Paribas, celebrates these four artists in 140 works and includes Bonnard



Alfred Sisley *Storr Rock, Lady's Cove, Evening* 1897  
© Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum of Wales (NMW A 26362). Acquired with the assistance of The Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation) 2004

and Matisse, who helped establish the gallery. Braque's brooding birds in a foliage of green or dull mud colours have an ominous quality. His landscapes are solid and dispassionate, almost pessimistic, echoing the Cubism he invented with Picasso. Close friends Miro and Calder blend poetry with playfulness: Calder stunned the art world by wearing his serpentine canvas with hieroglyphic motifs at the Galerie's 1947 surrealist exhibition. Calder tended to outline his abstract forms in black using red calligraphy. His *Great Oyster Seller* in harsh pinks, a starfish woman in red, and a red eye demonstrate his wit and humour.

Giacometti's elongated sculptures suggest purpose and movement despite their stillness. His interest in West African tribal art inspired *Spoon Woman*; his forests are filled with human trees, based

on his childhood perception of forests as being full of people standing still and talking to each other.

Lurking behind the Burlington Arcade is the RA's 'alternative' gallery, which launched a three-month season entitled GSK Contemporary. Their exhibition, *Touching Space*, is a collaborative, educational project with members of *Complicite* offering performance art, using film, theatre, kinetic sculpture and narrative in which science and arts students at Ashmole School, London, and St Xavier's in Mumbai (long before the massacre there) share a multi-dimensional experiment based on mathematical principles. There's even a temporary cafe built out of art storage boxes called Flash. But is it art or is it science? Hard to tell. Julian Rosefeldt's

*Trilogy of Faith* analyses everyday behaviour to discover how messy and repetitive it is. Others, less prosaic, show the stuff of dreams and nightmares, featuring a girl in a long white dress under fir trees. As people loomed towards me in the exhibition, I didn't know whether they were art installations in themselves. But the full-size cut-out of the Venus de Milo set in a perspex frame was less threatening! I passed a huge, untidy room with dirty dishes and cooking pots on the stove, a fan blowing out an old newspaper, open jars of nutella and, of course, the obligatory cliché – an unmade bed.

The contrasting peacefulness of Alfred Sisley, lone Brit in a sea of French Impressionists, is at the National Gallery until mid-February. Born in France to an English family, he substitutes English leisure life along the Thames for boating parties on the Seine. Sisley's Welsh scenes are considered the masterpieces of his late career. His colours perfectly reflect the light and the landscape of the west coast and prefigure Modernism in his play on colour, space and contrast.

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AND SCULPTURE

## REVIEWS

### Roughian recollections

#### LITTLE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS: AND THE ENGLISH SCHOOL THAT SAVED THEM

by Barbara Wolfenden

Oxford: Greenwood World,  
2008, 311 pp., hard cover £19.95

Has any school been so written about, so reminisced about, and so intensely remembered as Stootley Rough? It was basically a refugee/wartime boarding school, although it carried on until 1960. Perhaps it was the beauty of its Surrey location and the calibre of many of its staff that rendered it so memorable.

The arts flourished and the crafts. Music drifted from its windows. But there were also the household and farm chores in which all the children participated.

Barbara Wolfenden, wife of a former 'Roughian', became intrigued by Stootley Rough School while on a cruise to Alaska in 1998: 'I was regaled night after night with stories of five friends who sixty years earlier had come together in England after Germany and Austria had declared them unfit to be citizens of their own countries. They were celebrating their seventieth birthdays. As the ship moved among the glass-green icebergs, the men returned again and again to the years 1938-1945. It was clear that they had received more than just refuge at a very special place.'

These five were some of the Hut Boys, so called because of their sleeping quarters. The main building had not enough dormitories to accommodate all the pupils. But although the Hut Boys are at the centre of her story, Wolfenden's account expanded to encompass the entire history of the school and indeed the history of the war, which weaves in and out of the many individual narratives. We begin with Kristallnacht and end with the triumphant return to Germany of a former pupil as an officer of the US forces.

There is the heartrending story of two refugee pupils who return to mainland Europe for a visit and are never heard of again. Or the bizarre tale of one of the 'household girls' (household helpers) who, summoned by the police, goes blithely along, it being a warm day, in a light summer dress, to be immediately sent for internment to the Isle of Man without a change of clothes. (Happily, she eventually found her way back.) Or aircraft spotting by the boys, building a swimming pool down by the farm, the intricacies of porridge, feuds of passion among the staff, tentative sexual awakening among the young and, of course, the suppressed anxieties about families left behind.

Professor Wolf Elston writes hilariously about a deeply embarrassed and inhibited lady who had come to give a talk to the boys about sex. She couldn't quite bring herself to spell it out. 'Above all', she admonishes, 'don't play.' But it is he too who describes being reunited with his parents after the war; a strange sound came from his father – something between laughing and sobbing.

The title of the book (not the author's choice, one gathers) is something of a misnomer. However, the publishers have done an excellent job of the production and the book is a pleasure to handle as well as read. Dr Lion, the headmistress, wanted the children to grow up in a peaceful atmosphere. Perhaps the book should by rights have been called *War and Peace*.

Gerda Mayer

## EXHIBITION

### Childhood triangle

#### DAS DREIECK MEINER KINDHEIT

Vienna, November-December 2008

To a certain extent this exhibition came about as the result of a coincidence. At the beginning of the century, Herklotzgasse 21, a street in Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus, Vienna's 15th District, was the address of a communications company founded by Michel Kofler. Also employed there were Judith Pühringer, head of the Association for Social Enterprises, and Georg Traska, a historian. A book which appeared in 2004 made them aware that their workplace had been a Jewish centre before Hitler. Moshe Jahoda of the Vienna Claims Conference told them that the synagogue in the nearby Turnergasse, the Storchengasse Talmud Schul, and the kindergarten at Herklotzgasse 21 had been the 'Jewish triangle' of his childhood.

Soon after the trio's meeting with Jahoda, another former member of the kindergarten knocked on the door of Herklotzgasse 21: en route from the USA to Israel, Zwi Preminger was keen to show the place to his wife. Preminger indicated to the three further links with the past. They realised that the entire district must have housed an active Jewish community whose existence had been forgotten. They embarked on in-depth research.

Moshe Jahoda's triangle had been mine too during the first 12 years of my life, except that I had attended weekly Zionist meetings and Maccabi gym classes at the Herklotzgasse. The synagogue had been destroyed during Kristallnacht and the Talmud Schul no longer existed. In May, Georg Traska had interviewed me about my recollections; the interview was filmed by Ursula Henzl. The next day the team travelled to Israel to meet other contacts. They interviewed 20 people, devoting 18 months to their research.

Last October my wife and I visited Vienna to view the results of their work in the exhibition 'Das Dreieck meiner Kindheit' at Herklotzgasse 21.

The exhibition was an impressive, touching experience. One room contained DVDs of each interview with pictures of the interviewed. Another room concentrated on historical facts with photographs and statistics. There were large numbers of research photographs and reports as well as source material and literature. The organisation, in the hands of Alexandra Zabransky, was excellent. I celebrated a couple of reunions and met visitors from Israel and the USA.

The exhibition, which offered daily programmes of meetings, talks and shows designed to be of interest to all age groups, attracted over 2,000 visitors by 28 November, the planned date of its closure. At the time of writing, its success has led not only to an extension until Christmas but also to new goals: the furthering of a memorial on the site of the destroyed synagogue; making the exhibition material available to schools; arranging, with Radio Orange, ten listening stations which can be called on mobile phones; a film producing further biographies of refugees who settled in Palestine/Israel; and turning the exhibition into a travelling one.

I am sure this exhibition will occupy a major position in the large number of projects and publications which in recent years have contributed to the dissemination of the truth about the fate of the Jews in Austria following the Anschluss.

Eric Sanders

### A jewel of historical research NOVEMBERPOGROM 1938 IN DÜSSELDORF

Bastian Fleermann and  
Angela Genger (eds.)

Essen: Klartext, 2008, 448 pp.,  
22.95 euros

What more fitting way for a German city to commemorate one of the darkest events in its (pre-war) Nazi history than to publish a 'comprehensive account' of that event? And this promises to be more enduring than the many 70th anniversary commemorative events of Kristallnacht which took place throughout Germany, and indeed elsewhere.

Seven historians, most of them associated in some way with Düsseldorf's Mahn- und Gedenkstätte, have constructed a jigsaw previously seen only in its individual pieces. The result is overwhelming and moving. Much of the material has never before been published and sees the light of day thanks to rigorous research. A large amount of the source material consists of personal correspondence and diaries of those who witnessed,

or were victims of, the violence unleashed on the Jews on the night of 9-10 November 1938. Invaluable material has also been found in the Wiedergutmachung files and local police records and belies the hundreds of hours each contributor must have spent extracting the material which makes this book such compulsive reading.

Framed by the introductory historical context – clear and informative but concise – and an account of the postwar trials in Düsseldorf, we are conducted through the events of that night as through a prism. It is impossible to do justice to the detail in a review of this nature but, if I have to shine a spotlight on one chapter, it must be Dr Barbara Suchy's 'Überfallen in Düsseldorf' in which, street by street, house by house, using the many records at her disposal, she constructs a picture of brutality against individual families. (Through her research, for example, I learned for the first time what happened to my maternal grandparents that night.)

By now, the attentive reader may have noticed the discrepancy between the title of the book and my use of the term Kristallnacht. Suffice it to say that the use of the more familiar latter term is currently not favoured in Germany, whilst this reviewer regards the use of the Russian terminology, with all its implications, as questionable!

Despite its title, this is no parochial account. What was perpetrated against Düsseldorf's Jews surely represents a microcosm of the whole of Nazi Germany. I hope someone can be persuaded to provide an English – and indeed other – translation of this jewel of historical research. It doesn't deserve to be restricted to the German-speaking world.

Marion Koebner

*The Blue Salon and Other Follies* by Vernon Katz, reviewed in our January issue, is also available at Amazon uk, usa and de.

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## Friends indeed: Commemorating the Kindertransport

The Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers, has commemorated the 70th anniversary of the first train to leave Nazi Germany, thus beginning the evacuation of mostly Jewish children of the Kindertransport. The special commemorative event took place at Friends House in London.

The Quakers played from as early as 1933 a significant role in rescuing Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland to find safety in Britain. Well represented in Germany following the First World War, and having undertaken relief work for malnourished children, the Quakers were among the first to warn of the dangers of Nazi persecution of the Jews. In London, they joined with Jewish delegates to persuade the government to relax immigration controls, which permitted some 10,000 unaccompanied children to escape on the Kindertransport.

Kevin Franz, who welcomed participants on behalf of the Friends, spoke of the 'terror state which turned upon its own people,' and recalled British Quakers

like Bertha Bracey, who had worked devotedly to save children under threat. Viennese-born Dr Alfred Bader, who was among 1,200 children rescued from Vienna, estimated that 3,000-4,000 children had received some help from the Quakers, for which, on their behalf, he expressed gratitude. No attempt was made to convert them to Christianity and he remained a convinced Jew. Lotte Kramer read recently published poems describing her experiences as a Kind.

Wilfred Israel recalled his family's feelings of foreboding after Kristallnacht and his arrival at Liverpool Street Station. Mark Neil recalled his synagogue in Berlin burning and having queued for an exit permit with his mother while his father was in hiding. With 400 other children he was bullied by the German police at the Dutch border but was much relieved to cross into Holland, recalling an overnight ferry, Liverpool Street Station and a hostel in Highgate. His parents were murdered in Riga in 1942.

Hermann Hirschberger lightened the mood a little when describing how, as a

good-looking 12-year-old, he was elected house vice-captain by the girls of his school in Cliftonville – though he couldn't speak a word of English! Vernon Reynolds, who was cared for by the Quakers in Poole for three years, believed that the modern German generation was 'very distressed' when learning of the past. Dr Peter Kurer recalled the Quaker-led and Jewish delegations which appealed to the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, who was a Quaker, and the many Quaker contributions to the necessary £50 guarantee. Dr Elizabeth Rosenthal from Danzig, one fortunate recipient who was adopted by Manchester Quakers, found employment for, and consequently saved, her mother. *Dr Susan Cohen is to publish a book on the contribution of Eleanor Rathbone MP to saving German-speaking Jewish refugees in the 1930s and may evaluate the efficacy and composition of both Jewish and non-Jewish delegations who pleaded with the British authorities for a speedy and liberal entry policy.*

Ronald Channing

## Kindertransport memorial unveiled in Berlin

On 30 November 2008, 70 years to the day of the departure of the first Kindertransport to Britain, a poignant monument to children of the Kindertransport by Israeli sculptor and 'Kind' Frank Meisler was unveiled in the Friedrichstrasse outside the Berlin departure station. The memorial was initiated by Lisa Schaefer who, while working as a young journalist in London seven years earlier, had interviewed, and been deeply impressed by, Bertha Leverton, the founder of the Kindertransport Reunion.

Along with over 20 'Kinder', most of them from Britain but also some from New York, Vienna and Israel, I had respon-

ded to Lisa Schaefer's announcement of the forthcoming unveiling in November's *AJR Journal*. What impelled me was the line 'the majority [of Kinder] remaining in Germany' which included myself, rescued in occupied Belgium. Lisa urged me to come to Berlin.

The Kindertransport monument was unveiled by the President of the Berlin



State Police, Dieter Glietsch, who, along with the Head of the Berlin Police School and the Mayor of Berlin Mitte District, Christian Hanke, had sponsored the monument and the Kinder's participation.

Some 100 people were present. The Berlin Police President, who spoke first, declared that the police students' conversations with survivor witnesses (*Zeitzeugen*) would help them 'never to forget that above all they are duty bound to be humanitarian'.

Several Berlin and Bundestag dignitaries and a Jewish community representative addressed us. When it was Lisa Schaefer's turn she had difficulty speaking, her voice breaking with emotion. It was the accomplishment of her seven years of tireless striving for a memorial to child Holocaust victims.

On our return to our hotel we talked to the police students. They had become 'godparents' to those of us with sufficient German. After finishing school at 18 and attending the police school for two and a half years, they were due to graduate in January. I gave a 'seminar' (in English) about my wartime childhood to a dozen of the students.

We were the guests of the police students at dinner that evening. It felt good to meet and talk to these fine, thoughtful young people, who were so keen to listen to, and learn about, our childhood as Holocaust victims.

Bronia Veitch

### 'UNDERFED, UNDERPAID AND OVERWORKED' continued from page 5

This to my knowledge is not true. There are quite enough writers and articles about distorting the truth without innocently adding to it. May I give the case of my own parents who arrived in England in September 1938 to take up positions as domestic servants. Their location was a large country mansion near York. On arrival, they were warmly welcomed and shown to a very comfortable room. My mother was the cook and my father the general handyman. They were not outcasts at meal times and often joined the family. In fact, once the family had tasted chicken soup on Friday night it became a regular part of the menu – this despite the fact that they were the largest pork

butchers in Yorks. I who had been placed in a hostel in Leeds could visit any time. When the time came for them to leave there were tears in the employer's eyes and for many years hence while living in Leeds my parents received visits from the family bringing presents especially at Christmas time.

Now, although this was my parents' experience, I can immediately think of several other refugees who were treated in a similar and respectful manner. This may differ from the generalisation suggested in the article but these are the facts as I myself experienced them.

Dr J. Broch  
Netanya, Israel

# PROFILE

by  
Howard Spier

## THE 'ABC' OF DR ALFRED BADER

**W**e got off to a good start. Maybe I was even a little ahead of time for my appointment with Alfred Bader at the friend's apartment he was staying in close by the Old Vic Theatre at Waterloo. Precision of timing is clearly of critical importance to Dr Bader and his Ontario-born wife Isabel. They spend most of their busy year in their home town of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the remaining months in their UK home of Bexhill-on-Sea. Here Isabel taught over 30 years and remained until her marriage to Alfred in 1982. The two retain a deep fondness for England.

I joked to Dr Bader that so much information about him was available on the internet – not to mention his autobiographical works\* – that I felt I already knew him better than I knew myself. But of course, however much you read about someone, it can never substitute for a face-to-face encounter with its nuances, its humour and quirks.

What I had envisaged as a relatively formal interview format dissolved in the first seconds into a spontaneous tripartite discussion. But before all else, Alfred expressed disappointment that little had been said at the previous week's Kindertransport Reunion, which he had attended, of the crucial role the Quakers had played in helping Kinder: 'Perhaps never have so many been helped by so few,' was his highly quotable, but heartfelt, view. And not only did the Quakers help, Alfred stressed, they made no effort to convert the children to Christianity, as many other Christian groups did.

But now a more urgent subject was playing on Isabel's mind: the Baders had earlier that day bought a couple of sandwiches but couldn't make their minds up whether a single sandwich wouldn't have sufficed. This seemingly mundane dispute, it seemed to me, went to the heart of the Baders' paradoxical approach to life: profound personal modesty – virtual obeisance, as it were, to the Biblical injunction to help those less fortunate than yourself – coupled with access to untold resources at their finger tips.

Alfred Bader was born in Vienna in 1924; his father was of Czech-Jewish descent, his mother the daughter of



Alfred and Isabel Bader

Hungarian nobility. Alfred came to England on the first Kindertransport in December 1938. He found accommodation with a Jewish family in Hove and enjoyed a year's schooling. But then, when the war began, like so many other 'enemy aliens' he was interned in the Isle of Man, and from

*Chemist, entrepreneur, art collector/dealer, believing Jew, philanthropist. Alfred's principal interests have been justly summed up as 'ABC' – art, Bible, chemistry.*

there sent to a harsh camp near Montreal in Canada. Irrespective of the hardships he suffered, before his release in 1941 he began to study chemistry, laying the foundations of an outstanding career. In the final year of the war, denied admission at McGill University because their Jewish quota had been taken up, he obtained a BSc degree in Engineering Chemistry at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, following this up with degrees in History and Chemistry in successive years. Emigrating to the United States, in 1947 Alfred pursued graduate studies at Harvard, obtaining an MSc in organic chemistry and a PhD in 1950.

For a number of years, Alfred worked in Milwaukee as a research chemist for the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. And in 1951 he co-founded Aldrich – today

Sigma-Aldrich, the world's largest supplier of research chemicals. He became a naturalised US citizen. But a boardroom war broke out and in the early 1990s Alfred was thrown off the board of Sigma-Aldrich, though in later years he was to become involved with the company again. An inveterate collector – 'It may be a sickness, and it began with stamps at eight, drawings at 10, paintings at 20, and rare chemicals at 30,' he has written – Alfred turned to his second love: locating, buying paintings, in particular those of Old Masters such as Rubens and Rembrandt, and having them restored.

Chemist, entrepreneur, art collector/dealer, believing Jew, philanthropist. Alfred's principal interests have been justly summed up as 'ABC' – art, Bible, chemistry. The awards he has made, the honours he has received, the individuals whose careers he has furthered are too numerous to list. Alfred's two sons, David and Daniel, look after many of his philanthropic interests. Not long ago he gave a large grant to Queen's University, Ontario, to which he remains eternally grateful, to purchase and renovate Herstmonceux Castle in Sussex, the home of the old Royal Greenwich Observatory, and use it as an International Study Centre.

In religion and politics alike, Alfred and Isabel are liberally oriented, motivated by a consuming belief in natural justice, in passionate support for the underdog. Among their many activities are support for worthy causes in Israel, including that of Israeli Arabs, the work of the Lubavitch movement in Milwaukee, and the plight of the Roma in the Czech Republic, for which country Alfred retains a special affection. Mention of President George W. Bush brought forth from Isabel as large a grimace as any I've seen.

My time was up. The Baders were on their way. I had spent an enlightening hour.

\*Alfred Bader, *Adventures of a Chemist Collector* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995, 288 pp.); and *Chemistry and Art: Further Adventures of a Chemist Collector* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008, 246 pp.). Both are available through amazon.com or orders@alfredbader.com

# INSIDE the AJR

## Yorkshire pre-Chanukah party

Meeting in Shipley, more than 40 members from all over Yorkshire enjoyed a musical treat with klezmer music by Phil Cammerman and the Freilach Spielers together with Broadway songs (Gershwin etc) sung by Jena and Morton Shapero. This was followed by a delicious afternoon tea. Ruth Rogoff spoke about the history of Chanukah and members lit candles on two menorahs. Rudi Leavor sang *Ma'oz Tsur*. A delightful afternoon.

*Rudi Leavor*

## Weald of Kent: Great Jewish opera singers

A well-attended meeting appreciated Alan Bilgora's informative talk on great Jewish opera singers such as Mario Ancona and Joseph Schwartz. A very enjoyable morning!

*Inge Ball*

## North London: Celebrating in style

At our pre-Chanukah party we celebrated in style with seasonal food and exercised our minds with a quiz well organised by Myrna. Everyone went home with goodies, having thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

*Herbert Haberberg*

**Next meeting: 26 Feb. Audiologist Robert Beiny**

## Glasgow Gathering Witness Testimony

At our pre-Chanukah meeting we enjoyed a talk by John Powles, Research Collections Manager at Glasgow Caledonian University, and Carol McCallum, the Archivist there. John described the meeting as 'inspirational' and hopes to follow it up by recording the memories of some of the people he had the chance to meet. As usual, the tea that followed was much appreciated – especially the seasonal latkes.

*Claire Singerman*

**Next meeting: 17 Feb. Janet Niam, 'Neve Shalom/Wahat Al Salaam – The Peace Village'**

## Ilford feel-good morning

Harry Harris ably entertained us on his keyboard, playing music pertaining to the era of our arrival in the UK, at the same time telling us what life was like in London's East End in the dark days of the war.

*Meta Roseneil*

**Next meeting: 4 Feb. Maurice Beckman of The 43 Group**

## Newcastle pre-Chanukah tea party

We were entertained to Music and Song by Ann Havis (piano) and her husband John, whose mellifluous voice charmed us with, in particular, excerpts from *Fiddler on the Roof*. The refreshments were no less enjoyable and a most pleasant afternoon was had by all.

*Kurt Schapira*

**Next meeting: 29 March**

## Pinner musical feast

The 70 members at our Chanukah party enjoyed a musical feast provided by Naomi Hyamson (mezzo soprano) accompanied by Harold Lester on the piano. Naomi sang pieces by Johann Strauss, Brahms, Bizet and others. Later we got down to the serious business of demolishing latkes, doughnuts etc. A very good time was had by all!

*Paul Samet*

**Next meeting: 5 Feb. TV comedy script-writer Laurence Marks on his career**

## Liverpool pre-Chanukah party

Kay Fyne spoke about the recent KT Reunion while Sonia Strong discussed her recent visit to Magdeburg to unveil a *Stolperstein* for her grandparents. Kay's daughter, Tamar Samson, entertained us with a wide variety of songs – much appreciated. Susanne outlined plans for our joint visit with Manchester AJR Group to the Imperial War Museum North to present our respective Memorial Books.

*Guido Alis*

## HGS: 'Dealing with Satan'

Prof Ladislaus Löb gave us a vivid and revealing account of the controversial Rudolf Kasztner, who in 1944 saved 1,700 Jews (including our speaker) following negotiations with the Nazis. Professor Löb's book *Dealing with Satan* is published by Jonathan Cape.

*Carmen Stevens*

**Next meeting: 9 Feb. Shivaun Woolfson, 'The Jews of Vilnius'**

## Brighton & Hove Sarid: A traditional Chanukah party

We enjoyed a traditional Chanukah party arranged by Esther and Fausta. Latkes, doughnuts, chocolate money and a lively quiz warmed us up on a cold winter morning.

*Ceska Abrahams*

**Next meeting: 16 Feb. Rabbi Daniela Thau, 'Diversity in Faith'**

## Seasonal goodies at Wessex

Over 20 of us joined Bournemouth Reform Synagogue for a pre-Chanukah party. Entertainment, including music and stories from the Rabbi, was provided along with a delicious tea of latkes and other seasonal goodies.

*Susy Ellis*

## Manchester party time

Some 50 of us met for our popular Chanukah Social (this year pre-Chanukah). There was delightful entertainment from Three's Company, a most talented musical group. As usual, good food too. We had a most cordial time.

*Werner Lachs*

**Next meeting: 8 Feb. At Morris Feinmann Home**

## Essex Chanukah party

The Ladies Guild Groups of Southend held a Chanukah party at the Westcliff Synagogue attended by over 100 people. The women, dressed in their best finery, did us proud with excellent food. A generous gift was made to all the members. Otto Deutsch gave a vote of thanks.

*Ken Ward*

**Next meeting: 10 Feb. Seventh Anniversary celebration and Naomi Hyamson**

## Edinburgh 'roots' discussion

We enjoyed an animated discussion about our 'roots' led by Rabbi David Rose. Members were still asking 'Who are we?' and 'To which country do we really belong?' While some could never forget the past and see themselves wishing to return to, and live again in, the country of their origin, others felt very different – a reaction felt especially strongly by second-generation members present.

*Philip Mason*

## Radlett: Leitz family 'a shining example of humanity'

Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith spoke about the Leitz family, makers of the Leica camera, who had an outstanding record for their labour relations. More remarkable was the help they gave the Jews under the Nazi regime – a shining example of humanity in a period of utter darkness.

*Fritz Starer*

**Next meeting: 18 Feb. Alan Bilgora, 'Jewish Opera Singers'**

## Cambridge: Not a cheerful subject

Tim Pike, South East Agent for the Bank of England, gave an excellent talk, lucidly explaining the intricacies of the current financial crisis. Not a cheerful subject but truly thought-provoking and interesting.

*Keith Lawson*

**Next meeting: 12 Feb. Susannah Alexander**

## Record turnout at Glasgow CF

At our second meeting in the home of Sherry Jackson, Susanne Green spoke about the Holocaust Memorial Book for Scotland and the highlights of the year, including the holiday in St Annes. There was a record turnout with new members joining. A nice tea was enjoyed by all.

*Eva Szirmai*

## Temple Fortune pre-Chanukah party

Our last 2008 meeting was a pre-Chanukah party with entertainment by mezzo soprano Naomi Hyamson with Harold Lester at the piano. The afternoon ended with us all joining in a rousing rendition of *Ma'oz Tsur*, followed by a sumptuous tea with doughnuts.

*David Lang*

**Next meeting: 19 Feb. Anita Parmar from Holocaust Education Trust**

## Hendon Chanukah party

We were fortunate to have Annette Saville, one of our regular members, entertaining us on the piano. Annette played a selection of old and new music, before the candles were lit by Rabbi Steven Katz.

*Gunter Susskind*

**Next meeting: 23 Feb. Roger Beales of Bank of England**

## Oxford: What more could you ask?

A delightful morning. Three for the price of one: Naomi Hyamson sang beautifully, accompanied by Harold Lester, and Chanukah. What more could you ask? Thank you all!

*Anne Selinger*

**Next meeting: 3 Feb. Ross White of Anne Frank Trust**

**Wembley CF pre-Chanukah get-together**

We marked two exceptional birthdays, amounting almost to a double-century. A beautiful selection of goodies was laid on for the occasion by Myrna and we spent the afternoon exchanging news and views.

*Tom Heinemann*

Next meeting: 18 Feb (not 11 due to theatre outing)

**War Veterans: Full steam ahead at Cafe Imperial**

Good to welcome back Harry Rossney after his illness looking fighting fit. All members busy with various tasks, books to be written, TV documentaries to be made.

*Esther Rinkoff*

**ALSO MEETING IN FEBRUARY**

**Ealing** 3 Feb, 2 pm. Inaugural meeting

**Bromley CF/Kingston CF/South London** 5 Feb. Visit to Wiener Library

**Surrey** 15 Feb. Coffee morning at Esmée Barta. Details being sent out

**Norfolk** 23 Feb. Details being sent out

**Welwyn GC** 24 Feb. Rabbi Daniela Thau, 'Diversity in Faith'

**Cleve Road** 24 Feb. Peter Suchet – his famous family

**THEATRE OUTING:** 11 Feb. *Private Lives* at Hampstead Theatre. Details to be sent to relevant groups

**AJR GROUP CONTACTS**

**Bradford Continental Friends**  
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

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

**Bristol/Bath**  
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

**Cambridge**  
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

**Cardiff**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Cleve Road, AJR Centre**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Dundee**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**East Midlands (Nottingham)**  
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

**Edgware**  
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

**Edinburgh**  
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

**Essex (Westcliff)**  
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

**Glasgow**  
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

**Harrogate**  
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**Hendon**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Hertfordshire**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**HGS**  
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

**Hull**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Ilford**  
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

**Leeds HSFA**  
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

**Edgware mesmerised**

The delightful duo of Naomi Hyamson and Harold Lester entertained us with an array of songs dating from the early 19th century. We were mesmerised. The concert ended with a marvellous rendition of *Ma'oz Tsur*.

*Esther Rinkoff*

Next meeting: 17 Feb. Ruth Bourne, 'Bletchley Park'

**LONDON TRIP**

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The trip will include visits to the Houses of Parliament, Museums and the Theatre  
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Please call Susan Harrod at

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On Wednesday 4 March there will be a dinner at Belsize Square Synagogue to coincide with the trip.

A guest speaker will be announced shortly.

If you live in the London area and wish to attend, please call Susan Harrod at Head Office

**DIARY DATES**

Sunday 21 June

Trip to Beth Shalom

Friday 17-Friday 24 July

Holiday in Eastbourne

For further information, please call us on 020 8385 3070

**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**  
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**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**

Wednesday 18 February 2009

**Sally Fiber**

'Fitzroy Tavern and the Jewish West End Connection'

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 2 February 2009

**David Apfel** will entertain you with humour and song

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT 1.00 PM ON MONDAYS**

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**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

February Afternoon Entertainment

Mon 2	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 3	CLOSED
Wed 4	Michael Heaton
Thur 5	Francis Spiegel
Mon 9	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 10	CLOSED
Wed 11	Paul Coleman
Thur 12	RoyBass
Mon 16	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 17	CLOSED
Wed 18	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 19	Michelle Wolf
Mon 23	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 24	CLOSED
Wed 25	Simon Gilbert
Thur 26	Chris Sausman

**'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE**

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone Linda Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merriam 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

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

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Birthday**

**Kriss, Irving**, born Vienna on 18 November 1908, celebrated his 100th birthday surrounded by his loving family: his daughter Margaret with Henry, daughter Pat with Stanley, their children Jonathan and Jill with Daniel and Irving's four great-grandchildren. His late wife Hansi was a volunteer at the AJR Day Centre in West Hampstead for several years. Irving is now a resident of Sydmar Lodge in Edgware, where he had a second birthday celebration.

**Deaths**

**Eisner, Elisabeth (Lisel)**, formerly from Vienna, passed away in Cambridge on 12 October 2008 aged 91. She will be missed by her many friends and Scrabble partners.

**Dr Fanny Stang** died peacefully, aged 94, in Hammerson House on 29 December 2008. A highly intelligent woman with a charming personality, she had been happily married to her beloved Maurice for 50 years when he predeceased her. Her most remarkable achievement was that, having been the last Jewish medical student to graduate in Vienna after the Anschluss, she escaped to England and doggedly repeated part of her medical studies to qualify again in Edinburgh. She was appointed to honorary membership of the Institute of Public Health on her retirement. She recorded her experiences in two autobiographical books. Frank Beck

**Stiefel, Emmy (née Ranzenhofer)** born 10.06.1924 in Vienna, died 13.12.2008 in London. Much loved and missed by her family.

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– BBC ONE

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The show will be a unique event focusing on the home front and telling the stories of those who helped win the war back in Britain.

We are looking for powerful evacuation and Kindertransport memories to feature in our programme. This can be a fantastic opportunity to be reunited with an old friend you thought you would never see again, as well as the last chance to thank someone very special.

If you have a story you would like to tell, or if you would just like to find out more about the series, contact us at [nick@finestripe.com](mailto:nick@finestripe.com) or telephone 0141 568 7115.



Eric Sanders

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## SEARCH NOTICES

**Asch, Kurt** Possible Kindertransportee. Came with sister from Düsseldorf, where his father was a judge. They stayed in Bradford, Yorks, with 'mill owner' and wife. The daughter went to Bradford Grammar School; Kurt to Linton Residential School. Kurt was at school when it opened on 10 July 1940. He returned to the school as a young man; said he had restaurants in California, US. Any info pls to Doreen M. Lehr at chantryms@earthlink.net

I came across a brief mention of **Bayer, Richard Franz** regarding 'teatime at Auschwitz'. I know he drew a series of cartoons. I am researching for my book 'True Tea Tales'. Any info pls to Laurie Nienhaus at editor@gilly.com

(Von) **Bieterman(n), Frederick**, probably of Saxony, second husband of Anne Elie Bowring Walsh. Also any info on **John Edward Bowring Walsh**, lived Berlin 1937-45, and his maternal grandmother, married name Aslanian, mother of Lisa Aslanian Bowring-Walsh. Please contact Kay Bowring at tuppencecb@yahoo.ca

**Brunner, Peter**, born c. 1930. During the war I was evacuated to Gobowen in Shropshire, where I befriended him, a Jewish refugee from Prague. He did well at Oswestry Boys High School, which we both attended. Any info pls to Brian Mellor at jbmellor@btinternet.com

**Capuut Jewish Children's Home**. My aunt Eveline Alkan, b. 1925 Berlin d. 1990 in Israel, stayed in 1936-38 in this home, probably in or near Berlin. Any info on the home and/or its archives pls to David Alkan at dalkan@inter.net.il

**Goldstrom, Ilse** of Marienburg, Prussia (now Malbork, Poland) left Marienburg in 1939 aged 15 with her family, apparently heading for London. Ilse is a former school friend of my mother, maiden name Hanna Andres, who also ended up in London by 1950. Any info pls tel Peter Bryant on 020 7499 4195 or email pbryant@eu.skenergy.com

I am looking for my father's cousin **Helga Hofmann (née Zwarts)** and family. Helga was born Cologne 3.1.1914 and has been in UK since 1938. Any info pls to Jessica Jacoby, Kaiserin-Augusta-Allee 87, 10589 Berlin, Germany tel +49 30 345 56 62 or email jessjacoby@aol.com

**Lowus, Susi** Born Vienna late April 1927, spent war years in Glasgow. Last heard of 1952-53 when working for Dupont Co. in Montreal. She was a member of YMHWA in Montreal. Any info pls to Salomon Birnbaum, Neptunusstraat 35, B-2600 Antwerp, Belgium tel + 32 3 235 3191 mobile + 32 475 345618 email slomb@skynet.be

**Löwy, Dora**, b. 1924 or 1925, arrived London from Prague via Kindertransport in May 1939. Moved to Northern Ireland or Irish Republic soon after. Any info on her pls to H. J. Schermer, 116 Allerton Road, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8PL

**Mannheim, Jack**, my father, was born in Grossmunzel, Germany in 1922. He came to the UK via Kindertransport January 1938 and was interned in Australia, to which he went on the *Dunera*. Any info pls tel Linda Mannheim on 07986425799 or email unfoldedmap@googlemail.com

In 1938 a **Frau Marsden** worked as a cook in Amen Court near St Paul's Cathedral. She taught me German and my mother to cook in the German way. In summer 1939 she was possibly interned. My last memory is of her two sons arriving to collect her hats. Any info pls to Dr Jane Richards, Quarryfield House, Whitestone, Exeter EX4 2JS email sjaner@tiscali.co.uk

**Polasinski, Erika (née Zimet)** (or relations). Born in 1933, Erika left Vienna c.1941 for Venezuela with mother, Golda Zimet. From there emigrated to New York at end of war. Erika is half-sister of my father Eric Doitch, who was born Siegfried Steiner in 1923, and died 2000. Any info pls to Käthe Deutsch tel 01424 420025 mobile 07717 470 923 email KatheDeutsch@aol.com

**Sgt Henry George Popper (RAF)**, 1925-1944, son of Julius and Eugenie Popper of Barking, Essex. Born Vienna, came with parents to UK around 1938. Any info pls to anette.sarnas@malmo.se

**Spiers, Harry** arrived London 1938 from Germany. Served as interpreter with my unit HQ during campaign in Europe June 1944-May 1945. Our company was in military command of Hamburg afterwards. Any info pls to Sidney Barlow, 9 Ger-y-Llan, Cwmifor, LLandeilo SA19 7BU

## ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY — FEBRUARY 2009

**Mon 2** Robin Hanau, 'A Scots-German Jewish Family: Some Reflections' Club 43

**Mon 9** Hans Seelig, 'Some Musical Anniversaries of 2008 We Missed' Club 43

**Wed 11** Brigitte Bailer-Galanda (Head, DÖW), 'Aspects of Austria's Dealing with Her National Socialist Past: The Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance in Vienna (DÖW) in Postwar Austria' At Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

**Thur 12** Prof Jacques Picard (U of Basle), 'Israeli and European Jewish Identities in Transition' At Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7580 3493 University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies Lecture Series

**Sun 15** 43 Group, 1,500 Jewish War Veterans. Final Reunion. Norrice Lea Synagogue. 6.30 pm. Tel Morris Beckman on 020 7794 5085

**Mon 16** Raban Richter (Cultural Department, German Federal Republic), 'From Hour Zero to the Berlin Republic: Important Steps towards the Division and Unification of Germany' Club 43

**Thur 19** Prof Joanna Bourke (Birkbeck), 'Atrocity in War: British and American Experiences' At Lecture Theatre B34, Birkbeck, Malet Street, London WC1, 7pm Wiener Library/Birkbeck Lecture Series

**Mon 23** Dr Thomas Willimowski, 'Stefan Lorant (Author, *I Was Hitler's Prisoner*)' Club 43

**Mon 2** March Ralph Blumenau, 'Classicism and Romanticism' Club 43

**Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360**

## AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

## Towards reconciliation

Hannah Lessing, General Secretary of the Austrian National Fund, spoke to an audience at the Austrian embassy last month as part of a joint lecture series the embassy is running with the Wiener Library.

As well as covering both the pre- and post-war history of Austria, Ms Lessing spoke about the work of the National Fund, Austria's participation in the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance, and about efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

In her talk, Ms Lessing reminded the audience that the victims of National Socialism in Austria represented only a fraction of the post-war population. Far greater numbers of former Nazis had returned to live in Austria at war's end. She argued that the interests of the survivors had consequently been largely neglected in the new society.

To counter anti-Semitism, Ms Lessing pointed to Austria's participation in various international co-operative endeavours, including the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as the work of the Documentation Archive of Austrian Resistance, which since the 1970s has monitored and analysed right-wing extremism and neo-Nazi activities in Austria.

She also pointed to the relative success of legislation in Austria to criminalise Nazi and neo-Nazi activities, including Holocaust denial or trivialising National Socialist genocide.

In relation to more recent matters, she referred to the projects supported by the National Fund, which, she argued, have contributed to the victims' reconciliation with modern Austria. These initiatives include schemes which provide physical and psychiatric care to Holocaust survivors and the creation of memorials and educational and research projects to teach future generations.

Hanna Lessing concluded by making reference to the ongoing work to spread the message about the history and efforts of Austria: 'Reconciliation is not something that comes easily. It has to be sought – and we will not stop trying.'

*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*



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL



### 'An experience everyone ought to undergo'

When my granddaughter told me she intended to participate in her school trip to Eastern Europe, I was aghast. Why would any normal Israeli teenager wish to inflict upon herself the sights and associations aroused by concentration camps? Wouldn't this scar her tender soul for ever? Even possibly traumatise her? After attempting to delicately indicate my reservations, I was informed that the young lady was determined to go, that most of her fellow-pupils would be going, and that she felt it would be an important educational and social experience for her.

School trips to concentration camps have become more and more the norm in Israel in recent years. Shir is a mature and intelligent 17-year-old. She has a responsible position in the local Scouts movement, she is doing well at school, and from a very early age has been an individual with a will and mind of her own. Although her parents were initially opposed to the idea, as has often been the case in the past they could not withstand the onslaught of her forceful personality and had no option but to cough up the dough involved. And all her grandparents could do was lend her a suitcase and some warm clothing and remain on the sidelines (and slip her some spending money).

We were told that the 300 or so participants in the school trip were being given adequate historical and psychological preparation for the trip, that they would be accompanied by their teachers and a psychologist, and that this would serve to strengthen their ties with one another and their allegiance to the State of Israel.

Almost as soon as Shir returned from her trip she came to our house to tell us

about it. My hair stood on end when she told me that the group had visited Maidanek, Birkenau, Treblinka and Auschwitz. She described the beauty of the Polish countryside in autumn and noted that at some of the camps, such as Maidanek and Treblinka, nothing was left to indicate the evil that had once transpired there, that everything was green and pleasant. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, however, there were grisly reminders: rooms full of human hair, toothbrushes, suitcases and other personal effects of the kind that a person takes when he or she goes away on a trip, expecting to be able to use them.

But without being prompted Shir said: 'It was an experience everyone ought to undergo. I feel it has changed me. I have come back a different person to the one I was when I went away.' Naturally, her identification with the State of Israel has been reinforced and the conviction that nothing like the Holocaust must be allowed to happen again strengthened.

The youngsters travelled across Poland, staying mainly in Cracow and Warsaw. They found that the local population was warm and welcoming. It goes without saying that this is a booming tourist industry for the countries of Eastern Europe, whose forebears were in many cases the henchmen of the Nazis. I doubt whether this aspect was pointed out to the members of Shir's group. However, after telling us about her experiences, Shir added: 'But I just can't understand how people could do this to one another. How could anyone kill children, women, men, indiscriminately, day after day, as if it was just the most natural thing in the world?'

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

## Newsround

### Shanghai museum attracts 10,000 visitors a year

The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is currently attracting over 10,000 visitors annually. According to Hilary Saunders, writing in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, the museum is divided into two areas – the former Ohel Moshe Synagogue and the accompanying galleries. An exhibit entitled *Visas for Life* pays tribute to Dr Feng Shan Ho, the former Chinese Consul-General in Vienna, who issued thousands of Shanghai visas to Jews after Kristallnacht.

### Nazi-era papers on sale in Germany

A British company is offering a glimpse of life under Hitler through the sale of replicas of newspapers from the Nazi era. The company, Albertas, has begun selling copies in Germany of the Nazi paper *Der Angriff* at 3.90 euros. While Albertas is receiving advice from a number of historians, including the head of the Berlin-based Centre for Research into Anti-Semitism, some German Jews have expressed reservations about the project.

### New synagogue for Mainz

The cornerstone of a new synagogue has been laid in the western German city of Mainz, 70 years after the former synagogue was destroyed on Kristallnacht. It is being built, along with a community centre, on the site of the old synagogue. The cost of the construction project is being shared by the city and the state.

### Wagner boycott to be upheld in Israel

David Stern, the son of the renowned violinist Isaac Stern and the new musical director of the Israeli opera, has said he will uphold the ban on performing the works of Richard Wagner in Israel. 'I don't think it's such a great loss to Israeli audiences. I still conduct Wagner in other places around the world, but there are many other things that are worthwhile to conduct here.'

### Spanish overtakes German in British schools

Spanish has replaced German as the second most popular language in Britain's schools, according to the annual census of secondary schools compiled by the Centre for Information on Languages Teaching. Language experts said they believed TV's 'obsession' with programmes about the Second World War had contributed to the decline in the popularity of German.