

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Doreen Warriner, Trevor Chadwick and the 'Winton children'

Ever since his part in the rescue of 669 mostly Jewish children from Czechoslovakia on Kindertransport-style trains in 1939 was revealed on BBC TV's *That's Life* (February 1988), Sir Nicholas Winton has, belatedly, received something of the recognition that he deserves. A knighthood, a statue in Prague's Wilson Station, a feature film by the Slovak director Matej Minac (1999), the Masaryk Medal of the Czech Republic and, most recently, the Channel 5 programme *Britain's Secret Schindler* are but a few of the distinctions that honour his name. However, Sir Nicholas was, as he freely acknowledges, one of a group of people, mostly British, who were involved in the rescue; the others, long dead, have been almost totally forgotten.

The story of the immediate threat to the Jews of Czechoslovakia begins with the Munich Agreement of 30 September 1938, when Britain and France agreed that Hitler should occupy the Sudetenland, the areas of Czechoslovakia bordering on Germany that were in part German-speaking. Thousands of refugees, Jews and political opponents of the Nazis, fled from the occupied areas into the rump of the Czech state, itself now exposed to pressure from the Germans under the feeble regime of President Hacha. The refugees from the Sudetenland were desperate to emigrate, as were their counterparts in rump Czechoslovakia. As many Czech Jews and anti-Nazis feared, it was only a matter of time before Hitler occupied the rest of the country, and on 15 March 1939 he duly did so.

It was in January 1939, in the interim period between Munich and the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, that Nicholas Winton spent some three weeks in Prague and threw himself into the task of saving children. But others had been there well before him – and stayed well after, under the far more difficult conditions of the German occupation. The reason that they were mainly British was



Doreen Warriner,
1904-72



Trevor Chadwick,
1907-79

probably that, for the first time, the British government became directly involved financially in the organisation of the emigration of refugees from the Nazis. In the wake of its blatant sell-out of its Czech ally to Hitler at Munich, the Chamberlain government allocated £4 million to assist at least some of those under threat from the Nazis to flee the country.

The widespread feeling of guilt about Munich, combined with humanitarian compassion for the Czechs, also led to the raising of funds by non-government bodies, like the Lord Mayor of London's fund. Assisted by donations from these sources, the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), later the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, was set up, putting in place the apparatus to bring emigrants to Britain. One advantage of the financial involvement of the government was that H. M. Treasury sent Robert Stopford to Prague in October 1938 as its representative. Stopford was one of the unsung heroes of the story: his generous-minded sympathy for the refugees and, after March 1939, his ability to manage the

Germans were of the greatest benefit in getting endangered people out of Czechoslovakia to Britain, in face of the Home Office's marked lack of enthusiasm.

The key figure in the rescue of refugees from Czechoslovakia was Doreen Warriner, a young academic from University College London, who arrived in Prague in October 1938, soon after Munich, to provide assistance for those who had fled there from the German-occupied Sudetenland and, if possible, to bring them to safety. Warriner was mainly concerned with political refugees, especially anti-Nazis from the Sudetenland, mostly Social Democrats under the leadership of Wenzel Jaksch; she did not focus on Jews, though many of the people she rescued were Jewish, and she did not focus on children, though in bringing out the families of anti-Nazis she also saved children's lives.

It was Warriner who underpinned the rescue organisation in Prague. She established and headed up the office on Voršilská Street, where the other rescuers, including Winton, worked, and where the trains that took refugees across the border to Poland were organised; and she recommended Winton to the BCRC, thus making it possible for him to create his children's section of the BCRC when he returned to London. Warriner stayed in Prague until April 1939, when it became too dangerous for her. She had been smuggling anti-Nazis illegally across the border into Poland, and the Gestapo were about to arrest her. The number of people Warriner saved ran into the thousands. One of her most memorable exploits was, with two helpers, to guide two groups of endangered women and children from Prague's railway stations to safe accommodation in cheap hotels and hostels, and this on the day after the German army entered Prague, when the streets were filled with German military units.

The 'Winton children' left Czechoslovakia

continued overleaf

'WINTON CHILDREN'*cont. from page 1*

slovakia legally, largely thanks to Sir Nicholas's tireless efforts in fulfilling all the bureaucratic requirements for their entry into Britain, in finding homes for them and in locating people who would put up a guarantee of £50 for them, as demanded by the government. But Winton left Prague on 21 January 1939 and could play no part in the organisation of the refugee transports at the Czech end. Fortunately, a replacement was at hand, in the person of Trevor Chadwick, a teacher at a school in Swanage, Dorset, who had come to Prague to bring two refugee boys to places at the school. In the event, they also took a third child – Chadwick's mother provided the guarantee – and she became the poet Gerda Mayer, whose lines grace, among other publications, the book that accompanied the AJR's exhibition *Continental Britons* (2002).

Chadwick delivered the three children, then returned to Prague to work for the rescue of further refugees. According to the recently published and very informative book by his son, William Chadwick, *The Rescue of the Prague Refugees 1938/39* (Leicester: Matador, 2010), he had thousands of refugees on his lists, but to his abiding regret could 'only' save hundreds. Chadwick made the organisational arrangements in Prague for the children whose entry to Britain had been secured by Winton in London. Working with Warriner, he was involved in the selection of the children to emigrate and in the organisation of the trains that took them to Britain; it was he who stood on the platform at Wilson Station.

The division between Warriner's work to rescue adults and Chadwick's to rescue children was far from absolute. On 30 March 1938, she noted: 'Trevor Chadwick and I spent a happy hour packing food for seventy, and carried it to the Wilson station.' He was at the time preparing for his second Kindertransport. Chadwick also arranged flights for children, though these have not received any of the publicity accorded to the train transports. Doreen Warriner had assembled a number of children in the Prague YWCA, and on 10 March 1938, as she puts it, 'a special plane took my children from the YWCA to England, through Winton's organization, by now in charge of Trevor Chadwick'. Chadwick returned to Britain in June 1938, probably, as his son assumes, after seeing off a train transport with 123 children on board on 2 June.

Warriner and Chadwick both died in the 1970s. This article is intended to help to bring the role they played in the rescue of the children from Czechoslovakia to public attention. It is certainly not intended to detract in any way from the achievements of Nicholas Winton, whose name is now widely famous. Probably the best source of information about him is the study *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation* by Muriel Emanuel and Vera Gissing (1999). Winton's work was a humanitarian effort of the highest order. He recognised that no one was focusing specifically on the rescue of endangered, especially Jewish children from Czechoslovakia, and he set out to fill the gap. During his relatively brief stay in Prague, he compiled an invaluable database consisting of case papers on many hundreds of children, which he brought back with him to London.

There he proceeded to set up the children's section of the BCRC, effectively on his own authority and initiative, and, after finishing his day's work at the Stock Exchange, to complete the various requirements necessary for the children to be admitted to Britain. He lobbied the Home Office for permits, he found guarantors, he sent photos of children to people willing to act as their guardians and dossiers to those willing to accommodate them, he raised money and he generated publicity, all under the intense pressure caused by the urgency of the situation in Prague, the shortness of time and the slowness of the British authorities.

What Winton did *not* do was personally to spirit Jews away from under the noses of the Germans and their collaborators. Someone who did was the American journalist Varian Fry, who was sent to Marseille in August 1940 by the American Emergency Rescue Committee and set up a network that smuggled an estimated 2,000 endangered refugees, mostly artists and intellectuals, across the Pyrenees to Spain.

Anthony Grenville

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'Restitution in Austria Today'

Monday 4 April, 6.30 pm
at the

**Austrian Ambassador's Residence,
18 Belgrave Square, London SW1**

AJR Director Michael Newman will take part in a panel discussion on the subject 'Restitution in Austria Today'. The panel will consider Austria's efforts to return real estate and cultural objects looted in the Holocaust and to pay compensation for personal suffering and losses.

Other panelists will be Anne Webber, Co-Chair of the Commission on Looted Art in Europe; Christoph Bazil from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture; and Georg Graf of the University of Salzburg.

The event will be hosted by His Excellency Dr Emil Brix, the Austrian Ambassador.

If you wish to attend, please contact Beatrix Steinlechner on 020 7344 3272 or at beatrix.steinlechner@bmeia.gv.at

YOM HASHOAH

Sunday 1 May, 11.00 am

As a member of the Forum for Yom HaShoah, the AJR is encouraging our members to attend the Yom HaShoah 2011 National Commemoration. This will take place on Sunday 1 May 2011 at 11am at the National Memorial to the Holocaust, The Dell, Hyde Park, London.

As well as organising events to commemorate Yom HaShoah, the Forum is raising awareness of Yom HaShoah across the Jewish community.

If you wish to attend, please contact Rosemary Peters at rosemary@ajr.org.uk by 15 April.

*The AJR
wishes all its members
a Happy Pesach*

Holocaust Memorial Day, 2011

Among numerous Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) events in which AJR members participated in the North of England, Scotland and South West England were:

Darlington

The event, organised by the Borough Council at the Arts Centre, included a personal testimony by the AJR's Walter Knoblauch, who was also interviewed by BBC Radio Tees. Local schools participated.

Durham

The principal HMD event was at Durham Cathedral, where Deanna Van der Velde conducted two workshops with schoolchildren on the theme 'Stereotypes and the Holocaust'. The following day Deanna worked in Clayport Library with Year 6 pupils from St Hilda's Primary School.

Deanna's husband Clive and the Dean, Michael Sandgrove, closed the service before some 300 children. Clive also read out the names associated with Deanna's family and presented the Dean with a copy of the AJR book.

East Renfrewshire

The focal point of the HMD event was Mark Smith's story of Holocaust survivor Hershl Sperling.



AJR members at Liverpool Town Hall for HMD Memorial Service and Libraries Event: Tom Reti, Hana Eardley, Helen and Alan Scott, Kay Fyne

Liverpool AJR members joined a distinguished audience at Liverpool Town Hall for an HMD service. Hana Eardley recounted her journey with her twin brother to the UK on the last 'Winton transport' from Prague.

Guido Alis

Edinburgh

A hundred children attended Kindertransportee David Goldberg's talk

at Musselburgh Grammar School. David also spoke to 200 pupils at Edinburgh Royal High School.

Manchester

The Jewish Film Festival film *Ingelore* was screened at the Cornerhouse. Arek Hersh answered questions following a screening of his *Testimony* film at Imperial War Museum North. The Manchester Jewish Museum held an HMD event.

Merseyside

Merseyside Council of Christians and Jews organised a well attended 'Names Not Numbers' Dachau exhibition as well as a number of the 'Portraits for Posterity' at the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. Liverpool AJR displayed their Memorial Book and showed the film *Never Forget*, commissioned by Liverpool City Council and including testimonials from 12 Liverpool AJR members. *Guido Alis*

Renfrewshire



AJR member Dorrieth Sim, pictured above, was guest speaker at Castlehead High School. Dorrieth, author of the children's book *In My Pocket*, talked about her life as a Kindertransportee to a crowded hall of pupils and AJR members.

Taunton

My husband Max and I attended two inspirational events in Taunton, Somerset. Max spoke in a packed St John's Church of his journey to England in the context of this year's HMD theme 'Untold stories'.

The second event was the inaugural Somerset Anne Frank Award, to be given to a local teenager who has made a real difference to their world, promoting racial harmony or caring for others in some way. Overall winner Megan Hines, 13, received a beautiful glass panel modelled on the façade of the offices where Anne Frank and her family went into hiding.

Jane C. Dickson

Unless indicated otherwise, information provided by Susanne Green and Agnes Isaacs.

Yom Hashoah: Remembering those who perished and honouring survivors

This year, Pinner Synagogue's Memorial Evening will take place on **Monday 2 May**. The theme will be 'Defying Hatred' and key-note speakers will be Barbara Stimler and Ziggy Shipper. A number of dignitaries will attend as usual, including the Austrian Ambassador, H. E. Dr Emil Brix.

Barbara Stimler was born in Poland. Her hometown was invaded by the Germans when she was 12 years old, beginning a sequence of desperate moves from town to town, where she lived in various ghettos.

Following the 1942 Wannsee Conference, deportations accelerated and Barbara spent a year in Auschwitz-Birkenau. She escaped during a 'death march' to Bergen-Belsen, eventually falling into the hands of the Russians. She came to the UK in 1946.

Ziggy Shipper was born in Lodz in 1930. By 1940, the Lodz ghetto had been created. Ziggy began work in a metal factory, 12 hours a day, six days a week, for his rations. In July 1944, with the Russians approaching Lodz and the Germans

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

planning to exterminate the ghetto, he was moved to Auschwitz, from which he fled on seeing the guards had left. He was ultimately reunited with his mother in England.

All are invited to attend this free Memorial Evening - prompt start 8.00 pm.

Brian Eisenberg

‘Kde domov můj?’: Where is my home?

Kde domov můj? – Where is my home? – is the question asked in the first line of the Czech national anthem. Over the last 60 years it was a question I had often asked myself. I had decided to visit the Czech Republic and Teplitz-Schönau, the country and town of my birth, one last time, accompanied by my wife, my friend and support of over 50 years, my two sons, their wives and our three grandchildren. Nostalgia perhaps, or to lay a few ghosts for me and to show my grandchildren a part of their heritage.

We travelled the 60 miles north of Prague to the town where I was born. It had been cleaned up a little since its neglected Communist days but it certainly was not the town of my childhood. The memories flooded back: my first school; walks to and playing in the ruined local castle with friends, most of whom had perished in the Holocaust; the shops, the restaurants and *Gasthäuser*; and the comfort of a large, warm and close family. The houses that once belonged to my grandparents and great-grandparents still stood, now divided and sub-divided, neglected and shabby. My English family could only look at the shabby streets and the remaining landmarks where I had once lived. For them these invoked no memories and prompted no vignettes of an incomprehensible past or of ancestors far removed by time and culture from their own lives.

On our return journey to Prague, we stopped to pay our respects and say *Kaddish* at that evil, incomprehensible place of hate and death, Terezin. Prague invoked some memories but, for the most part, I viewed that beautiful city like any other tourist. The old Jewish quarter was the exception, for this too was my children's and grandchildren's heritage. How could they not be affected on finding the names of our relatives inscribed on the wall of the Pinchas Synagogue or the poignant exhibition of drawings and art of the children of Terezin?

Home is defined in the dictionary as 'a place of origin – one's native country'. Mine was the spa town nestling at the foot of the Giant and Ore Mountains of northern Bohemia. Mother's large Jewish family were strangers among the Germans and Slavs, yet after 200 years were so integrated into the social and business life of the town and area that they didn't notice (or want to acknowledge) that they



The author with his parents, London, September 1940

were different. My early childhood was spent innocently, happy within my family and within the community. I always knew I was slightly different because my father was a Hungarian but it was of no apparent consequence, unlike my uncles and other relatives who were Czechoslovaks. I had a grandma who lived in Budapest whom we visited regularly. However, in my mind as a child, home was where I lived and belonged.

Suddenly our lives – my life – changed in 1938. To escape the political change and consequent persecution, our family dispersed throughout the Czechoslovak Republic. We moved to a strange flat in a large, unfamiliar city called Prague. I sensed my parents' worry and uncertainty and, for the first time, I experienced discrimination. The school at which my mother wanted to register me told her in no uncertain terms and in front of me that Jews from the German-speaking northern part of the country were not wanted. My family, my friends had gone. My parents remained. I discovered I was not Czech but, like my father, Hungarian – somewhat confusing for a young boy.

Many years later I understood that it was thanks to our Hungarian passports and nationality that our lives were saved. We came to England as refugees on the way to America, a country so different from our Central European home. It had a different language in which I couldn't communicate, a different culture. England, however, was the country in which I eventually grew up and in which I went to school and made friends whilst never forgetting my early childhood. Unlike my contemporaries, I had no relatives, no grandparents, no aunts or uncles, no roots. I grew up with my parents. We lived in the 'here and now refugee world', where my parents' entire

social circle were refugees like us and where German was the language we spoke. Daily comparisons of life in England with that of the past 'zu Hause' – at home – were made. We differed from our neighbours not only in nationality but also in that we were Jews. We even differed from the local Jews because we didn't stem from Eastern Europe and came from a less orthodox tradition and established emancipated Jewish background.

Gradually I grew up in England. Along the way I made friends among Jews and Gentiles, some of whom were to become lifelong friends, and I was privileged over the years to be involved in their and their families' lives and they with mine. I became a citizen of Britain, never an Englishman. We anglicised our name; to all intents and purposes I had integrated.

My business often took me to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria. Although two of the countries were now under Communist dictatorship, Austria still seemed to call me to a remembered home, like a voice from the past. The food, the language, which I spoke accent-free, the buildings and countryside brought back memories of my early home. My frequent visits to Czechoslovakia and Hungary strengthened those early memories of my former home, yet my revulsion towards the people who had betrayed and rejected us, their fellow citizens, confirmed that Central Europe could no longer be home.

My wife is English, my children and their wives are English and my grandchildren are English. Yet one of my sons and his family are domiciled in Switzerland and, like the proverbial wandering Jew, he and our grandchildren were destined to move on to another home and land and begin another integration. On our recent visit, I showed my family part of their heritage and they saw evidence of the horrors and injustice done to our family. Now it is time to move on. The voices of the past will be with me for the rest of my days but the answer to the question 'Where is my home?' is for me 'Ubi bene ibi patria' (Where it is best is my home). And that is England – that decent, democratic, sometimes maddening land that accepted and protected me, educated me, gave me a new family and, above all, gave me peace and the confirmation of what I am.

Bob Norton

Stones of remembrance: Further information

My request for further information in last month's issue of the Journal has resulted in a number of replies from Vienna-based Dr Elisabeth Ben David-Hindler (Liesl), given below in italics. The task Liesl set herself has grown from very small personal beginnings into an enormous project. Information is available in English on her website (see below), but no details can be reproduced in the space available. Names and former addresses and a great deal of information are available in German.

1 How many stones are in existence?

There are now various associations in Vienna. We are working in the following districts: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20. In the 6th district, there is a different project: 'Erinnern für die Zukunft'. In the 3rd and 8th districts, we are responsible only for the technical part of the work.

Path of Remembrance

In the 2nd and 20th districts, we have constructed a Path of Remembrance, i.e. we seek to remember Jewish life and culture. We place stones to remind us of synagogues, schools, theatres, coffee houses and various Jewish institutions.

Stones for murdered inhabitants set on the Path

We usually place them in front of their former houses. If it was a house with 'assembly flats', we place a stone with the number of people deported from it (up to 170 people from one house).

Thus, to tell the number of existing stones, one must divide them into those which give information (20cm x 20cm) and those for the murdered inhabitants (10cm x 10cm). We always put four together and also place stones for people in whose family nobody survived.

I presume that the information readers would like refers to stones for Jewish women, men and children who lived there. Therefore the statistics include only them.

2 How many stones have been ordered?

3 In which districts are they placed and how many present and future orders are there?

4 What are approximately the shortest and longest times from request to placing?

If you send the request in the first half of the year, we can usually set the stone

in the following year. For children of victims, we try to make the stones as soon as possible.

5 What is the price per stone?

For each 10cm x 10cm stone we ask €120. If there are many victims in the family and the cost is too high, we seek to reduce it. We have never failed to set a stone because relatives were unable to afford it. As the cost is much higher than the €120 we now ask relatives if they can afford to pay more.

6 What is the final cost per stone?

The cost to us is €650 for a 20cm x 20cm stone with four names on it. The City of Vienna determines that we work with a street-construction firm to place the stones in the ground. This is about €270 per place.

7 How is the difference made up?

Our finances are based on private sponsorship and donations plus subventions from the National Fund and Future Fund, the districts, and the City of Vienna.

One difficulty is that we don't know how high the subventions from the various organisations will be for the next year. If they are reduced, we cannot realise our plans and must tell relatives that they have to wait. We had this problem last year but then obtained a special subvention from the City of Vienna and the Dr Renner Prize, so for this year we have no problems.

8 How many contacts resulted from Fred Stern's original article (January 2011) and what comments would you make relating to them?

I haven't counted the number of people with whom I have been in contact, but every contact is personal and we try to find an individual solution. I have received numerous letters and emails showing how precious our work is for the relatives.

9 How can help be given from this country?

I am delighted these articles are being published in the AJR Journal and am now sure that victims' relatives will know of our project. People should also know that we have published a booklet about the 2nd district in English. With the help of Frank Beck, who translated our booklet for the 9th district into English, we will also publish 'Stations of Remembrance in Alsergrund'. It would be helpful if the AJR orders more booklets together and sells, or gives, them to their Viennese members. We

are, of course, happy if AJR members wish to donate to our project.

Considering Liesl's huge task, she has to decide the relative order in time in which the stones are to be placed. This takes into account the age of the person requesting the commemoration of their loved ones. As each case varies, the time Liesl devotes to it must be tailored to the total project. In addition to all the paperwork, phone calls and interviews, each stone placing requires considerable preparation. Liesl must obtain the permission of the householders and of the district authorities concerned, and there is also the interaction with the manufactures of the plaques and the organisation which places them in their locations. The final cost of individual stones greatly exceeds the charge levied. The €15,000 awarded at the prize-giving (see January issue) was shared with her helpers, leaving little to Liesl herself, all of which she assigned to the cause.

The year after the first stone placing on the Volkertsplatz, I commemorated my family with five stones: four on the Karmeliter Markt, the centre of Jews in the Leopoldstadt and close to my Realgymnasium, and one on the gate of my burned-down Barmitzvah synagogue in the Tempelgasse, close to my home. There are in this district 136 'stations' to date.

On the day of a ceremony, attended by relatives and friends of the bearers at the 'station', the unveiling of the stones is accompanied by prayers, appropriate music, and an unscripted speech by Liesl. A very emotional ceremony, it replaces both burial and stone-setting.

Information on Liesl's website indicates that at the end of last year over 40 'stations' were planned for Vienna this year, that there are some 500 financial contributors from many countries, and that about 100 individuals as well as numerous organisations, associations and groups maintain the stones regularly. There are also numerous letters, speeches, meetings and much more. Of special interest is a letter from Austrian President Heinz Fischer to 'General Secretary Dr Elisabeth Ben David-Hindler' expressing gratitude for her project in remembrance of the Holocaust.

Further information may be found at www.steinedererinnerung.net and info@steinedererinnerung.net.

Fred Stern

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

GERMANS AND JEWISH REFUGEES

Sir – Dr Grenville's contributions to the Journal are invariably fascinating to read and inwardly digest, but his latest observations on Germans and Jewish refugees (March) brought back particular memories of Herbert Sulzbach. Shortly after my parents and I arrived in England, we found a room in Belsize Park Gardens, the house also occupied by the Sulzbach family as well as two or three other Jewish refugees from Germany. Sulzbach adored young people and he and I, then aged nearly nine, got on famously and he would often tell me exciting stories from his native Frankfurt am Main.

One day I came home from school to find the house empty, except for my mother (dad was still at work). Everyone had been taken away and transported to the Isle of Man. As Germans, they had been interned. Because my father had told the immigration officer at Harwich, where we had arrived at dawn on 3 September 1939, that we were 'staatenlos', he was told 'We don't have that here. Where were you born?' My father said he was born in a part of Poland which had been annexed to Russia at the time. 'Russia, eh! Then that's what you are!' Within a couple of minutes we had become Russians – and were never interned.

We had the Anderson shelter to ourselves and wept for the Sulzbachs, thinking they must have been taken to a concentration camp. But Herbert Sulzbach joined the Pioneer Corps, the only section of the British army open to 'aliens'. He was quickly promoted to captain and, as explained in Anthony Grenville's article, became closely involved in the de-nazification of prominent German POWs.

Many of the POWs were fully-fledged Nazis but, thanks to Sulzbach's superb handling, they were genuinely re-educated. What the article did not mention was that, once the war ended and a new German embassy was opened in London, Herbert Sulzbach was appointed its cultural attaché – to my knowledge the first and only Jewish refugee to have landed such an appointment. He remained in this position until well after what should have been his official retirement.

His funeral, at the age of (I think) 80, was attended by a large contingent of the POWs he had 'de-nazified'. He had, in

fact, become their most treasured friend. Whenever we got together for a meal or just a drink, he would always introduce me to friends as 'I knew this young man when he was just a little boy who spoke no English. Look at him now – the education correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*! Would you believe it!'

John Izbicki, Horsmonden, Kent

Sir – I am of the first English-born generation of my father's family. I have come across all the views expressed in your March leading article. My refugee parents seemed to have had no issue with re-establishing relationships with Germans, even though a silent question mark hung over those of a certain age who crossed their paths. My parents had many German relations who had lost their Jewish identities centuries earlier and lived through the war in Germany and live there today. I know they covered all extremes of attitudes, actions and empathies during the Second World War.

In my life I have found mainly, but not exclusively, Anglo-Jews to be the most virulent in their hatred of Germans, whether because of their 'lost' years having to fight against them or for some of the reasons expressed in your article. What strikes me most is the dehumanisation this causes and the unswerving prejudice this sort of thinking creates. We accuse the Nazis of dehumanising whole swathes of society in order to justify their programme of extermination, yet we are quite happy to accept similar concepts for ourselves.

People are individuals. They may belong to a race or nation: treating them collectively opens the door to racism and prejudice. There were, and still are, those who commit evil and, while it may taint those who are present in such places, it does not make everyone evil. People exist and interact as *individuals* not as races and we must treat everyone as a person. We become like our enemies if we start to justify hatred against groups of people and deny them individuality and identity.

Geoffrey Marx, London W14

Sir – Regarding Anthony Grenville's article 'Germans and Jewish refugees', I have often wondered whether any estimate has been made of the number of non-Jewish Germans imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps and the number who died in them.

I would be grateful for enlightenment.

Tom Schrecker, Val d'Isère

DOMESTIC SERVICE

Sir – I am most grateful to Anthony Grenville ('Books of interest', February) for drawing attention to the new book on the refugee domestic service scheme: *Dienstmädchen-Emigration* by Traude Bollauf. For anyone interested in migration studies, this will be essential reading, and it certainly deserves to be translated into English.

My personal reason for appreciating this book is that, as an infant in 1939-40, I was cared for by a refugee domestic named Hilde, who joined our family in Sunningdale in Surrey. Unfortunately we have no record of her surname.

The organiser of the local refugee committee was Mrs William Cecil Smyly. I wonder if any reader recalls that fondly remembered Hilde who came to Sunningdale under the domestic service scheme, or indeed Mrs Smyly?

Edward Timms, Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex

REFUGEES AND SCOTS

Sir – Like so many, my mother came to this country with a domestic permit and a job to go to on the outskirts of Edinburgh. She found it very hard to cope with work she hadn't been used to. Fortunately, she was in touch with the Refugee Committee in Edinburgh, who gave an enormous amount of help to the refugees.

There were a number of women in similar situations to that of my mother. Somehow a house which offered a flat large enough for my whole family (parents, brother and me) became available. It also offered a facility for the women to meet on their days off on Sundays to have tea, and gave them an opportunity to exchange views, experiences and, above all, support. My mother was charged with this role, for which she was very suitable. Unfortunately, this arrangement lasted only until Edinburgh became an 'alien protected area': both father and brother were interned from there, and the women all had to leave, most of them going to Glasgow to find both work and accommodation.

A big thank you is due to all the Scottish people who did so much for the refugees.

Eva Frean (née Reichenfeld), Finchley

WILTON PARK OR LATIMER HOUSE

Sir – Could anyone who worked at Wilton Park or Latimer House in 1943-45 please contact historian Dr Helen Fry, who is writing a book on this subject. Email hp Fry@btinternet.com or write to 38 Temple Gardens, London NW11 0LL.

Helen Fry, London NW11

NO NOSTALGIA FOR THE BLITZ

Sir – I don't remember the Blitz 'with some nostalgia' (Edith Argy, February), but with

horror and sadness. My father's entire family were killed by a direct hit on our house during the Blitz.

At the beginning of the war our family had all been brought over from Germany through the energy of my father, Martin Sulzbacher. Then he was interned, first on the way to Canada on the ill-fated *Arandora Star*, which was torpedoed. He survived but was then sent to Australia. My mother and we four children were sent to the Isle of Man.

However, my grandparents were too old, my uncle and aunt had already been naturalised as they had been in England five years, and my other aunt was classified C, so they all remained in London. But the Blitz was so dangerous that my uncle had driven to Chesham outside London and booked rooms there. As it was getting dark, he didn't want to drive back in the Blackout so he returned to London by train hoping to bring the family there the next day. That night the whole family were killed and were buried in Enfield cemetery four in one row, and my aunt in the next row as her body was not found in the rubble until later.

My dear father did not hear of the disaster until Erev Yom Kippur in far-away Australia. Forty-one years later he himself passed away peacefully on Erev Yom Kippur, so that my brothers and I say *Kaddish* on that anniversary in memory of my father and of that tragedy in the Blitz so many years ago.

Max Sulzbacher, Jerusalem

Sir – Edith Argy's 'Business as usual' article brought back memories. I kept a diary during the Blitz and I quote some of the entries to show what normal lives we led:

18.8.40: Two [air raid] warnings, then go swimming with [my friend] Lisl. In the evening, dancing at the Czech Club.

26.8.40: Warnings in the afternoon. Go to the pictures afterwards. See *My Son, My Son* and *Teargas*. 7 hours' warning at night, hear bombs.

7.9.40: East End in flames. Warning at night.

11.9.40: Warnings day and night. 85 Jerries down.

20.9.40: Many warnings, fires and time bomb. Slept at Marble Arch Tube Station 2 nights as it is deep down.

We would walk home (I was 17) in the Blackout and not see the person next to us but were never afraid.

When my grandson did the Blitz at school the teacher was delighted to have such a factual account of what happened at the time. *Gisela Feldman, Manchester*

Sir – Like so many events during the 1939-45 war, many personal lives were affected immediately but also for a lifetime. Edith

Argy's story of the Blitz resonates with my family experience. Bombed out of home and the family business in the Liverpool 20 December 1940 air raids, the family dairy built up over 40 years was totally destroyed.

And for me, it was a lost opportunity to continue to help my father, Borach, in running the dairy, often regarded as the 'pride of Jewish Liverpool'.

Professor Eric Moonman OBE, London N7

IMPORTANT ROLE OF AJR

Sir – I hope it will be of interest to readers if I point out the increasingly important part the AJR plays in my life.

I suffered a heart attack and had an operation a few months ago. The MRI scan also revealed that I had a slipped disc, which makes standing up very painful and walking practically impossible.

I used to attend the AJR Centre on Wednesdays only. Now, I am there every day it is open – if I can manage. The importance of the AJR Centre as a meeting place for the elderly – with similar background, experiences and most of them living on their own – cannot be overemphasised. Many are also terribly lonely. Cleve Road is run smoothly, the staff are most helpful, the food is very good, and the entertainment is pleasant. I can make use of this only because transport is provided by the AJR for at least two of the days. Otherwise, it would be financially prohibitive.

The benefits I receive from the AJR are very much appreciated and most helpful to meet essential expenditure.

I am very grateful for the wonderful service provided and the work done by AJR staff for the benefit of the members.

Without the AJR, my life – and, I am sure, the lives of many other people – would be made much more difficult. Keep it going. Thank you.

Henry Grant, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middx

DENMARK AND THE HOLOCAUST

Sir – While I cannot comment on other countries, I would like to take issue with Rubin Katz (March, Letters) in respect of Denmark. Mr Rubin states that Denmark did not have any qualms about surrendering their foreign Jews who sought asylum there.

There was a considerable number of Jewish refugees in Denmark – among others, groups of young people who had gone there on *hachshara* (preparation for working in agriculture in Palestine). In common with Danish Jews, these Jews were also brought to safety when the Danish resistance rescued us to neutral Sweden in October 1943. It was there that I made friends with a youngster from Stettin, Germany who had been on *hachshara* in Denmark.

Walter Goddard, London SW7

BULGARIANS AND JEWS

Sir – Peter Block (February, Letters) highlights the Bulgarian Jews saved from the Holocaust.

Strong national pride is not a distinctive trait of Bulgarians and this particularly attractive characteristic seems to be one of the principal reasons for Bulgaria's protection of her Jews.

Lack of race hatred was the cumulative result of Bulgarians living with other minorities under Turkish domination for over five centuries.

The saving of the Jews was not complete. King Boris authorised the deportation of Thracian and Macedonian Jews. Only 12 of the 11,343 sent to Auschwitz and Treblinka survived, whereas Jews in Bulgaria proper were saved.

The King acted only in national self-interest, collaborating in March 1943 and opposing deportation only when he saw the Allies gaining ground – and the chance of emerging from the Nazi period with Bulgaria's reputation enhanced.

In 1940 Bulgaria already introduced anti-Jewish laws. This legislation was met with a howl of protest.

Having grown up among Armenians, Greeks and Gypsies, the Bulgarian finds no defect in the Jews that might justify special measures against them.

Did Bulgarians possess exceptional moral and political qualities? Bulgarians do not hold themselves in particularly high regard. Of course, they love their land, but when it comes to making value judgements, they are quick to maintain that those of other peoples are superior.

The 1934 *coup d'état* weakened the role of Bulgaria's traditional political parties as well as that of the National Assembly. After the 1939 elections the regime was authoritarian, but not fascist.

Bulgarian Jews numbered 48,400. Half of them lived in Sofia. They were mostly workers or artisans. Although Bulgaria had its anti-Semitic traditions, they were never especially strong.

Kurt Winter, London NW3

RETURN TO FUERTH

Sir – 'Return to Fuerth' reads the heading of an article by the Rev Bernd Koschland in your February issue. Of all places, Fürth, my birthplace, which I left in 1933 and have never visited since! Fürth, how vividly I remember this sooty town with its tall factory chimneys and the nauseating smell of hops at almost every street corner. Fürth is where my mother was born, as was her mother and my great-grandmother. I think we're probably some of the original inhabitants of the town!

The Jews once played a prominent role there, with numerous institutions bearing the names of their founders, the great benefactors of the place. The very street

continued on page 16

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

From Arcadian landscapes to war scenes, the watercolour is eternally popular. According to **Tate Britain**, British artists such as **John Frederick Lewis**, **William Turner**, **William Blake** and **John Nash** have been among the greatest exponents of the medium. And the fluidity and portability of the medium made it cheap and handy enough to represent eye witness accounts of events before the days of photography.

In its wide-ranging exhibition **Watercolour** (until 21 August), the Tate traces the medium back to medieval illuminated manuscripts. Well before the so-called golden age of British watercolour in the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, artists like the sixteenth-century painter **Nicholas Hilliard** painted exquisite



John Dunstall *A Pollard Oak near West Hampnett Place, Chichester* c 1660

miniatures on vellum laid on thin paper. The technique of painting miniatures on ivory began in Georgian times, until artists such as **John Hoskins** and **Samuel Cooper** found vellum preferable.

The history of watercolour began with topography. The milky blend of sky, land and water is beautifully rendered, for instance by the eighteenth-century painter **John Robert Cozens** in his *Lake of Albano and Castel Gandolfo*. Considered one of the founders of the British watercolour school, his landscape, in which one tree leans away from the others in a nod to the castle seen way into the distance, is both playful and majestic. **Thomas Girtin's** *Bamburgh Castle* in Northumberland has a similar magic: his focal point of a rock pointing upwards like a hand is a virtual set for *Lord of the Rings*.

Violence and war are depicted in **Edward Burra's** *Wake* (1940) in gouache and ink wash. Clearly obsessed with the sensual body, he adds skeletal hands to portray horrific events. In *Soldiers at Rye* his grinning, masked faces evoke a military Walpurgisnacht. His *Mexican Church* carries a similarly bleak message: Christ's face, darkened and dirtied, is answered by an equally dark cadaverous figure smirking back at us – his future. The Holocaust is depicted in Eric Taylor's *Human Wreckage at Belsen Concentration Camp* (1945). **William Holman Hunt's** *Dead Sea from Siloam* is among several pre-Raphaelites on show, apart from William Blake, the water-colourist who excelled most at dark surrealism. Turner's sketches anticipate the full-blown, glowering sunsets which made him the father of English Impressionism. Thomas Girtin's *La Rue St Denis* – a long, empty street – signifies introspection. **Anish Kapoor** mixes his watercolours with earth and gouache, giving a murky, gravelly aspect.

Ludwig Blum's Jerusalem in the soft, early winter light is etiolated by the sun behind the clouds. The Czech artist, who emigrated to Palestine in 1923, is featured in **The Land of Light and Promise: 50 Years Painting Jerusalem and Beyond** at the **Ben Uri** (until 24 April). Blum immersed himself in Jerusalem, delving into its light, architecture, religious symbols and people. His style has been compared to that of John Singer Sargent. He is a pure nature artist, captivated by the strong light and shadow of the Middle East, but no matter how verdant his cypress trees or how eloquent his imagination,

there is something in his work that remains forever Europe.

The AJR at Jewish Book Week

A large and appreciative audience at the Royal National Hotel in Bloomsbury heard Dr Anthony Grenville introduce his book *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970*, as part of Jewish Book Week 2011. The session, chaired by Baroness Ruth Deech, also included Professor Bob Moore (University of Sheffield), introduce his book on the rescue and survival of Jews in Europe.

In the afternoon, the audience was treated to a showing by Dr Bea Lewkowicz of the films *Continental Britons* and *Moments and Memories*, both funded by the AJR. The footage in the films deeply moved and enthralled those present.

REVIEWS

An inspirational tale of survival

THE WOMAN WITHOUT A NUMBER
by Iby Knill

Scratching Shed, 2010

(www.scratchingshedpublishing.co.uk),
288 pp. paperback

Unlike most concentration camp memoirs, this one begins in the middle of the story. We follow the writer on a stealthy journey across the Czech border, crawling on her hands and knees into Hungary. There she and her guide get a sour welcome from her aunt. While in Budapest she joins the Resistance but is betrayed and sent to a women's prison, 'where vagrants, drunks and prostitutes were held. There were huge dormitories with iron folding bedsteads. A long, narrow table and benches went down the middle of the room, but there was not enough space for everyone to sit there. Those who had been there longest had the choicest places.'

Before long, Iby gets to help out in the infirmary. Next is a move to a camp for Jewish refugees, where a guard recognises her and offers her a sexual relationship, which she rejects. Released on parole, she marries a young Hungarian. However, the flat in which she is staying with relatives is raided and the Jewish occupants sent to a transit camp for Auschwitz. Her protestations that she is not Jewish – she was baptised – are ignored and she is deported with the others.

She teams up with a group of doctors and nurses who walk defiantly past Dr Mengele, who is making his 'selections'. Having arrived in a prisoners' hut, she describes the sleeping arrangements: 'We slept in lines, but there were so many women in the hut that the only way was to sleep like spoons with one's head on the hip of the person in the row above.'

All in all, Iby gives the clearest account I have yet read of day-to-day conditions in Auschwitz. One day, the women are given white blouses and proper skirts and seated at benches, where a decent meal is provided. This is for the benefit of a visiting papal nuncio. Iby surprises him by telling him in Latin that what he sees is not the truth.

As the Russians are advancing, the prisoners are carted off to work in a munitions factory in Lippstadt and then set off on a death march. By now the Americans are in the area and Iby is liberated. A spell in hospital, where she is nursed by German nuns, restores her to health and she starts work as an interpreter for the British army in Buren,

where she meets Bert, a recently widowed British army captain, who proposes marriage. Meanwhile she gets news that her mother has survived, but decides not to go home to Czechoslovakia.

She describes the confusing atmosphere of post-war Germany, where former enemies are obliged to work together. There are lighter moments as, for instance, when the German cook provokes the Hungarians to demand paprika, not sauerkraut, with their stews.

Having decided to marry in Germany, Iby is obliged to undertake a complicated ceremony of conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism in order to share the religion of her husband-to-be. After missed train connections and other adventures, she arrives in England with an elaborate trousseau donated by her mother to meet Bert, who has gone there ahead of her.

There the story ends but for a flashback giving an account of her background – a prosperous Jewish extended family wealthy enough to own a car (which is pictured on the front cover of her book). Iby admits to having suppressed her Jewish and concentration camp history so, in a sense, this book may be a kind of 'outing'. She recently featured on the BBC1 television series *My Story*.

Iby is pictured in later life in an academic gown having received an honorary degree from the University of Leeds. For her amazing courage and resilience, I am sure she deserves it.

Martha Blend

Where Was the World?

by Jo Manger

After a visit to Auschwitz

A place of silence, their air we breathe,
The world stood still, beyond belief.
Where was help? Millions let down,
Within their tears the whole world
could drown.

Shoes, bags, toys and all
Snatched away, standing grossly tall,
Glass display beyond glass display,
Possessions and life taken away.
Could we ever feel an inch of their pain?
In our fortunate lives will we dare to
complain?

These people were beaten, broken and torn,
Gassed, starved, worn and drawn.
Their barracks were cold, heartless and plain,
Again I ask, had the world gone insane?
Men, women and children too,
Innocent people, they did not care who.
This open space, this awful place,
The anger, the tragedy, pure disgrace.
Change the past, if only I could
Any way, any how, any human would.
We must all remember a face, a name,
We must not forget this place where they
came.

Do tell of their story, do tell of their sorrow,
So this hideous crime won't repeat tomorrow.

The AJR and the Separated Child Foundation

Since Mitzvah Day last year, the AJR has been involved with the Separated Child Foundation, an organisation that helps children and young people who come to Britain seeking asylum.

These children have fled their homelands due to war, terror or persecution. They are separated from their culture and natural environment as well as from their family and friends.

The Separated Child Foundation offers emotional, social, financial and physical support to separated children and young people in Britain up to the age of 21. It also engages in educational activities that raise awareness of their needs.

AJR members are helping these children by collecting items for 'arrival packs'. These are distributed to the children when they arrive at the end of an often dangerous journey and make a simple but important difference to their everyday life.

The arrival pack consists of a bag, light top, warm top, towel, umbrella, underpants,

slippers or flip-flops, and socks. Much needed too are toiletries such as wash bags, soap, deodorant, toothbrush/paste, shampoo and brush. As well as a pen and a notepad, non-perishable food is very much appreciated.

Newly bought items don't need to be top quality: supermarket and chain store own-brands are fine.

The size of the clothes should be suitable for teenagers, especially those in the 15-17 age group.

In addition, a card or personal message of good wishes will help the children to feel welcomed in a new and foreign country.

If you would like to help these children to settle in, please collect as many of the above-mentioned items as possible and bring them to the next meeting of your regional group or to the AJR Centre.

For further information, please contact Lena Mangold at the AJR office on 020 8385 3081 or at lena@ajr.org.uk

Our Love, from Vienna, 1938

by Charlotte Peploe

*For my mother Anneliese Lindsay and her parents,
who were sent to Auschwitz*

they came on the wheels of the train
pounding along the continent,
walking the waves, grinning with
ignorance and
welcomed by some coastal resort.

and her parents will arrive soon.
they all know that.

arms, those arms, wrapped about
porridge and kippers which sent
the scent wheeling past her nostrils.
she sighed the goodness of England
and smiled with the frozen air.
parents, chattels, will come about
now –
'gulls, bring Oma in your beak.'
but the bird shrieked to ignore.
and the train slid through.

these hundreds of children
swaddled in worsted
bore wide black eyes
which saw heaven as a
single marshmallow.
her parents were shortly to come.
they all knew that.

steadily, stealthily, time fell, never to
recover itself,
leaves rose up juicing their greens
because trees stand up to war.

her mother/father photograph
her violin
her new leather shoes
breathing beneath a pillow
were used to placate other
weeping girls
while she wept on.

her parents should be coming
but something had re-routed them
onto a different set of tracks.

now, many years on
and I move around the very
same trees.
I carry inside a seed
which has grown as a seed should.
when I yield it up
and give it the chance of life
I shall wonder
whereabouts my Oma lies.

in its eyes
in its fears
in its past.

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY APRIL

Mon 4 Jim Betts, 'The Quakers in Britain' Club 43

Thurs 7 'Ashes in the Wind: The Destruction of Dutch Jewry' by Jacob Presser. A Re-evaluation by Philo Bregstein At Wiener Library, 7 pm. Admission free but spaces limited - telephone 020 7636 7247

Mon 11 Ken Baldry, 'Tchaikovsky: Lawyer into Composer' Club 43

Wed 13 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. David Wass, 'Shoplifting – How It's Done and How It's Prevented' At home of Tom Heinemann, 2.30 pm. Tel 020 8904 3568

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Ernst Flesch on 020 7624 7740 or Helene Ehrenberg on 020 7286 9698

The Journey: A 'life-changing' exhibition about the Holocaust for young children



Not all journeys are nice. Some people have to make journeys they don't want to, to places they don't know, and to futures that are uncertain.' So begins *The Journey*, the award-winning permanent exhibition at the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre. Made possible only thanks to generous support from benefactors, including the AJR, its ground-breaking intention was to introduce learning about, and learning from, the Holocaust to school children as young as eight or nine years old – yet without patronising an older audience.

The brainchild of Centre co-founder Stephen Smith, the exhibition contains minimal text and photography but takes its young visitors through an experiential set of spaces in the company of Leo Stein, a fictional ten-year-old Jewish boy living with his parents and baby sister in Nazi Germany in November 1938.

Leo is keeping a diary, and in each space he relates a new entry telling us what's going on in his life and how the rising anti-Semitism and discrimination are affecting him. We move through his home and classroom before reaching his street on Kristallnacht. In the ruins of his father's shop, we realise the family faces a tough set of choices: go into hiding, try to flee, or stay and hope for the best. A concealed entrance within the shop (which visiting children have to find for themselves) leads to a family hiding place, created by Leo's father, in which we learn that

he has managed to secure a place for Leo on the 'Kindertransport'.

On board the train, as the countryside flashes past, Leo wonders what life will hold for him alone without his parents in a foreign country, and worries about Hannah, the baby sister he has to leave behind. Visitors also learn that most Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Europe had to make journeys to ghettos and concentration camps, where very few survived. In the last room, Leo has arrived in England, and it is here that the schoolchildren come face to face with a child survivor or refugee from the Holocaust.

'I think *The Journey* is brilliant because the kids are taken through in an atmosphere that replicates the situation as it really was,' says Steve Mendelsson, who escaped Nazi Germany with the Kindertransport and regularly speaks at the Centre. 'They are in a position to see, smell, hear, touch the thing, and I think that is terribly important for creating an everlasting memory of their experiences at Beth Shalom ... I certainly enjoy meeting the kids and looking into their eyes to see their enthusiasm and their interest in what



has to be said.'

Throughout the exhibition, children can pick up, and interact with, artefacts and replica objects from the period. Within each space too, touch-screen kiosks offer access to survivor testimony relating to the experiences that Leo is facing at that point. The Centre educator accompanying the schoolchildren can use these to prioritise the story of the survivor or refugee that the children will meet.

Now entering its third year of operation, *The Journey* has been visited by thousands of schoolchildren and is in high demand among primary schools across the Midlands. The response of Sarah, a pupil at Langwith Bassett Primary School in Derbyshire, is typical: 'I didn't really care that much about the war but, when they took us to the Holocaust Centre, it just wowed me.'

Teachers too express their admiration. Julie Harrison, Head Teacher at Chad Varah Primary School, described their November 2010 visit as a 'life-changing experience' for her pupils. 'The experience was fully brought to life by your approach to the children and the way they were led to understanding the prejudice which allowed it all to happen,' she says. With a busy calendar for 2011, *The Journey* promises to touch many more young lives in the years to come.

Helen Whitney
Director, Beth Shalom
Holocaust Centre

An unexpected tribute to Anna Essinger and her school in Kent

The *Kent Messenger* is a substantial weekly paper published in Maidstone. Thanks to the energy and devotion of the Managing Editor, Lesley Bellew (Kent Feature Journalist of the Year), the 4 February issue included a 20-page supplement entitled *Blitz Spirit*, in which aspects of Kent's 'home front' are described and commemorated 70 years on. The illustrated articles cover a range of topics, from the land girls (Kent contributed as many as 4,000) and the Home Guard to the Observer Corps, which carried out vital duties by giving advance warning of German aircraft approaching the Kentish coast, using the newly developed radar.

Embedded in this supplement is a two-page spread telling the story of Anna Essinger and her refugee school, which she transferred with astonishing foresight in 1933 from Ulm in southern Germany to Bunce Court, a mansion on the North Downs. In this warm tribute

to a remarkable and strong-minded woman, who recognised the evil of the Nazi ideology long before most German Jews woke up to it, Mrs Bellew describes how this was done surreptitiously without raising the ire of the German authorities.

Bunce Court proved to be a happy choice for it provided the children not only with a new home but also with some woodland, vegetable gardens, outbuildings and a playing field, all embedded in the beautiful Kentish countryside. The emphasis was not only on academic subjects but also on practical work, which contributed to the school's upkeep. The relationship between teachers and pupils – the school was residential and co-educational – was informal and relaxed, most teachers being called by their first names or by nicknames. Anna Essinger was generally known as Tante Anna.

Late in 1938 the first of the Kindertransports arrived in England and Anna Essinger took in a further 50-60

children. In 1940 she was given a week's notice to move her school out of the military zone of the North Downs, and she found suitable premises in Shropshire. When the war ended, this intrepid woman, by now virtually blind, returned the school to Kent. Its main task having been fulfilled, it closed in 1948.

Much of the article consists of rather touching quotations from former pupils, who felt that their lives had been greatly enriched by the ethos of the school. Among them is the celebrated painter Frank Auerbach, who said: 'Bunce Court was my home. I was happy there and consider myself very fortunate to have been one of the children in that unique community.'

The *Blitz Spirit* supplement is available for £1 from the KM Group office, 6/7 Middle Row, Maidstone ME14 1TG, or by contacting Linda Evans on 01622 794604 or at levans@thekmgroup.co.uk.

Leslie Baruch Brent

MY TWO FAMILIES

My late father, Willi Reissner, was born in Seelow, a small town in the east of Germany, near the Polish border. My late mother, Susi Reissner (née Cohn), was born in Dortmund in the west of Germany.

Last year, my husband, David, wrote in the *AJR Journal* about our visit to my father's birthplace in July 2009. He wrote about how, by chance, we contacted the Seelow Town Hall to enquire about travelling there by train and how this simple request brought forth family birth, marriage and death certificates and even a few photos from 1920 of my grandfather, Louis Reissner, in the Seelow Schuetzengilde (Shooting Guild). Louis and my grandmother, Martha, perished in the Holocaust. I recently found out that their daughter, Ruth, my father's sister, had been a teacher at the Jewish orphanage in Pankow and perished in Riga with the children – but that's another story. My father and his late brother, Joachim, managed to escape to England.



Willi, Ruth, Louis, Joachim and Martha Reissner

Before the war, my mother lived with her parents, Max and Ida Cohn, and her brother, Heinz. My mother had told me that, during the war, Heinz had, coincidentally, also lived in Seelow, my father's hometown. She had also told me that Heinz had been married to Elli and that they had had a baby girl. That was all I knew. My mother never wanted to speak about her family.

After my mother died in 2005, I discovered, from various searches, that Heinz and Elli's baby was called Mathel and that she was born in December 1942. All three were transported from Berlin to Auschwitz on 19 April 1943 (Erev Pesach), where they perished.

In October 2010, I arranged to go on a one-day trip to Auschwitz. The day before the visit, I decided to look through what little information I had about my mother's family so that Heinz, Elli and Mathel would be at the forefront of my thoughts during the visit.

As I read the Red Cross letters in my file, I came across a reply on the back of one that my mother had written to Heinz in 1941. I didn't remember noticing this before but Heinz had written that he'd

French Railways during the war: Coalition for Holocaust Rail Justice launches website

The Coalition for Holocaust Rail Justice has launched a website providing information about the actions of the Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (SNCF) and its role in the deportation of 76,000 Jews from France to death camps between March 1942 and August 1944.

The Coalition comprises victims and their family members, historians, community leaders and volunteers committed to holding the SNCF accountable, to the full disclosure of its wartime role, and to the payment of reparations to its victims and their families.

According to the Coalition's website, 'In the 65 years since the end of the Second World War, the SNCF has refused to acknowledge adequately its role in the Holocaust, has avoided taking any financial responsibility for its role, and now wishes

to enter the high-speed rail market in the United States. If granted these lucrative contracts, the SNCF would receive billions of American tax dollars, some of which would come from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It is a terrible irony that a percentage of these tax dollars would come from the very victims the SNCF deported to concentration camps.'

In addition to details of US legislation calling on the SNCF to address its past, the website contains links to survivors' testimonies and opinions and written submissions by historians, legislators and community leaders.

The website also includes articles published in recent months about the history of the campaign against the SNCF. The Coalition's website can be visited at www.holocaustrailvictims.org

Michael Newman

married Elli Stern in Seelow on 26 October. I had a sudden brainwave. The next minute, an email was winging its way to Thomas Drewing, our contact at Seelow Town Hall, asking if he could possibly trace the marriage certificate for Heinz and Elli. Half an hour later, Thomas replied: 'I have it and will send it to you within the next half-hour.'

Half an hour passed and David and I checked our emails. Thomas's reply had arrived and we eagerly opened it to find the scanned certificate of Heinz's and Elli's marriage. Thomas had also been kind enough to include a translation of the certificate into modern German,



Ida, Max, Susi and Heinz Cohn

followed by one in English. As we were scrolling through it, I noticed my paternal grandfather's name, Louis Reissner, on the page.

'Thomas has made a mistake – he's got the wrong side of the family,' I said. 'He's sent me something about my father's family, instead of my mother's family.'

Then sudden realisation. Thomas hadn't made any mistakes – quite the contrary. The amazing fact was that my father's father, Louis Reissner, had been a witness at my mother's brother's wedding.

Or put another way, Louis was a witness at the wedding of the man whose sister his son would marry six years later in another country.

Thomas has since discovered that Heinz had lived in a place called Gut Winkel in Spreenhagen (60 km from Seelow) on *hachshara* – 'a camp for young Jewish people who were learning about farming, in preparation for emigrating to Palestine'. However, Thomas was unable to explain why Heinz was in Seelow. Apparently Heinz, Elli and Mathel had also lived in Hasenfelde (30 km from Seelow), a village between Seelow and Spreenhagen, where Heinz had worked as a slave labourer in a forest camp. Thomas wrote: 'I hope the small informations decipher the mystery a little.'

My mother, Susi Cohn, did not meet my father, Willi Reissner, until after the war and they married in London in 1947. But, unbeknown to either of my parents, my paternal grandfather had already met my mother's brother and sister-in-law. A family relationship had already been created before my parents cemented their own relationship under a *chuppah* in London. But they never knew about it. Neither did Heinz nor Elli, who went into Hitler's gas chambers never guessing that a witness at their wedding would, had they all survived, have been a part of their extended family. And had I not been going to Auschwitz this would never have come to light. Coincidence or what?

By the way, Thomas Drewing has been in touch again recently. He is arranging for *Stolpersteine* to be installed in October outside my paternal grandparents' house as well as outside the place where Heinz's and Elli's wedding took place.

Vivien Harris

INSIDE the AJR

Hull 'Untold stories'

It's always good to meet and recount our memories of past events. There are still many 'untold stories', the theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day. But it wasn't a gloomy meeting – we were told a story based on Leo Rosten's definition of the word 'mitzvah' in his book *The Joys of Yiddish*. Our hostess did us proud.

Rose Abrahamson

Next meeting: 8 May

Ealing Jazz greats

Though Alf Keiles was unable to be with us to present his 'Jewish Personalities in Jazz', his music was. A delightful afternoon spent listening to greats such as Danny Kaye and Judy Garland, among many others.

Esther Rinkoff

Next meeting: 5 April. Gerald Curzon, 'Jews on the Golden Road to Samarkand'

Ilford 'Jewish Trades in Regency London'

David Barnett's talk was excellently researched and we were amazed to learn that there was apparently no anti-Semitism around 1800, the people's rancour being directed at the Irish Catholics instead. It was particularly interesting to note that there were quite a few Jewish publicans! A very worthwhile talk much enjoyed.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 6 April. Jane Rosenberg, 'Jewish Musical Journeys'

Harrogate birthday boy



(from left) Inge Little, Ken Little, Eugene Black, Marc Schatzberger, Rosl Schatzberger

We heard reports of events on Holocaust Memorial Day and other recent happenings and were informed of what is on the AJR calendar for the foreseeable future. Most of the remaining time was spent telling each other about our experiences soon after our immigration. We ended with a little party for Eugene Black on his 83rd birthday. A most enjoyable day.

Inge Little

Next meeting: 13 April

Pinner A broadcaster and writer's tale

The insight Eve Pollard gave into her fascinating life was a delight to a large audience. Her spell as editor of the *Sunday Mirror* and other well-known newspapers brought her into contact with the great and the good in politics as well as the larger-than-life Robert Maxwell.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: 7 April. Rabbi Alan Plancey, 'Is Being a Rabbi a Good Job for a Jewish Boy?'

Bromley CF South America stories

We met at the home of the ever hospitable Eva Byk. Somehow South America loomed large in our conversations. One of those present had lived in Uruguay and Hazel mentioned her forthcoming riding holiday there, having previously climbed the Cotopaxi volcano in Ecuador on horseback. Robert Shaw said he and his family had done this magnificent mountain more leisurely by car in 1999.

VISIT TO LUTON HOO

Thursday 19 May 2011

Invitation to a Special Event

A unique opportunity to visit the original home of Sir Julius Wernher and Alice Mankiewicz, both of Jewish German and Polish descent. The exquisite décor has been tastefully furnished in the style of The Ritz. A feast for your eyes as well as your palate!

This special afternoon event will include transport to Luton Hoo; a talk by Mrs Dickenson, a long-standing employee of the Wernher family; a full afternoon sandwiches and cream tea; a tour of the grounds (walking or driven); and an opportunity to learn about the history and see the magnificent art works.

A coach will pick members up from the North London area, returning at the end of the day.

£30 pp including entrance, guided tour, full afternoon tea and transport

For further details please call
Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070

Essex (Westcliff) Southend as it was

Evening Echo former editor Jim Worsdale reminisced about Southend, which at its peak had 10 cinemas, including the Odeon, which held 2,500 people. He interviewed the Beatles there when they came to perform in 1963.

Larry Lisner

No meeting in April due to Pesach

Welwyn Garden City Memories of the Fifties

A large audience listened enthralled to Myra and Peter Sampson reviving old memories. Myra recalled life in the Fifties: Coronation, Festival of Britain, cinema, music, make-up, holidays, Wimpeys. It was all there!

Alfred Simms

Next meeting: 7 April. Howard Lanning, '80 Years in the Film Industry'

Birmingham (West Midlands)

A thrilling concert

A select group of us visited the refurbished

Birmingham Town Hall for a concert by the Orchestra of the Swan and spent a thrilling afternoon listening to Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* and Mozart's *Symphony No 40* under the baton of David Curtis.

Fred Austin

Next meeting: 5 April, 2.30pm. DVD of 'Rescue in Albania'

Bradford CF HMD feedback

We began with feedback on Holocaust Memorial Day, in which we had either participated or simply attended. We continued our discussion on the HMD theme of 'Untold stories', not all of which were sad – there were stories of rescue and hope too.

Thea Hurst

Next meeting: 4 April

HGS A talented young lady

Natasha Solomons spoke about the genesis of her first book, *Mr Rosenblum's List*, and of her forthcoming second book, *The Novel in the Viola*. All of us at this well attended meeting wished further success to this very nice and talented young lady.

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 11 April. Alfred Simms, 'Gluckel Manein – Housewife from Hamburg, 1646-1724'

Edgware 'The History of Berlin'

Many of the audience were ex-Berliners and the topic was 'The History of Berlin', presented by Alfred Simms. Those less familiar with the topic found it most interesting. Alfred mentioned several historical dates and showed us photos depicting parts of Berlin. Then came the year 1933 – of which each of us has his or her history.

Felix Winkler

No meeting in April due to Pesach

Largest Café Imperial get-together

The largest get-together in my experience and a most enjoyable one, not least because we mostly know each other well. I was most impressed by *Mr Rosenblum's List*, by Natasha Solomons, who was present. It is based on her grandfather's life in Berlin and emigration to the UK (as I understood it).

Henry Myer

Oxford In search of 'Jewish genes'

Professor Curzon enlightened us on the search for 'Jewish genes', the influence of Sigmund Freud, the objectivity of Jewish thinkers and 'being outsiders most Jews question everything'. Many thoughtful questions followed this interesting talk.

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: 12 April. Ladislaus Löb, 'Rezso Kasztner: A "Jewish Shindler"'

Radlett 'My Father's Roses'

Most of the older generation of Bridget McGing's family had escaped from the Sudetenland to the UK. They brought with them a treasure trove of family photographs and letters, based on which Bridget's mother, Nancy Kohner, wrote the book 'My Father's Roses'. Bridget spoke movingly about the people involved.

Fritz Starer

No meeting in April due to Pesach

A pleasant afternoon in Wembley

We enjoyed a pleasant, spring-like after-

noon discussing various topics. Concerns over the treatment of elderly people in hospital led to mention of 'medical' soaps on TV and programmes enjoyed. As usual, the cakes etc went down well.

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: 13 April. Social get-together

Leeds birthday boy



(from left) Bertha Klipstein, Suzanne Rappaport Ripton, Edith Goldberg, Heinz Skyte, Barbara Cammerman, Helga Segelman

Susanne led a lively afternoon of stories and anecdotes relating to 'Untold stories'. As the meeting was held on Valentine's Day we also recalled meeting spouses many years ago and laughed at the funny side of relationships and meetings which form future lives. We celebrated member Heinz Skyte's 91st birthday too. *Barbara Cammerman*

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
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee
Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

East Midlands (Nottingham)
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3077

Edinburgh
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254

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

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Cambridge Basque and Kindertransport evacuees

We were given a vivid account by Natalie Benjamin of the evacuation in 1937 of 4,000 Basque children to the UK resulting from the Spanish Civil War. Those of us who came here by Kindertransport a year or two later could relate to many of their experiences.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 14 April. Renée Tyack, 'They Called Her Cassandra'

'Growing old' in Liverpool

We had a very good attendance for the meeting, held at Susanne's home. After a very pleasant bagel lunch, Professor Julian Verbov reminded us that his paternal grandparents and four of their children were murdered by the Nazis in Lithuania. The subject of his talk, 'Growing Old', turned out to be quite amusing and was greatly enjoyed by all present.

Guido Alis

Next meeting: 6 April

OUTING TO WESTCLIFF AJR GROUP

Tuesday 10 May 2011

We are pleased to announce an outing to visit the AJR Essex Group, which meets in Westcliff on Sea.

The cost of £20 pp includes refreshments on arrival, a buffet lunch, a tour of Westcliff, and return coach journey.

For further details please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070.

Temple Fortune Argentina – a place of refuge

The Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn spoke about Argentina as a place of refuge for Nazis, Jews and Germans alike. He also mentioned that the Wiener Library would close at the end of March and re-open in early September at 29 Russell Square.

David Lang

Weald of Kent When we were a nation of shopkeepers

Members were taken back to a time when we were a nation of shopkeepers and Oxford Street was called Tyburn Way by

Norfolk (Norwich)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London

Ruth Jacobs 020 8445 3366

Oxford

Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)

Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Radlett

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Sheffield

Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London

Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey

Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Temple Fortune

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent

Janet Weston 01959 564 520

Wembley

Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)

Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)

Fred Austin 01384 252310

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

KT-AJR

**Kindertransport
special interest group**

Monday 4 April 2011

**Michael Newman
'The Work of the AJR'**

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH
WILL BE SERVED AT 12.30 PM ON MONDAYS**

**Reservations required
Please telephone 020 7328 0208**

**Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
9.30 am – 3.30 pm**

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

April Entertainment

Mon	4	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	5	CLOSED
Wed	6	William Smith
Thur	7	Simon Gilbert
Mon	11	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	12	CLOSED
Wed	13	Paul Coleman
Thur	14	MODEL SEDER LUNCH
Mon	18	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue	19	CLOSED
Wed	20	CLOSED – PESACH
Thur	21	Mike Marandi
Mon	25	CLOSED – EASTER MONDAY
Tue	26	CLOSED
Wed	27	ANNIE'S QUIZ
Thur	28	Michael Heaton

a fascinating talk on the history of shops and shopping by David Barnett. We heard about an age before supermarkets and department stores and when a pineapple for a duchess cost three guineas!

Janet Weston

Surrey coffee morning

Once again we extend our thanks to Edmée for her generous hospitality, which, with help from Edith, allowed us to

continued on page 15

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3070

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

Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070

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

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birth

Congratulations to Susie and Andrew Kaufman on the birth of their new grandson Benjamin Freddie.

Deaths

Hacker (née Eick), Lilli Passed away on 10 February 2011 in London following an illness. She will be very greatly missed by Sam, Richard and Sarah, her much adored granddaughter Rebecca, and her brother Heinz.

Wolfisz (née Schwarz), Ursel Passed away on 28 January 2011 aged 85. Deeply mourned by sons Richard and Steven, daughters-in-law Pamela and Rita, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Wolfisz (née Schwarz), Ursel Passed away on 28 January 2011. Sadly missed by sister and brother-in-law Vera and Michael Price, nieces Julia van der Wens and Nicole Diamond, and their families.

CLASSIFIED

Garden help I have a small garden requiring TLC, which I can no longer offer. Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead. Will suit retired person. Please call **020 7435 0231**

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HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS

**Sunday 26 June
to Sunday 3 July 2011**

At the Inn on the Prom
11/17 South Promenade, St Annes
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Cost, including Dinner,
Bed and Breakfast
£632.50 per person

For booking, please contact

Ruth Finestone
on direct line 020 8385 3082
or mobile 07966 886535

MODEL SEDER LUNCH

**Thursday 14 April 2011
at the**

Paul Balint AJR Centre
**11.30 am for a prompt
12 noon start**

Rabbi Katz will be leading
the service

Please book early to avoid
disappointment
Wheelchair places are limited

'THE JOURNEY' A TRIP TO BETH SHALOM Sunday 12 June 2011

An opportunity to see
'The Journey', the latest addition
to the Centre

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BOURNEMOUTH HOLIDAY

**Sunday 8 May to
Sunday 15 May 2011**

This year we are returning to the
Cumberland Hotel in Bournemouth.

The cost will be £500 plus
£50 single room supplement
(sea view rooms an additional
£10.00 per person per night).

Price includes transport to and from
Bournemouth from Cleve Road,
a sandwich lunch on journey to
Bournemouth, dinner, bed and breakfast,
outing, cards and entertainment.
As always, places are limited so
please book early.

Please contact Carol Rossen or
Lorna Moss on 0208 385 3070
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OBITUARY

Eric Hugo Strach, 21 October 1914 – 10 January 2011

Eric Strach was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, into a close-knit Jewish family. He had one sister, Ilse, 1½ years older than he.

Eric studied medicine at Prague University and graduated in 1938, after which he spent the summer in France with friends. As the situation in Europe deteriorated, his parents dissuaded him from returning to Czechoslovakia. He tried desperately to arrange a visa for his sister and her children but failed. He always said he thought he could have done more to save them.

Answering his call-up, Eric sailed with the Czech army to Liverpool. Eventually he was able to resume his medical career, becoming Senior House Surgeon at Wigan Infirmary. He married Margaret Forshaw on 27 January 1945. It is a fitting coincidence that this day has since taken on a greater significance as Holocaust Memorial Day.

After the war Eric returned to Czechoslovakia to help with the typhus epidemic in Terezin. He discovered his beloved Ilse, her two children and his parents had perished in concentration camps. Devastated, he decided to settle in England, where he progressed to the position of Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at St Helens and Whiston hospitals. He and Margaret had three children.

He had a strong belief in the value of life, however limited by disability, and went on to specialise in the treatment of



children with spina bifida.

Eric was a keen amateur astronomer and shared this interest with another orthopaedic surgeon who was Egyptian. The two completely disregarded the East-West divide despite the high tension between Israel and Egypt at the time they got to know each other. Believing that racial and cultural differences should not divide human beings, they forged a long and valuable friendship.

Until 1989, Eric never revisited Czechoslovakia. He was deemed to owe money for the upkeep of the house the Nazis, then the Communists, had confiscated and could have been imprisoned! Sadly, he never recovered ownership of the house. Once the Iron Curtain fell, he was able to return to what was now the Czech Republic.

Eric wrote an article for the Liverpool Progressive Synagogue's magazine on his experience of returning to his homeland. This came to the notice of the Nottingham Synagogue, which had been given guardianship of the Torah scroll which originated from the synagogue in Slavkov (Austerlitz), where Eric's grandparents had lived. It had been one of many stolen by the Nazis when they pillaged synagogues and which were retrieved after the war. Finally, at a special *Shabbat* in memory of the victims of Slavkov, Eric carried the Torah his own grandfather had carried years before.

Eric set about having a memorial stone erected in the Slavkov Jewish cemetery and renovating the synagogue there. In May 1998 an inaugural ceremony was held, attended by the Israeli ambassador and many other dignitaries. At last Eric had been able to pay homage to his lost family who had been denied rites of passage. It was a bonus to his life that he had not anticipated. He believed that the horrors of the *Shoah* should never be forgotten and that Holocaust education was a necessity. He was a frequent visitor to, and supporter of, the Holocaust Centre at Beth Shalom.

Eric always lived life to the full and gave back in equal measure. He is survived by his wife, three children and six grandchildren.

Angela Strach

INSIDE THE AJR *continued from page 13*

continue chatting well into the afternoon. Our meeting was tinged with sadness as we remembered Harry Stadler, his passing being all the more poignant as it happened just before the broadcast on C5's Holocaust Memorial Day programme on which he appeared. *June Wertheim*

Brighton and Hove Sarid The importance of documentation

Wiener Library archivist Howard Falksohn stressed the importance of collecting and preserving documents pertaining to the Holocaust in memory of the people and events of this horrific era. *Ceska Abrahams*
Next meeting: 11 (not 18) April. Mark Perry-Nash, 'In the Footsteps of the Legions: Exploring the Romans'

Cleve Road Mid East update

Speaking to a capacity crowd, the largest ever for our group, the Israeli Embassy's Daniel Bacall gave us a Powerpoint

presentation on the fast-moving events in the Middle East. *David Lang*

No meeting in April due to Pesach

Book Club: Talking about many things

Meeting at Costa, we talked about many things, though not very much about the book we had been asked to read. Our next meeting will be on 13 April, when we will discuss the book *The Hare with Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal. If you have a free afternoon, do come and join us – you will enjoy it! *Margarete Weiss*

North London Simple tunes from the shtetl

Jane Rosenberg gave a most interesting talk, illustrated with music and her beautiful voice, showing how simple tunes from the *shtetl*, mostly played on portable instruments like the fiddle, clarinet and accordion, evolved as they travelled west. Despite the transition from klezmer

groups to the Big Band sounds in the USA, something can still be heard of the haunting original. *Hanne R. Freedman*

No meeting in April due to Bank Holidays

Hendon An uplifting, special afternoon

On a dark, gloomy, wet afternoon, our spirits were lifted by the music played by Jane Rosenberg. We were taken on a journey from the *shtetls* of Poland to the big bands of America in the forties and ended in Israel. With Jane's voice singing in parts beautifully, we ended the afternoon doing 'Hava Nagila'. A very uplifting afternoon. *Hazel Beiny*

No meeting in April due to Pesach

ALSO MEETING IN APRIL

Cardiff 4 April. Lunch and speaker: David Lawson, 'The Jews of Ostrava'
Bath/Bristol 7 April. Lunch and speaker David Barnett, 'Jewish Trades in Regency London'



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Israel and the charge of 'apartheid'

The term 'apartheid' is being bandied about with increasing frequency with regard to Israel.

The crime of apartheid is defined by the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as 'inhumane acts of a character similar to other crimes against humanity committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.'

In other words, it is the systematic discrimination of one racial group by another, on the basis of a system of repressive laws.

Israel's Declaration of Independence states, *inter alia*, 'we call upon the sons of the Arab people dwelling in Israel to keep the peace and to play their part in building the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its institutions, provisional and permanent.'

This would seem to indicate that the basic premise underlying Israel's laws is that of equality and representation for the country's Arab citizens.

Israel is a parliamentary democracy,

and currently 12 of the 120 Knesset members are Arabs representing several Arab parties. The Arab citizens of Israel have full and equal democratic rights though, apart from certain groups (Beduin, Druse), they are not called up to serve in the IDF. Israeli Arabs have full and equal access to education at every level. Because many Muslim women wear a distinguishing form of headress they can be easily identified on university campuses, shopping malls, public transport, hospitals and clinics, and in any and every public place. As Arab men are not immediately identifiable by their dress it is not so easy to spot them in public, but they are often to be found accompanying their womenfolk. Thus, discrimination in those spheres of public life cannot be said to exist.

Never in Israel's history have facilities been labelled 'Jews only' or 'Arabs only', as was the case in the darkest days of South Africa's apartheid regime and, even until not that long ago, in some southern states of the USA.

As my friend and colleague Ira Sharkansky has pointed out, 'Claims of discrimination against Israeli Arabs pale in comparison to what occurs in other

countries. Israeli Arabs have better health indicators than white Americans, and far better indicators than American minorities. The incomes of Israeli Arabs are closer to those of Israeli Jews than are the incomes of African Americans to those of white Americans. Israel provides instruction in Arabic to its minority, and there is no problem of Muslim women dressing according to their religious tradition. Compare those freedoms to the experience of the Kurds in Turkey, or Muslim women in France. Israeli courts act against the political activities of Arab citizens (or Members of Knesset) only in extreme cases when there are charges of incitement to violence, or aiding the enemy against the background of armed conflict.'

When it comes to Arabs living in the areas conquered by Israel during the Six Day War – i.e. Palestinians – the situation is different. Initially, no restrictions were placed on the movement of either Jews or Arabs and the two populations mixed freely. In Jerusalem this is still the case. However, as a result of Jewish settlement across the Green Line and acts of terrorism on the part of Palestinian groups, the free movement of population between them has been restricted, primarily in order to prevent death and injury being inflicted upon innocent civilians by would-be terrorists.

As far as I can understand, that does not constitute apartheid. But, as every politician knows, if you sling enough mud, some of it will stick.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

where I was born and bred was named after one of them: Königswarterstrasse, later – after we had moved from there – to be changed to Adolf Hitler Strasse, but changed back to its original name after the war.

Germany's first railway, the Ludwigsbahn (not Ludwigseisenbahn as stated in the article), named after the king of Bavaria, was still in service when my sister was a little girl, but had been replaced by an electric Strassenbahn (tram) by the time I was born.

I sometimes wonder how much Fürth may have changed since my early childhood and if I'd still find my way around.

Henry Kissinger's father was my sister's maths teacher – the best she'd ever had,

she claims. He taught her to write her numbers neatly. He had already, as a young man, held a job as a Hebrew teacher in my mother's school!

As for Frank and Beri Harris, I too am a recipient of his annual newsletter. He is a very active man despite his age and has done a lot of good work.

(Mrs) Margarete Stern, London NW3

FIXATION WITH JEWS

Sir – Regarding the article 'The fixation with Jews' (March): listening to BBC Radio 4 a few weeks ago, I heard crucifixion of Jews was established practice during the rule of the Greeks and Romans. In fact, further refinements in the art of this cruelty to prolong the agony, especially reserved for

Jews, were the order of the day.

Laura Selo, London NW11

Sir – The Jews gave the world the Ten Commandments. The Jews gave the world Jesus Christ. The Jews have never been forgiven!

Hans Hammerschmidt, Oxford

HUNGARIAN JEWS WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

Sir – A propos 'Hungarian Jews who changed the world' (March, Letters), it is perhaps not generally known that they all came from Mars. They did not want to admit this, so they called themselves Hungarians.

Professor Ernst Sondheimer, London N6