

Lotte Kramer's collected poems

Lotte Kramer, born Lotte Wertheimer in Mainz in 1923, started writing poetry only relatively late, in 1979, when what she calls 'the ice-break of words' induced her to confront the traumatic experiences of her childhood: the humiliation and suffering inflicted on her as a Jew, the parting from her parents when she left for Britain on a Kindertransport train in July 1939, and the loss of many family members in the Holocaust, including her parents, who were deported to Piaski, near Lublin in Poland. These experiences are central to the substantial volume of her *New and Collected Poems*, published in 2011 by Rockingham Press of Ware, Hertfordshire, priced £9.99.

It was also to Piaski that the mother of Mainz's most famous daughter, the novelist Anna Seghers, was deported. Seghers, whose real name was Netty Reiling, was born in 1900 and died in East Berlin in 1983, a convinced Communist. As a literary stalwart of the GDR, she was long boycotted in West Germany, which meant that her great novel *Das siebte Kreuz* (*The Seventh Cross*) (1942, subsequently made into a Hollywood film starring Spencer Tracy) and the unforgettable short story *Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen* (*The Excursion of the Dead Girls*) (written in exile in Mexico in 1943/44) have never enjoyed the acclaim they deserve. Only rarely, as in that part-autobiographical account of the schoolgirl Netty returning home from a school excursion on the Rhine in 1912, juxtaposed with the fate that would befall her, her family and her friends in both world wars – the deportations to the extermination camps, as well as the destruction of Mainz in an air raid – does Seghers refer to her own Jewish background.

For Lotte Kramer, as for Anna Seghers, the Rhine, at once the symbol of history in flow and the symbol of the permanence of nature, of the natural order and, by extension, of the humane values innate in human beings, marks a lasting reference point. The beauty, harmony and abundant fruitfulness of the Rhineland landscape continue to resonate in their works, even in distant lands of exile, made the

more distant by the barbarism that had enveloped their native countryside in 1933, excluding them from the community to which they had belonged.

In her poem 'Rhine', Kramer addresses the river as a powerful protective force – 'Always the father of my being/ Unchanging in your majestic song' – that is unaffected by the fickleness of humankind. While the sight of barges



Lotte Kramer

bearing goods on 'the flow of your streaming' reminds the poet of the river's liquid transcendence of borders, its 'sheltering fastness' still remains a solid refuge against the storms of history, offering protection 'with assuring presence' even as the poet recalls how 'Crusaders rampaged through Jewish quarters', a historical premonition of the Nazi terror. (The reference is to the massacres of Rhineland Jews by crusaders under Emicho of Leiningen in 1096.)

But rivers take on a new significance in the light of Kramer's enforced flight from Mainz to Britain, in the sense that by transcending boundaries they open up new perspectives and opportunities, especially for writers. 'To cross a bridge', she writes, 'is walking to a new country'. A central theme in Kramer's work is her awareness of having gained from her exposure to two cultures, which, as if they were the two banks delineating the chan-

nel of her life, have nurtured and enriched her, 'the bloodstream feeding both sides'.

Above all, Kramer the poet has been enriched by exposure to two languages. Her poem 'Bilingual' conveys the well-defined intellectual order of German:

When you speak German
The Rhineland opens its watery gates,
Lets in strong currents of thought.
Sentences sit on shores teeming
With certainties.

English, by contrast, remains fluid and elusive:

When you speak English
The hesitant earth softens your vowels.
The sea – never far away – explores
Your words with liquid memory.

In 'My Three Rivers', she describes the course of her life as moving from the Rhine to the valley of the Thames, then to Peterborough, where she settled with her husband, a fellow refugee from Mainz, by the flat horizons and muddy arms of the Nene.

Kramer's work reflects her life, which may stand for that of a generation of assimilated German-Jewish children who were brought up believing that they belonged in German society. The collection *The Shoemaker's Wife* (1987) is replete with memories of sunlit summer days in Mainz, of happy family life, of Kramer's grandmother's 'rooted security and village ways', of schoolgirls enjoying the squashy sweetness of cherries, which decades later could still transport the poet back to the innocence of her childhood, before she had learnt what maggots could lurk in the flesh of the enticing fruit.

Kramer repeatedly invokes the service of relatives, including her father, in the Kaiser's army during the First World War, the field grey of their uniform symbolising their loyalty to Germany and its subsequent betrayal by a disloyal fatherland. The poem 'Delusions', from *The Phantom Lane* (2000), describes how Jewish men like her own father had kept their wartime photos as soldiers, which their mothers had proudly framed. But,

continued overleaf

Lotte Kramer's poems cont. from p1

as Kramer puts it in her direct, concrete style: 'They fooled themselves, as Jews,/ That they belonged, were integrated,/ German to the core and nothing could/ Deter their constancy.'

Above all, it was the so-called 'Crystal Night' pogrom of 1938, 'a November day/Bright with dread and ashes', that shattered the illusion that there might yet be a place for Jews in Hitler's Germany. Kramer's poem in memory of her classics teacher Friedrich Sandels evokes in chilling clarity how 'On the day of the burning school/He came walking towards us,/Face as grey as his flapping coat', to inform the pupils of the Jewish school that their headmaster had gassed himself in despair, the beliefs of a lifetime reduced to 'a splintered alphabet'.

Even under the Nazi tyranny, however, some friends remained true. The poem 'Lament and Celebration', for example, is dedicated to the memory of the poet's lifelong friend Greta Berndt, who as a child had defied the pressures of Nazi society by visiting Kramer: 'Through streets of terror/You came as night's shadow/Giving new names/To courage and love' (from *The Desecration of Trees*, 1994). And the reason why the shoemaker's wife had a collection of poems named in her honour was because she had come to her Jewish clients' house in tears, after the ominous sign 'No Jews' had been affixed to her cobbler husband's shop.

The separation from home, parents and family was a lasting trauma for Kramer, expressed in such poems as that dedicated to the solitary suitcase she had been allowed to take with her on the train to England and that now stands grey and tattered in an attic, 'stuffed tight with mother love and heartache'. The enduring pain of that loss is attributed 60 years later to the suitcase: 'Unable to forget the packed trains/Of ownerless children and platforms of tears.' One of Kramer's most movingly resonant poems, 'Exodus' (from *Black over Red*, 2005), refashions the story of the infant Moses to fit the children's exodus of 1938/39:

For all mothers in anguish
Pushing out their babies
In a small basket

To let the river cradle them
And kind hands find
And nurture them

Providing safety
In a hostile world:
Our constant gratitude.

As in this last century
The crowded trains
Taking us away from home

Dr Anthony Grenville's book *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970* has been reprinted. For copies (paperback), write to Anthony Grenville at the AJR, enclosing cheque for £22.50 (incl. postage and packing) made out to the author.



Became our baby baskets
Rattling to foreign parts
Our exodus from death.

But also omnipresent in Kramer's poetry is the consciousness of those other trains that bore their human cargo to the extermination camps. 'What do we know of nights in cattle-trucks?' is the opening line of 'Deportation', while 'Red Cross Message', recording her parents' last message of farewell before they left on their final journey, ends by evoking 'Your calvary of nails/And gas and graves'. Images of gas and chimneys abound in the poems, though often they suggest the gas chambers and crematoria of the Holocaust only obliquely. In 'On Shutting the Door', the everyday act of shutting the front door causes the poet to wonder how her parents would have shut their front door for the last time, after they had 'turned off the water, gas ...'. Since her parents have no known grave, she is fated 'Never to share/Your last secrets,/Never to know/Where your breath ceased' (from 'Certainty').

Kramer was fortunate in that she found a welcoming home in Britain, looked after by Mrs Margaret Fyleman and Sophie Cahn, a teacher from Mainz who had accompanied five Jewish girls to their new home in Tring, Hertfordshire, the house that is so vividly conjured up in the poem 'Arrival'. Her experiences of Britain are also presented in a largely favourable light, though she long retained the sense of being an outsider. Her collected poems, like those of her fellow refugee poet Gerda Mayer, stand as a moving evocation of a childhood shaped by the experience of National Socialism, the Holocaust and the Kindertransport.

Anthony Grenville

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Views expressed in the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of
THE ASSOCIATION OF
JEWISH REFUGEES
THURSDAY 7 JUNE 2012
11.00 AM**

at the AJR Paul Balint Centre
Belsize Square Synagogue,
London NW3 4HX

Lunch, if required, £7. Must be ordered
and paid for in advance – please telephone
020 7431 2744.

Agenda

Annual Report 2011
Hon. Treasurer's Report
Discussion

Election of Committee of Management

All questions for the chair should be
submitted by Thursday 24 May to the Head
of Administration at Jubilee House, Merrion
Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL.

**ELECTION OF COMMITTEE OF
MANAGEMENT**

The following members will be
proposed for election or re-election to the
Committee at the AGM
on Thursday 7 June 2012:

Mr A C Kaufman, Chairman, Mr W D Rothenberg,
Vice Chairman & Hon. Treasurer, Mrs E S
Angel*, Secretary, Mr C W Dunston*, Trustee,
Mrs D Franklin, Trustee, Mrs G R Glassman,
Trustee, Ms Karen Goodman, Mrs J Millan,
Sir E Reich*, Mr A Spiro

*Committee members retiring by rotation
and being proposed for re-election

Anyone wishing to propose any other
member for election as Hon Officer, Trustee,
or Committee member must submit to AJR's
Head of Administration such a proposal
signed by ten members qualified to vote at
the meeting and with the signed agreement
of the person being proposed no later than
Thursday 24 May.

**ARTS AND EVENTS
DIARY FOR MAY**

To 8 June 'Traces' Exhibition by photographer
Julia Winckler about her great-uncle Hugo
Hecker, who in 1939 escaped from Vienna
to England and whose family perished in the
Holocaust. At Austrian Cultural Forum, 28
Rutland Gate, London SW7, tel 020 7584 8653

Wed 2 Dr Gideon Reuveni (University
of Sussex), 'The Politics of Jewish
Consumption' In co-operation with the
History Department 'Work in Progress
Seminar'. Centre for German-Jewish Studies,
University of Sussex, Arts A 155, 4 pm. Tel
+44 (0)1273 678771. Booking not required.

Wed 16 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Jean
Dennis, "'A Beryl of Laughs': The Work
of Beryl Cook – Paintings and Drawings'
2.30 pm at home of Sue Raingold. Tel 020
8907 4553

**Thur 24 'Wilfrid Israel – the Saviour from
Berlin: The Story of a Forgotten Hero'**
Naomi Shepherd, author of *Wilfrid Israel*
– *German Jewry's Secret Ambassador*, in
conversation with Ruth Barnett. At London
Jewish Cultural Centre, 1-2 pm. £10 in
advance, £15 at the door. Tel 020 8457 5000

Thur 31 Special screening of *Nicky's Family* to
raise funds for the Refugee Council Children's
Section. Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St John's
Wood, 7.00 pm, £15. Tel 020 7286 5181

Recollections of the 1936 Berlin Olympics

When I was asked to write about my memory of the Berlin Olympics in 1936, it was like dipping into a remnant box, extracting and trying to match up the snippets into some sort of coherent recollection.

I was 16 years old. I lived with my father and mother and two older sisters in a fourth-floor apartment block in Berlin's Westend in Kirschenallee, Charlottenburg, some four or five miles from the Olympic stadium. This was newly built before the games, a vast area of dark grey concrete. The whole of Berlin was bedecked with Olympic and swastika flags. All anti-Semitic slogans had been removed for the games and the marching of the SA troops in the streets had been temporarily stopped, in our area at least.

I cannot really remember how I came to be asked – or maybe ordered – to play my violin in a big youth orchestra in the Olympic stadium. I don't remember how I got there. What I do remember is that it was very frustrating because most of the time was spent waiting and shuffling about to get a huge youth orchestra assembled and seated. I think there were also many young dancers who had to be organised. The thing I am absolutely certain of is that the music we rehearsed and played was a short piece by Carl Orff, whom I had never heard of before. It wasn't difficult to play. There were people about, but the thousands of seats in the stadium were empty. This experience of participating in the youth orchestra in the actual Olympic stadium, I presume now, was just being

in a rehearsal for the real performance to take place at the opening ceremony, in which I didn't take part.

And was that because I was a Jewess? For already I had, two years earlier, experienced such discrimination, when, at the age of 14, I had won a competition at the girls' grammar school (playing the first movement of Bach's A minor Violin Concerto). I remember being petrified standing on the concert platform with my violin. After a few days I was told they had made a mistake. They found out I was Jewish. And it was a huge disappointment for me, my family and my teacher, a violinist in the Berlin opera who was not a Jew. But I was. And even in this Olympic year of 1936 I

would experience more discrimination in continuing my musical studies in the Hochschule für Musik before finally I was expelled for being Jewish in 1938, on Kristallnacht, only a day after my father was taken by the Gestapo.

This was the real backdrop to the applause we could sometimes hear coming from the Olympic stadium through an open window when the wind was in a westerly direction.

Ironically, the big issue then, of course, was that a black athlete had won the 100-metre race and other gold medals as well. Of course there was no television at the time, and we had no proper radio at home, so all the news we heard was from a crystal set which my father had made with only three sets of earphones for a family of five!

Gertrude Evans



Gertrude Evans



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TWO WONDERFUL DAYS

I have just spent two wonderful days with members of various AJR Northern Groups and I want to thank all involved for arranging such an interesting itinerary.

I was fascinated by the Czech Scrolls Museum at the Westminster Synagogue, tremendously impressed by the Royal Courts of Justice (my very first visit to this grand building) and overwhelmed by the grandiose presentations at Harrods. How the other half live! The day ended with scones and tea in their beautiful restaurant.

Not least, the group was very friendly and congenial and it was a pleasure to be in their company.

Thanks must also go to the able helpers who shepherded us around and kept to a strict but necessary timetable.

Meta Roseneil (member of Ilford Group)

AJR Annual Report 2011

Key events

We were thrilled to organise a number of events throughout last year to celebrate our 70th anniversary and once again highlight the rich history of our Association and the heritage of our members.

Examining the invaluable contribution of the refugees, we co-organised a series of lectures and discussions at the London Jewish Cultural Centre, where an array of historians, celebrities and personalities provided perspectives on the refugees' achievements and legacies.

In a change from tradition, our Annual Celebration Tea became a Celebration Lunch. But we still found room, and time, to enjoy once again the beautiful singing of Glenys Groves, Jonathan Fisher and their colleagues from the Royal Opera.

It gave us great pleasure to invite members to a Chanukah reception at the residence of HE the German Ambassador, when we also heard from Dr Charlotte Knoblauch, former President of the German-Jewish community. We were also delighted to accept an invitation from HE the Austrian Ambassador for a summer gathering, when we marked the anniversary of the founding of the AJR on 20 July 1941.

It saddened us enormously to move from the AJR Paul Balint Centre, our wonderful home in Cleve Road, after 25 years. However, we have returned to our roots and been wonderfully accommodated at Belsize Square Synagogue, where we are delighted to offer a new programme of activities.

It was with greater sadness that we mourned the passing of our President, Ludwig Spiro, who did most to establish the AJR Centre in Cleve Road and whose towering presence helped develop the AJR into what it is today. We all miss him greatly.

Our regional groups continued to flourish, attracting over a third of our members to meetings and outings to the theatre, stately homes and elsewhere, with the annual visit to London proving as popular as ever.

Alongside our social activities, we were grateful to AJR member Susi Bechhofer for her moving talk at our Holocaust Memorial Day event and to Toby Simpson of the Wiener Library for his remarks at the service to commemorate Kristallnacht, both at Belsize Square Synagogue. We also organised a Kristallnacht service at Imperial War Museum North in Manchester, when over 80 members heard from James Smith of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre. The AJR also helped co-ordinate activities of the Forum for Yom HaShoah, which held its annual service in Hyde Park, when I was honoured to address over 200 guests on the contribution to Britain of the Jewish refugees from Nazism.

We were also thrilled to continue promoting our ground-breaking testimony project *Refugee Voices* and to reach agreements with some of the world's

foremost institutions engaged in Holocaust research, notably Yad Vashem and the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute as well as a joint project of the University of Groningen and the Research Centre for Contemporary History in Hamburg, and the University of Southampton.

Personnel

In September we held a farewell party for our Finance Director, Gordon Greenfield, who retired after 17 years with the AJR. David Kaye was recruited to take his place. Vivi Markstein also left us in September, having decided to return to her native Argentina. Karin Pereira moved from the AJR Centre to Head Office to take over Vivi's roles as receptionist and membership secretary.

Pritika Raghvani, our book-keeper, took maternity leave at the end of the year with Bernadette Cleal joining us on a temporary basis. We also welcomed Andrea Rosner on to the staff to assist in the Accounts Department.

To help provide greater support for our members in Scotland, Myrna Bernard was recruited as our new social worker, with Eileen Brady, who previously covered this area, focusing on Newcastle and the North East.

Membership

At the start of the year, total membership stood at 2,847 (down from 2,988 in January 2011). We enrolled 123 members and received notice that 152 had died and that 69 members had moved away or not paid their subscriptions. A further 37 members cancelled their subscriptions.

For 2011, total second generation membership was 431, including 35 who joined during the year. We now have 41 members aged 100 or older and a further 557 aged 90 or more.

Holidays

AJR holidays are still proving very successful. In May members enjoyed a week in Bournemouth, which was very well attended. There was also the annual July trip to Eastbourne, where members enjoyed a very full week with entertainment and outings. We were also delighted to arrange the annual northern holiday in St Anne's-on-Sea.

Financial assistance

We continued our role as lead agency for the administration of grants and assistance from Claims Conference programmes, which are paid to members of five charities, including the AJR. We disbursed £2.1m, of which over £640,000 was paid out through some 1,400 grants for emergency purposes, e.g. dental repairs, hearing aids and house repairs.

Also, 370 survivors and refugees received Homecare grants at a total cost of £1,068,000. Altogether, 146,000 hours of care were provided through this critical programme, which enables us to help

maintain members in their own homes as long as possible.

It gave us great pleasure to pay £472,000 through AJR Self Aid to members with the greatest need. Currently, around 165 of our members receive this assistance.

AJR Centre

Following the relocation of the AJR Centre to Belsize Square Synagogue, our three tenants who resided in flats at Cleve Road are happily ensconced in new accommodation in north-west London.

With the move to Belsize Square, we needed to review the number of our staff and were sad that Julian Kaye, Tina Mensah and Lawrence Zahra voluntarily left the AJR. We are grateful for their contributions at Cleve Road.

We were also sad that Susie Kaufman retired as AJR Centre Manager, ending a 25-year association of working for the AJR, first as a volunteer, then as Catering Manager and more recently as Centre Organiser. We are happy to announce that Judy Silverton has been appointed her successor.

As well as an art appreciation class and book club, visitors to the AJR Centre can now take computer lessons and participate in a current affairs discussion. As always, we continue to serve excellent lunches – including the monthly Kindertransport Lunch and Luncheon Club – and arrange for Meals-on-Wheels deliveries.

70th Anniversary Celebration Lunch

The 70th Anniversary Celebration Lunch was held at the Hilton Hotel in Watford in September with 250 members enjoying an excellent lunch and concert. Each guest was given a commemorative brochure and a goody bag of gifts.

Social and Welfare Services

Our team of social workers diligently attended to the needs of our less able and less secure members. Alongside nationwide visits, they completed assessments for programmes supported by the Claims Conference.

We assisted several members to relocate to residential and care homes and were able to help many members move to the new extra care housing facility Selig Court, in Golders Green, run by Jewish Care.

Many AJR members have been assessed for the Homecare scheme and continue to benefit from this service.

The department increasingly works with local authorities and Healthcare services to meet the needs of members, with our social workers reporting greater complexity in the nature of AJR members' personal circumstances, including deteriorating physical and emotional health. We continue to advise those who apply for statutory benefits and we travel to meet members wherever they reside in the country.

Northern groups

The 15 northern groups are flourishing, with Continental Friends' meetings in members' homes in the outlying areas and larger meetings with speakers in the main centres.

A highlight was the annual AJR northern get-together and 70th anniversary held in Leeds in July, when over 90 first, second and third generation members from across the north held a day of inter-active discussions. The lunchtime speaker was Linda Paterson, Chief Executive of British Friends of Yad Vashem.

Recipes Remembered, a book of Continental dishes designed and collated by AJR volunteer Pippa Landey, with memories collected from AJR members, was launched at the Yorkshire Chanukah Party in Leeds.

In Sheffield Suzanne Bardgett from the Imperial War Museum in London gave a fascinating talk on 'The Holocaust Exhibition: 11 Years On'. In Liverpool and Hull we showed the film *Watermarks*, while Continental Friends' meetings in members' homes continued to attract good attendances.

Edinburgh's Continental Friends shared wonderful afternoons exploring topics including '50 years ago', 'First impressions of Edinburgh' and 'Acceptance into a new society'. We also organised an outing to the Book Festival to hear Julia Neuberger; a visit to Queens Gallery; and a taste of the Edinburgh Festival at Edinburgh Synagogue. We ended the year with a trip to the Festival Theatre to see *The King and I*.

Members in Newcastle heard from several speakers, including Ethne Woldman of the Targu Mures Trust and author Mark Smith, while in Glasgow the Book Club continued to thrive and members heard from heart surgeon Geoffrey Berg and BBC radio producer David Neville.

Southern groups

Reflecting the interest of our members in London and the southern region, we organised outings to the Royal Courts of Justice, Luton Hoo, and the RAF and Jewish Military Museums.

We also organised a visit to Westminster Synagogue to see the rescued Czech Scrolls and to Regent's Park Open Air Theatre to see *The Beggar's Opera*. Members enjoyed theatre trips to *Death and the Maiden* and *Three Days in May* and the three-day visit to London proved as popular as ever, with highlights including tours of the Olympic Village and the Jewish Museum and a visit to the House of Commons.

The regular meetings continue to attract new members, including the Café Imperial gathering of veterans who fought in the British army. We also launched a Book Club and organised an outing to Foyle's followed by tea at St Pancras Hotel.

Among other highlights was the screening of *Watermarks* at the Kingston Continental Friends' meeting, where we welcomed AJR member Anne Marie Pisker, who featured in the film.

There was an excellent attendance at

the summer gathering in Nottingham and at the concert outing in Birmingham, while members from Ilford travelled to Westcliff for a joint lunch and tour of the area.

We welcomed Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg as guest speaker at our regional get-together at the New North London Synagogue in September, when guests heard about his extraordinary walking trip to Frankfurt and enjoyed a musical performance by the grandsons of one of our members.

It gives us enormous satisfaction that several of our 29 southern groups have met for more than 10 years, some having met over 100 times. We are grateful to those who host meetings in their homes as this setting creates a convivial environment for discussion and socialising.

As always, these social opportunities help break the isolation for many of our members and enable them to enjoy entertainment and each other's company.

Volunteers

The department continues to benefit from the help of numerous dedicated volunteers, the largest group of volunteers being those who give their time as befrienders. Reflecting our status as a nationwide organisation, we can now find many volunteers for our members in Manchester and recently matched a member and a volunteer in Dundee.

We have continued our training programme and work with the Jewish secondary schools on various programmes, including computer help both at the AJR Centre and in members' homes. To communicate more effectively with our younger volunteers, AJR is now on Facebook.

The department also found volunteers to run activities at the relocated AJR Centre (as above), while Rita Rosenbaum and her team of volunteers continued to arrange for the *AJR Journal* to be recorded and distributed for blind and disabled members. At Head Office, volunteers assist staff with many tasks, while other volunteers help with the regional group meetings.

The department was fortunate too to benefit from the support of two interns: Lilli Meinck from Germany, who comes to us through the ARSP, and Joanne Feldman, a student at Clark University in America.

AJR Journal

The year 2011 was one of continuity, with regular contributions from Consultant Editor Dr Anthony Grenville, Dorothea Shefer-Vanson and Gloria Tessler: (respectively) historical essays on themes relating to readers' lives, perceptions of present-day life in Israel, and reviews of art exhibitions.

Also regular features of the *Journal* were reviews of books, plays, films and exhibitions; (often controversial) correspondence columns; and reports of events held by the nationwide outreach groups.

A principal theme of feature articles – reflected also in the correspondence

columns – was the mixed emotions experienced by members on returning to their hometowns and lands of their birth.

Major AJR events covered during the year were the relocation of the AJR Centre and the retirement of Finance Director Gordon Greenfield and Centre Organiser Susie Kaufman. Annual events reported included services on Holocaust Memorial Day and on the anniversaries of Kristallnacht and Yom HaShoah.

The correspondence columns provided an interesting indication of where the *Journal* is read – in locations as far apart as, among others, Buenos Aires, Jerusalem, Melbourne and New York. A particularly pleasing practice of the *Journal*, as of the AJR itself, was putting in touch with one another readers and authors who have had no contact for many years.

Kindertransport

The highlight of the year was the unveiling of a statue, created by Frank Meisler, at the Hook of Holland. 'Channel Crossing to Life', sponsored by the AJR, commemorates the role played by the Dutch people in helping to rescue the Kinder, while the date of the unveiling marked the 73rd anniversary of the arrival of the first Kindertransport at Liverpool Street Station in 1938.

The monthly Kinder lunches at the AJR Centre still prove popular, with guests hearing from a talented array of speakers. The Kinder were once again grateful to the AJR Centre for organising a Chanukah party and to Bernd Koschland, who continues to produce the excellent KT Newsletter.

By far the largest area of enquiry to the AJR is requests – from students, researchers and documentary makers – to interview Kinder about their experiences. More recently, the attention of the KT committee has turned to planning events next year to mark the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport.

Child Survivors' Association

As in previous years, the CSA held a series of social meetings, some with a speaker, and produced a bi-monthly newsletter. A highlight of the year was the highly successful Strawberry Tea.

Some members continue to speak in schools and at the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, with other members travelling to Switzerland, Northern Ireland and China. Although formally launched in February this year, the CSA's new book, *We Remember – Child Survivors of the Holocaust Speak*, became available in November.

The Association was well represented at the Annual Conference of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust, held in Warsaw. Organised by the Polish organisation Children of the Holocaust, the gathering attracted considerable publicity in the local media. The annual meeting of the European Association of Survivors was also held during this conference.

continued on page 6

Finance Report

AJR – Income and Expenditure Account Year ended 31st December 2011

Income:	2011		2010	
	£	£	£	£
Membership/Donations and Legacies	146,335		118,060	
Other	2,984		4,041	
		149,319		122,101
Less:				
Overhead Expenses				
Salary Costs	59,575		57,197	
AJR Journal	56,602		56,056	
Administration/Depreciation	61,308		54,485	
		177,485		167,738
(Deficit)/Surplus:		-28,166		-45,637

Summary of Balance Sheet at 31st December 2011

	2011		2010	
	£	£	£	£
Current Assets	9,747		6,032	
Less: Current Liabilities	67,611		35,730	
		-57,864		-29,698
Represented by:				
General Fund B/Fwd	-29,698		15,939	
Net deficiency for the year	-28,166		-45,637	
		-57,864		-29,698

David Rothenberg, Hon. Treasurer 01/04/2012

AJR CHARITABLE TRUST PAUL BALINT AJR DAY CENTRE Summary figure for the year ended 31st December 2011

	2011		2010	
Income:	£	£	£	£
Takings – Day Centre and meals-on-wheels	63,189		73,080	
Less outgoings:				
Salaries	96,414		98,504	
Catering costs	172,802		178,746	
Sundry expenses	95,781	364,997	99,293	376,543
Deficit funded from Charitable Trust		301,808		303,463

AJR CHARITABLE TRUST Summary Income and Expenditure Accounts Year ended 31st December 2011

	2011		2010	
Income:				
Gift Aid/Donations/Claims Conference	864,335		690,033	
Investment income	464,473		402,999	
Sheltered housing	20,145		19,605	
	1,348,953		1,112,637	
Legacies	913,790		651,610	
	2,262,743		1,764,247	
Less outgoings:				
Day Centre	301,809		303,463	
Self Aid, Homecare and Emergency Grants	1,026,331		1,018,162	
Other organisations	295,324		339,431	
Administration/Depreciation	1,190,255		1,031,506	
	2,813,718		2,692,562	
Net outgoing resources for the year	-550,975		-928,315	
Surplus/-Deficiency on realised and unrealised investments	-763,885		1,296,631	
Net movement in funds	-1,314,860		368,316	

Treasurer's Report 2011

Our financial position is not radically different from that of the previous year. On the positive side, the contributions we receive for Homecare from the German Government via the Claims Conference have increased. This, however, is with shrinking support from local authorities which is often due to more stringent criteria of 'need', and the funds available are still not sufficient to pay everything we would like. In many cases, the AJR will add to the Homecare funded through the Claims Conference.

Unfortunately, we have not been immune from the financial upheavals surrounding us. We have seen, in line with the benchmarks against which we measure our investment performance, a reduction in the value of our investment portfolio. Taken together with the continuing very low returns we enjoyed on our cash deposits, this means that overall we have to take a very cautious approach to the use of our resources. What we know is that over the next few years the greater part of our reserves will be spent – as they should be – on looking after our ageing, progressively frailer and more dependent refugee members. I would urge members to include the AJR when considering their wills, as have many former members who are no longer with us. If it were not for the legacies and donations we have received over the years, we would not be able to continue this essential welfare work.

It is not only financial assistance we provide, but also the work of our dedicated team of social workers, so ably led by Sue Kurlander. They visit many hundreds of members who appreciate not only their help but also their care and attention as well as that of our many volunteers. We give them all our thanks.

Apart from this primary aspect of our work, the Trustees of the AJR Charitable Trust have given assistance to the Wiener Library as custodians of our history, and to Beth Shalom in Nottinghamshire, who have created not only a Holocaust museum in the heart of the East Midlands but are also seeking, through an imaginative educational exhibition, 'The Journey', which is targeted at local schools, to reverse a worrying level of ignorance and intolerance. If members have not visited Beth Shalom, I would urge them to see what has been achieved there.

During the year, we welcomed David Kaye, who joined us as Director of Finance. David has brought with him not only dedication and wholehearted identification with the AJR, but also, from his previous industrial experience, modern management accounting skills. He is a very welcome addition to our Head Office team.

The burden of work done on behalf of all members of the Umbrella Group,

including ourselves, to support the requests for and validation of the funds coming from the Claims Conference in New York (as well as from the German Government and the Austrian Holocaust Survivors Emergency Assistance Fund) has, if anything, increased over the last year, and I should like to thank all our staff for the dedication they have shown in coping with this burden.

What many members will not realise is the pace at which changes, whether governmental, economic, social or organisational, impact on what we do. The analogy of the swan, apparently gliding effortlessly through the water – whilst paddling furiously but unseen below the water – seems very apposite.

David Rothenberg
Honorary Treasurer
Association of Jewish Refugees
April 2012

AJR ANNUAL REPORT *continued from page 5*

Claims

With the loosening of eligibility criteria for several reparation programmes, we provided guidance to many members on a range of compensation schemes, including indemnifications for work in ghettos as well payments from the Claims Conference. We also continued to provide assistance on pensions.

Grants

As previously, the AJR Charitable Trust supported leading institutions in the fields of Holocaust education, research and commemoration, including projects proposed by the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre and the Anne Frank Trust. The Charitable Trust also contributed towards Holocaust Memorial Day events at the Finchley Reform and Northwood Synagogues and at the Universities of Sussex and Glasgow.

Thanks

I would like once again to pay tribute to my fellow Trustees and members of our Management Committee for their support as well as to our dedicated and caring staff, who do so much to ensure that our services are delivered so professionally and kindly.

Thanks also to you, our members, for your continuing involvement and active participation in your Association. We all look forward to welcoming you at our events and at the new AJR Centre in the near future. As always, do please let us know if you are aware of other Holocaust refugees and survivors, as well as their families, who may benefit from our services.

Andrew Kaufman
Chairman
Association of Jewish Refugees



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication.*

HELPING REFUGEE BOYS

Sir – I wish to reply to Dr Susan Cohen's comments regarding my article on the Gloucester Association for Aiding Refugees (GAAR) and their efforts to help provide a hostel and apprenticeships for ten 'Kinder' boys. The 'inaccuracy' comes in my reference to the National Association for Women. This should read 'National Council of Women' (NCW), for which I apologise.

The purpose of the article was not to play down the role or importance of the latter, but to highlight the fact that many non-Jewish charitable and voluntary organisations pursued the common objective of helping Jewish boys who were difficult to foster. Twenty-three organisations were ready to support the initial ideas of Miss Hartland from the NCW to rescue the children, while the Reverend Henry Carter of the Lord Baldwin Fund came up with the important point that the boys would be a long-term 'obligation', requiring suitable funding and commitment. The latter meant giving the boys the opportunity to learn a trade when they were old enough to leave school.

There was a clear understanding from the start that the children could be the responsibility of GAAR for many years, which would require a joint effort by all who cared about the fate of refugee Jewish children. With the constraints of the article's word limit, I was unable to include the details of all the organisations involved and their valuable contributions.

The University of Exeter puts a block on public access to PhD theses for a limited time period. However, the thesis does contain examples of other local efforts to save Jewish refugee lives, particularly teenagers, and how the latter, such as the noted Australian historian Frank Knopfmacher, attempted to gain entry into Britain.

Nick Burkitt, Moretonhampstead, Devon

BRICK WALL

Sir – Any member interested in researching their German relatives since c 1870 will find it an almost impossible task as German privacy laws permit only direct descendants to research their records.

However, the Standesamt goes further in first providing wrong information – only after fees have been paid does it state that one must be a direct descendant. This happened to me some years ago. It was made clear from the beginning that I

wished to research the brothers and sisters of one set of my great-grandparents. I was informed that as I was a descendant this was in order. Only after I had paid the money over was I advised that I had to be a direct descendant.

All attempts to obtain a refund of the fees, including, *inter alia*, writing to the mayor of Berlin, my MEP and the German embassy, met with a brick wall.

The sum involved was €90 and one would have thought that good customer relations would have dictated that this amount be promptly refunded to me. The result of this not happening is that the German authorities must have expended a sum considerably in excess of €90 in dealing with this matter – a brief count shows I wrote and received more than 50 emails and letters in all. In addition, I understand that my MEP wrote many emails to the relevant authorities, most of which remained unanswered.

When I told fellow specialist genealogy researchers and AJR members of my predicament, they said one should claim any name one was searching for was that of a grandparent but limit it to four names at one time. I wonder whether other AJR members have experienced similar problems.

Anthony Portner, Chertsey, Surrey

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

Sir – I refer to Stella Curzon's letter 'Conspiracy of silence'. I'm not convinced that very few people are aware of the Kitchener Camp. It has, in fact, been well publicised in Dr Helen Fry's books, in particular *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens*. Dr Fry has researched most thoroughly the history of Jewish refugees who joined the armed forces to fight against the Nazis, many of whom arrived at the Kitchener Camp, their first home in the UK.

Dr Dennis Dell, Aylesbury, Bucks

MEDICAL LUMINARIES

Sir – My earlier short article on 'Refugees in far-away places' attracted some interesting correspondence. I am now in the last stages of writing an essay entitled 'The pre-Anschluss Vienna School of Medicine', which includes eight vignettes of medical luminaries: Ignaz Semmelweis, Theodor Billroth, Sigmund Freud, Julius Wagner-Jauregg, Karel Wenckebach, Karl Landsteiner, Otto Loewi and Robert Bárány. If any reader has knowledge of

or reminiscences about any of the above-mentioned, please contact me **speedily** on tel 020 8467 5656 or at Brettargh.holt@dsl.pipex.com

*Professor Robert A. Shaw,
Chislehurst, Kent*

SO MUCH KINDNESS

Sir – Health problems mean I can't any longer do as much book-dealing as I would like and I have therefore terminated my 'Wanted to Buy – German and English Books' ad in the Journal. I'm still happy to have referred to me the occasional enquiry you may receive from people with books to dispose of.

I feel privileged to have had through my ads in the Journal the opportunity to visit many AJR fellow members in their homes. So much kindness received, so many uplifting life stories heard!

Robert Hornung, London W5

WITH MY OWN PEOPLE

Sir – In the many letters that appear in your journal attacking me, I am often accused of not being Jewish enough. It is true that I am sceptical about many aspects of Orthodox Judaism. It is true that I am against faith schools. It is true that I believe that Jews should fully integrate into British society. It is also very true that I am aghast at the power the religious parties have in Israel. I support Israel strongly – but I want it to be a secular state and not the fundamentalist religious one it is in danger of becoming.

I therefore decided to go to Israel, with my wife, last February to see for myself how much change there has been since its birth. Sadly, the religious parties do seem to rule the roost. They are now trying to stop all public transport on Shabbat, even in Tel Aviv. The majority of Hasidim still do not do their military service and, oddly, those that do seem to get paid more than non-Hasidim. The militant settlers all seem to be 'frummers'. Proportional representation has really not worked out: Netanyahu is in power because the religious parties backed him and not Tzipi Livni, even though her party beat Likud in the election.

There is no doubt that the ultra-Orthodox made me feel uncomfortable, but you know what? I liked Israel. I felt curiously at home there. I was with my own people.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

TO ENGLAND VIA UGANDA

Sir – I read the article 'To England via Uganda' by Ilse Dokelman in the March issue and was disgusted to read the sentence 'I had almost no contact with the black employees: one just didn't befriend black people.' This sentence has no place in your journal. All one has to do is substitute 'Jewish' for 'black' – how would we then feel?

It is also sad that the journal is entirely

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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about German-speaking refugees from Hitler. What about all the Jews from the Arab lands who came here? They were also Jewish refugees and many of them have remarkable stories that could do with a wider airing.

Dr John W. Frank, Westcliff-on-Sea

THE WORLD HAS MOVED ON

Sir – Claire Tomalin's *Charles Dickens: A Life* is a beautifully bound hardback biography. The scholarship, research and detail that inform the 560 pages are admirable.

Dickens's novels also require many hours of concentration. They too are long, but life is short. What to read in the winter evenings before the ten o'clock news? The biography or the novel? The opening pages of *Oliver Twist* are seductive and the novel took over for a while.

In a rare criticism of Dickens, Claire Tomalin takes him to task over the character of Nancy, which she describes as the chief failure of the book, saying it is not a convincing portrayal of a prostitute. Dickens is accused here of creating a stereotype – but Fagin, described as a favourite character with readers, including Queen Victoria, is a stereotype too. Fagin is not the friendly old gentleman depicted in the musical *Oliver* dancing with the boys and singing 'You've got to pick a pocket or two.'

In page after page of the book, Fagin is described as 'the Jew' or 'the wily old Jew': '[T]he hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.'

This stereotype of Jews was endemic in the Christian culture of the time, but the world has moved on. Might it have been apposite in a biography which dwells at length on *Oliver Twist* to have mentioned it?

Mary Essinger, Wigston Magna, Leicestershire

THE JOINT AND JEWISH REFUGEES

Sir – Professor Miriam E. David wants to know how refugees from different parts of Europe managed to arrange their journeys to England. My parents and I arrived in Albania from Yugoslavia, where we had been on three-month tourist visas: after these expired in October 1938, we were expelled. None of the Western countries that now claim they then cared for the plight of us persecuted Jews was prepared to offer us visas. Albania was the only country to offer us asylum. When we arrived there with the equivalent of £50 my parents were extremely worried how we would survive. Fortunately, we were welcomed at the port by two Austrian refugees. They reassured us that there was already a group of Jewish refugees living in Durres supported by a subsistence allowance from the JOINT: their lives were not luxurious but they could survive, which

was the most important thing.

We learned then that the JOINT supported refugees wherever they were living as long as there was a resident Jewish family prepared to act as recipient of the money received and account for it. Fortunately there was a Jewish shopkeeper in Durres who accepted this responsibility. Periodically, a JOINT representative (Mr Oriewitsh) visited us to check that we were alright. If any of us refugees managed to secure entry to one of the safe Western countries, the JOINT also paid our travel costs. When my mother obtained a domestic visa and I an apprentice visa for the UK in 1939, the JOINT provided us with the necessary travel money. Without the JOINT's generous help, we would not have survived. I assume the same applies to many other Jewish refugees.

Dr T. Scarlett Epstein OBE, Hove, Sussex

WAITING FOR THE GOOD BURGHERS OF LEEDS

Sir – In 1957 we were 750 refugees from the Hungarian uprising in a disused holiday camp in Skegness. Of these, three of us were Jews. In my very basic English I wrote a letter to the Chief Rabbi of England, addressing it only to 'London'. Service by the Post Office was a lot better then as it was forwarded to the Leeds community. Eventually three men appeared at the camp and greeted us with great warmth. Promises were made to take us to Leeds very soon and attend to all our needs (these were rather large as we had only the clothes we were wearing and, of course, no money).

One of us was a man of around 40, whose father had deposited the substantial sum of £5,000 in a London bank before the war. Without saying goodbye, he disappeared. He travelled to London somehow, managed to get his hands on the money, on more than one lady, and on a good supply of alcohol, according to some eyewitnesses. I came across him in 1961 in a Hungarian patisserie in Willesden (anybody remember Patisserie Virag?) and he appeared penniless. He discreetly told me he worked for Interpol. Presumably Interpol was not unionised and paid poorly. In the meantime, two of us refugees are still waiting for the good burghers of Leeds to fulfil their promises!

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath

INTERESTING OBJECTS OF LONG AGO

Sir – I read with interest 'A moving return to the city of my birth [Innsbruck]' by Dorli Neale in a recent issue of the Journal, especially as parts of her life reminded me of mine. I too possess photographs as well as many other interesting objects of days long ago. These include Hebrew school books, drawings, childish letters and three albums. Two of the albums are from my sister's early school days in Fürth (Germany), from a time when people there used to write in Gothic script, and one album she kindly handed down to me as she hadn't used it. I, having reached

the right age for it, passed it around at home and at school, first in Maribor, Slovenia, then in London, making it doubly interesting and intriguing to compare the different styles of writing in those two countries. A pity I can't show it to a wider circle!

(Mrs) Margarete Stern, London NW3

DEALING WITH JEWISH WAR VETERANS

Sir – In his review of a book on German-Jewish soldiers (February), Professor Leslie Baruch Brent states that even at the Wannsee conference (20 January 1942), 'there were discussions on how to deal with the question of Jewish war veterans'.

But that question had already been settled. I have a list of 102 restrictions, orders and confiscations imposed on Jews in Bohemia and Moravia, with dates of their implementation. From 1 September 1941 Jews had already been 'forbidden to wear medals, decorations and other insignia' and the same would have applied everywhere else. My uncle Fritz had served in the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) and had been awarded an Iron Cross. After years of forced labour in Berlin he and his wife were sent to Auschwitz and death on 3 March 1943. The Nazis had thus decided to ignore the military service of German and Austrian Jews in the First World War, even that of decorated veterans.

Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk

IF

Sir – If all Members of Parliament who speed repeatedly were caught, there wouldn't even be a quorum in the House. This would save their salaries and their inflated expense accounts – and incidentally, we wouldn't be burdened with any more contemptible laws.

If, however, all road users who transgress the Highway Code were caught, the roads would be free for buses, taxis and bicycles. The police would do what they used to do in days gone by. And who loves wardens? The car industry would fold up and Britain would rank as a Third World country, but we might escape being downgraded to AA status like the rest of Europe. We would be healthier though – a boon for the NHS, saving on doctors and nurses.

If, alternatively, all MPs who break the seventh commandment were exposed by certain hypocritical media, it would empty the House and the Members could follow unhindered Noah's command to 'go forth and multiply'.

If the corrupt bonus culture were abolished, and the multitude of bankers and others in the financial sector and elsewhere were paid by results, their numbers would shrink dramatically and the country's debts would be cleared. Excessive salaries would be relegated to history and we would all be better off.

If the antiquated honours system were abolished, there would be no need to strip them later from unscrupulous scoundrels.

If only!

Fred Stern, Wembley Park, Middlesex

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The shifting demographic of British art is explored by **Tate Britain** in **Migrations: Journeys into British Art**, an examination of the multi-culturalism influencing home talent. Between the 16th and 20th centuries, the experience of European immigrants, including Dutch painters and later those in flight from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, may have some resonance with today's refugees. But many 17th-century artists came here to seek British patronage. We can reflect on Holbein's Henry VIII or Anthony van Dyck's Charles I, while 19th-century artistic ideas flowed through France, Britain and America.

But it is hard to recognise artists' *otherness* inside Britain. It is essentially art *in extremis*. Hatred of war and of anti-Semitism are among the gauntlets Jewish artists threw down while integrating into British culture, as the Whitechapel Art Gallery famously indicated in its early exhibition of Jewish settlers, some refugees from Nazi Europe. They brought artistic challenges through genres like Expressionism, which the Nazis banned and parodied in their 'degenerate art' exhibition. The Tate's examples include **Mark Gertler's** *The Artist's Mother*, warm, wise and cynical – her black satin finery betraying her worn-out, workaday hands. But Gertler's haunted, spectral *Jewish Family* tells another tale.

David Bomberg's *Vision of Ezekiel* explores the reduction of humanity into geometric shapes. **Jankel Adler's** powerful *The Mutilated* shows the brutal impact of war. **Oskar Kokoschka's** menacing *The Crab* represents

Neville Chamberlain in his betrayal of Czechoslovakia, identified in the painting as the small swimmer. **Jacob Kramer's** rectilinear *Jews at Prayer* contrasts with **Sir William Rothenstein's** more literal *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*, a study of Jewish *angst* if ever I saw one. **Kurt Schwitters's** 1942 work *Relief in Relief* understates migration by his use of tickets, stamps and other examples of the detritus of urban civilisation. The Tate includes other works by **Epstein**, **Hans Feibusch** and **Marie-Louise von Motesiczky** (until 12 August).

Johan Zoffany, another European immigrant, this time at the **Royal Academy**, painted the disappearing world of Georgian and Italian high

society, using wit and intensive brushwork to immortalise their aristocratic life-style. The Frankfurt-born 18th-century artist studied painting in Regensburg before travelling to Rome and moved in 1760 to London, where he caught the eye and patronage of newly crowned King George III. His conversational pieces catch the interplay between his sitters, exemplified by his eccentric composition of a

musical family afloat, topped by the father as 'captain' doffing his hat. These are compelling, everyday faces, quirky faces, with their innocent-looking children, their formally attired dowagers and young mothers in the sort of finery and frippery you would hardly take to the seas in.

Zoffany's group portraits have satirical edge. The *Tribuna of the Uffizi*, depicting a lavish studio with nude models, evokes a libertine world, yet one frozen in time.

As the British Empire expanded, Zoffany went to India to portray British diplomats and military heavyweights lording it over the locals. But things turned still darker as he painted the sacrifice of a Hindu woman on her husband's funeral pyre. Back in Britain, in declining health, he became haunted by the spectre of the French Revolution. Gone was the painstaking detail of the earlier years as the delicacy of his observation diminished into a terrified Impressionism.



Mark Gertler, *The Artist's Mother* 1911

REVIEWS

A family correspondence

LIFE-LINES

by Ruth L. David

Leicester: *Christians Aware* (tel 0116 254 0770), 2011, paperback 182 pp., £10.00 (+ £2 p&p)

The 'Life-lines' in the title of this remarkable book refer to the correspondence between a Jewish couple living under ever worsening conditions, first in Germany and then in France, and their children abroad. Until the rise of Nazism the Oppenheims were a respected, middle-class family living in Fränkisch-Crumbach, a small town in southern Germany, but their situation changed rapidly as the full force of anti-Semitic decrees and the antagonism of local people made themselves felt. They had the foresight first to encourage their two older sons, Werner and Ernst, to emigrate to Argentina and the USA respectively. Then in summer 1939 they sent their two daughters, Hannah, 14, and Ruth (this book's author), 10, to England via the Kindertransport. The two youngest children, Michael, 9, and Feodora, 5, remained with them.

The introductory part of the book charts the effects of the rise of Nazism on German Jewry in general and, later, more directly on the author's family. It also refers in considerable detail to the excellent diary kept by Victor Klemperer, describing life under the Nazis in Dresden.

Ruth's parents were initially forced to move from their home to Mannheim, where they ran a small Jewish orphanage as well as looking after their own two children and elderly relations. In October 1940 they were deported to what was effectively a concentration camp in Gurs, in unoccupied France.

Up to that time letters, which form the bulk of the book, kept the older children informed of what was happening, although it is clear that particularly those to the girls in England played down some of the worst aspects. The letters always emphasised how longingly they were awaiting post from the children and discussed the desperate attempts to obtain visas to enable them to escape. There was also information about relatives and friends, including some of the children's school-friends. Their pre-war maid, Mina, is also often fondly mentioned: she had remained loyal to the family, at the risk of endangering her own position.

Up to the beginning of the war correspondence was direct, but then this had to be via a school-friend in still-neutral Holland and another friend in neutral Lithuania. Sadly both these friends were murdered after their countries were occupied. At that stage, Ruth was in a hostel in

continued overleaf

REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

the north of England, her sister was working in southern England, one brother was on a farm in Argentina, and another was working as a cook in America. Following each of the letters, the author has added comprehensive comments and explanations and, very interestingly, often includes references to what Victor Klemperer was writing at the same time. She also puts the letters into a time frame by quoting from German news bulletins of the period. Considerable post-war research must have been required for these inserts.

For a long time after October 1940 there was no news from the Oppenheimer parents, but they were then again transferred to a camp in Rivesaltes and letters resumed in April 1941. The next move meant separation of the parents, with the father sent to a forced labour camp and the mother to a house in Marseille, where she did hard domestic service for a young couple, but was relatively free. With special permission the father was occasionally permitted to visit his wife. As Michael and Feo had by then been sent to separate children's homes in France, it meant that all eight family members were isolated in separate locations – four in unoccupied France, two in England, Werner in Argentina and Ernst in the USA. As far as possible, the 'life-lines' kept them in touch and surprisingly there was a postal service between unoccupied France and the UK. In most letters the mother asks that these be forwarded to others in the family. The letters from France become increasingly desperate as the mother's optimism about eventually receiving visas evaporates and rumours circulate about deportations to the 'East'. The letters are again accompanied by explanatory notes and comparisons with Klemperer's diary.

The last letters, in August 1942, are effectively farewells, as Ruth's parents realise they will never again see their children. From various documents, particularly based on the work of Serge Klarsfeld, Ruth was able to establish what happened to her parents. They were sent to Drancy and from there on 17 August they left on Transport 20 to their deaths in Auschwitz. The train held over 1,000 people, half of them unaccompanied children.

All six of the Oppenheimer children survived the war, but they never again managed to meet all together. Through the dedicated efforts of Ruth, much of what had happened to each of them and to their parents was pieced together and most of the letters received by each of the four older siblings were saved. The two youngest ones survived the war in French children's homes but were unable to keep the letters they had received.

Mina, entrusted with all the letters sent to the parents before they were deported, returned them to Ruth when they met in the late 1950s. Ruth writes that Mina should have been honoured both as a 'Righteous Gentile' by Yad Vashem and as a saint by her religion.

The publishers of this book, Christians Aware, deserve much appreciation for enabling the tragic story of European Jewry, as represented by the Oppenheimer family, to be told with so much humanity. The book does not in any way promote a Christian point of view, and indeed the author pulls no punches in criticising the inaction, even complicity, of the major Christian churches. She does, however, praise the work of the Quakers and Jehovah's Witnesses who were punished for speaking out against the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

George Vulkan

Music

Tosh and misery

THE DEATH OF KLINGHOFFER

English National Opera/ Metropolitan Opera, New York

Coliseum, London

It is asking the impossible to make a drama out of an ongoing crisis and invoke sympathy for a particularly despicable action during the course of that conflict. But such is the aim of librettist Alice Goodman and composer John Adams in this opera, which made its London debut earlier this year.

Where traditional opera sets a fictional love story against a background of historical conflict, allowing the characters to present opposing political arguments as well as their own passionate and usually contradictory feelings, it nearly always ends in tears. This is intended as a musical 'docudrama'. And it doesn't work.

The scene is set by a prologue pitting one lot of 'exiles', Arab refugees in 1948, against another lot, Jews returning to their ancestral home. But the expression of Arab grief and revenge is set to a subtle and delicate musical frame that simply sounds like moaning – as does the corresponding Jewish chorus.

The text is utter tosh (the critics called it impenetrable and metaphysical – code for incomprehensible), while the minimalist music is inherently incapable of conveying any feeling other than that of monotonous misery.

The intention is to justify the main action of the opera, the hijacking of the Mediterranean cruise ship the *Achille Lauro* in 1985 by four young members of the Palestinian Liberation Front.

If the prologue was inspired by the Bach chorales, without Bach's strong rhythms, the rest of the piece is largely recitatives, with no sense of integrated drama. This is probably true to life, as no one really knew what was going on. But it hardly makes for audience engagement.

One hijacker is a sadistic thug, another a mixed-up kid who has seen his family murdered in Lebanon. The captain – the real hero of the incident – tries to calm them. The entire event lasted two days, when the gang were persuaded to leave the boat in Egypt. At this point, the

captain tells Marilyn Klinghoffer that her invalid husband has been shot and thrown overboard in his wheelchair. According to contemporary records (the captain's diary and passengers' accounts), no one witnessed the event, though shots were heard. Leon Klinghoffer's body washed up on shore with two bullet wounds.

The two impressive sung speeches, by Klinghoffer (Alan Opie on stage), showing him as a decent man who has played his part in helping others, and his wife (Michaela Martens on stage) as a dignified widow, refusing to accept easy condolences, go some way to redeeming the work.

They are also presumably the reason why a filmed version was rejected at a 2002 Palestinian festival for being pro-Jewish. But there is a Christian note too. Mrs Klinghoffer's grieving stance as the opera ends recalls the paintings of the *Pieta*, Mary standing at the cross, and the mediaeval hymn *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*.

The opera elicited little enthusiasm at its earlier, mostly semi-staged performances. But its New York opening in 1991 was a disaster. The Klinghoffer daughters, who lost their mother to cancer shortly after their father's death, denounced the presentation as 'historically naive and appalling'. Unlike mainstream intellectuals this side of the Atlantic, New Yorkers saw no reason to swallow wholesale the Middle East's culture of revenge and rejection.

The adverse reaction did not affect the career of the non-Jewish John Adams, who went on to write *On the Transmigration of Souls*, commemorating the victims of the 9/11 attack, as well *Dr Atomic* in 2005, about the making of the atom bomb.

But for Alice Goodman, work completely dried up. As a Harvard post-graduate continuing her literary studies at Cambridge, she had rejected her strongly Jewish and Zionist family and converted to Christianity.

She married English academic and poet Geoffrey Hill, some 26 years her senior, and had a daughter. Moving with her family to the USA, she collaborated with Adams on her first opera, *Nixon in China*, which received generally favourable reviews at its 1987 premiere.

Returning to England after the Klinghoffer debacle, she became ordained in the Church of England, working first as assistant curate in Kidderminster, then as chaplain of Trinity College, Cambridge, for five years before becoming rector last September of a group of Cambridgeshire village parishes. In 2010 Geoffrey Hill became Oxford Professor of Poetry and in the last birthday honours he was knighted, thus making Klinghoffer's librettist Lady Hill.

But whatever the background and motivation of the operatic creators and whatever your political and/or emotional response, no amount of beautifully modulated singing, fine conducting or clever staging can compensate for the emptiness at the heart of this work.

Ruth Rothenberg

An experience I will never forget

Last October a ceremony took place in the Hook of Holland near Rotterdam. A statue was presented to the 'Kinder' who left from here during the Second World War on the Kindertransport. The Kindertransport was a special journey made to England to save Jewish children from the Nazis. Some 10,000 children were saved this way, including my Great-Grandma Dudu (Judy Benton).

The day started with the Kinder and some family members being taken around Rotterdam to see all its landmarks. Four generations of my family were present: my great-grandmother, Judy Benton; my grandmother, Ruth Abraham; my mother, Danielle; my uncle, Marc; and I. We all then went on to the Hook of Holland, where children from a Rotterdam school had painted pictures showing scenes of what they thought it would have been like for the Kinder. The pictures were drawn on the side of the railway platform where the Kinder got off the train when arriving at the port to get on the boat to a new life. Some pictures showed boats crowded with children; others showed kids getting on a boat with their cases all packed.

There were a number of speeches: by the Mayor of Rotterdam; Erich Reich, the youngest Kind; and Frank Meisler, who created the statue and is a Kind too. Each speech was interesting, but especially Erich Reich's. He explained how he couldn't remember the whole experience. What especially touched me was that he was so young when he left that he can't remember his family! I found this horrible: I and many others could describe their family without thinking twice.

Everyone then walked to the statue, which was by the dock. The statue was

covered with a blanket with pictures of items the Kinder would have brought with them for their journey. The local schoolchildren gave each Kind a white rose with a message or picture attached. Then the statue was revealed. It showed five kids with suitcases by their feet, unhappy faces and looking scared. And there was a little boy reading the newspaper on the corner of the statue with the same look – and it was a statue of Erich Reich as a kid!



Four generations: (from left) Nathan Conn, Ruth Abraham, Judy Benton, Danielle Conn, Marc Abraham

The experience was very moving! My Great-Grandma Judy Benton – or, as we know her, Dudu – was why I went. She is amazing, funny, brave and smart and keeps up with all the latest tech, for instance Skype, Facebook, Twitter

Her story is amazing and I am proud to share it with you. She lived in Meissen in eastern Germany. One day she came home from school to find the doors of her first-floor flat wide open. Her neighbour ran over to her and told her the Nazis had taken her parents and were coming back for her. She went into her flat, took some money and any important documents she could find, e.g. her birth certificate, her parents' marriage certificate and her passport. Then she went to the station and caught a train to Dresden. There she went to a synagogue, where they gave her milk

and cookies and told her of a train to Leipzig and about the Kindertransport and gave her some money.

When she got to the station, it was crowded. All the children had guarantors waiting for them in England, but Dudu did not. As she was a teenager the parents asked her to look after their babies, children and children's belongings on the train. When it got to the Dutch border, the SS came on the train. Realising she couldn't wear a Magen David necklace and ring, Dudu threw them out of the window as she thought she could buy new ones in England. When they arrived in a town in Holland called Utrecht they all got out. Dutch people gave food and drink to all the kids.

From there the train went to the boat: the Kindertransport. When they got to Liverpool Street in London, everyone left the train and went with their guarantor. Dudu just stood there – there was no one to collect her. Then a

man from the refugee centre at Woburn House came and gave Dudu some bus money so she could go to a hostel in the East End. There she found a woman selling apples who could speak Yiddish so she asked her where the hostel was. This woman told her daughter to take Dudu to the hostel. In the hostel were people from different countries. Two weeks later the hostel sent Dudu to an agricultural college in the countryside and that is where she met my Great-Grandpa, Opi.

I met some amazing people in Holland with fantastic stories, including Otto Deutsch, Henny Franks and Elizabeth Rosenthal. I am lucky to be able to help out at the Holocaust Centre in Hendon, where Dudu and lots of other Kinder go, for my Duke of Edinburgh award.

Nathan Conn

Nathan Conn is a pupil at Immanuel College

Kindertransport sculptor Frank Meisler receives German award

The sculptor Frank Meisler has been decorated with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. The order, bestowed on him at a ceremony in Tel Aviv by German Ambassador to Israel Andreas Michaelis, honoured his contribution to German-Jewish and German-Israeli relations.

Ambassador Michaelis highlighted Frank Meisler's work in helping to bring attention to an important aspect of the Holocaust which had often been neglected: the Kindertransport, through which some 10,000 children were rescued and brought to Britain in 1938-39. Meisler himself was a child on the last train to London in August 1939. His parents were arrested shortly afterwards and were



subsequently murdered.

Frank Meisler was 'an outstanding artist who contributes to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive. He achieves this though his work as an artist but also through his work as a witness, engaging in discussion with young people,' Ambassador Michaelis said.

Meisler's bronze sculpture 'Trains to Life, Trains to Death' was unveiled in Berlin in 2008 near the Friedrichstrasse train station. It commemorated the children who were rescued but was also a memorial to the 1.5 million children who were murdered in the Shoah.

Born in Danzig, Frank Meisler emigrated to Israel in 1960 after obtaining a degree in architecture in England.

INSIDE the AJR

Nucleus of a Scottish Jewish Museum?

Glasgow Jewish Archive Centre head Harvey Kaplan told us the Archive was an ever-growing collection of documents relating to the history of the Jewish community in Glasgow and Scotland in general. The documents, which include photos, personal documentation and minutes of meetings of local organisations, are the nucleus of a possible Scottish Jewish museum. *Halina Moss*

Ealing Czech Memorial Scrolls

Evelyn Friedlander discussed the Czech Memorial Scrolls and their acquisition by Westminster Synagogue in 1964. She also told us about the related museum at the Synagogue and the role of the Memorial Scrolls Trust in maintaining contact with recipients of individual scrolls and the destroyed communities in Bohemia and Moravia. *Leslie Sommer*

Next meeting: 1 May. Michael Newman, 'AJR Update'

Ilford A Riveting Tale Well Told

Hermie Rothman told us how he came to write *Hitler's Will*. It was very interesting to hear how this document turned up, having been hidden in the shoulder pads of a jacket. Hermie's book is highly recommended. A riveting tale well told. *Meta Roseneil*

Next meeting: 2 May. Israeli Embassy Briefing

BRIEF ENCOUNTER VISIT TO ST PANCRAS STATION Monday 2 July 2012



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£15 to include guide and tea
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Please note there will be a fair amount of walking during the afternoon.

For further details, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

Pinner 'People Better than Dogs'

Sheila Kennedy's job was to make visiting an airport as pleasant as possible – assisting in making last-minute purchases, getting passengers to the right gate, or uniting passengers with their luggage on the return journey. Sheila once set up some boarding kennels but found that people were better than dogs! *Paul Samet*
Next meeting: 3 May. David Wass, 'Shoplifting and How to Prevent It'

HGS Jewish Art at the V&A

Marilyn Greene, a 'second-generation' from Berlin, told us about several noteworthy pieces of Jewish art at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Regrettably most of this art is kept in storage. A very interesting and entertaining morning. *Laszlo Romain*

Next meeting: 14 May. Angela Schluter, 'Jewish Mother, Nazi Father'



THE ZEMEL CHOIR INTERNATIONAL JEWISH CHORAL FESTIVAL

Sunday 17 June 2012

7.30 pm

at West London Synagogue
33 Seymour Place
London W1H 5Au

Tickets £15.00 per person

The Zemel Choir is hosting an International Jewish Choral Festival culminating in this Gala Concert for all participating choirs. The choirs expected to attend are the Wiener Jüdischer Chor and the Coro Ha-Kol Choir from Rome. The Festival has been accepted by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games to be branded with the Inspired LOGO as part of the Cultural Olympiad.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hear these three choirs and their wide repertoire, embracing Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Yiddish and Israeli cultures.

For further details, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

Essex (Westcliff) Music Enjoyed by All

A small group this month as several members were ill. Otto Deutsch played us recorded music, which was enjoyed by all. *Linda Fisher*

Next meeting: 8 May. Lord Gold of Westcliff

Oxford 'An Israeli Perspective'

Malvin Benjamin spoke on 'An Israeli Perspective', raising many questions and interesting answers. *Anne Selinger*

Next meeting: 16 May

St Johns Wood London in the Cinema

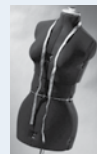
Nick Scudamore of Birkbeck College used clips from, *inter alia*, 4 films, a thriller made in 1949, and the classic Ealing comedy *The Ladykillers* to show the many different ways

OUTING TO ANGELS COSTUMIERS

Thursday 24 May 2012

Please note this tour is strictly limited in numbers and will be first come first served

We are delighted to offer a guided tour of some of the incredible collection of costumes, including the **Tailoring** and **Ladies Making** departments, where bespoke pieces are created for Film, TV and Theatre productions. We will also go into the **Alterations** section, where costumes are restored and altered to fit the specific requirements of the Costume Designer.



Then we will trail our way through the **Costume Warehouse**. This cavernous room contains over 8 miles of costume hanging rails with 4.5-5 million individual items.

Participants need to be able to walk quite a distance: we will be on our feet for an hour and a half minimum.

We will finish the tour with well deserved refreshments.

For further details, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

London has been depicted in film. *David Barnett*

Next meeting: David Barnett, 'Jewish Trades in Regency London'

Norfolk Young at Heart

As is the custom, the young at heart met once again for lunch in Norwich to sample and enjoy the goodies shopped from the kosher part of Wembley to darkest Norfolk with train delays along the way.

Frank Bright

Welwyn Garden City 'Watermarks'

There wasn't a dry eye in the house at the end of this documentary film about the Vienna Hakoah swimming club in the 30s. Fortunately the whole team escaped after the Anschluss and are able to tell their stories with charm and humour.

Marianne Linford

Next meeting: 17 May. David Wass, 'Shoplifting and How to Prevent It'

Bradford CF

We remembered Edgar Rothschild, who had sadly passed away. Later we looked at copies of the AJR's *Recipes Remembered* book. We also remembered childhood Purims and seders, then talked about the complex passport problems which used to arise for anyone whose birthplace changed its nationality through war and politics. *Anna Greenwood*

Next meeting: 11 June

Brighton & Hove Sarid Jewish Contribution to London's Success

David Barnett told us that the Jews, coming entirely from Western Europe, were economic migrants. Many went for trading in second-hand clothing, which developed into a huge business in ready-made garments. London was then the biggest and richest city in the world and

ALSO MEETING IN MAY
Bath/Bristol 1 May. Trevor Bedeman,
Chairman, Insurance Database
Services Limited

the Jews contributed to a large part of this success.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: David Lawson, 'Eve Erben's Holocaust Autobiography'

Newcastle Improvements in cardiac surgery

Geoff Berg, lead cardiac surgeon in Glasgow, gave us insight into technical advances in cardiac surgery. A pacemaker, valves and other items used in heart operations were handed round for examination, adding to the impact of the very illuminating slides.

Gail Knoblauch

Informal meetings in Somerset

AJR members in Somerset will be interested to learn that a group of Jewish people living in Somerset are getting together regularly on an informal basis to meet, exchange views, aspirations and experiences, and share cultural and social interests.

Anyone interested is invited to contact Leonard Daniels on 01823 352 827 or at leonard.daniels@btconnect.com

Cardiff The Welsh and Oxford

Historian Mark Davies told us about Welsh connections with Oxford University.

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

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Newcastle
 Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Mr Meyer, Meet Mr Meyer!



Freddie at left, Henry at right

Freddie and Henry could, we discovered at Café Imperial, be related – both are Meyers with families originating in Düsseldorf! Discussing members' first jobs after leaving the forces, Bill, a pleater, earned 34/6, Harold, a tool-maker, 10 shillings, and Freddie, an office boy, a huge wage of £300. A new guest, Melville Faber, told us stories from the time he was stationed in Oxford.

Esther Rinkoff

In 1571 Hugh Price, Treasurer of St David's Cathedral, founded Jesus College for scholars from Wales. There have been other connections throughout the centuries, particularly with the red dragon of the Welsh flag.

Myrna Glass

Edgware Whealpower

We listened to Joyce Sheard of Whealpower with great interest. Her organisation is doing a lot of wonderful voluntary work helping disabled people.

Felix Winkler

Next meeting: 15 May. Dennis Hart, 'My Life as a Fleet Street Journalist'

Inside the AJR continued on page 16

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

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 Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

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Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
 0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
 020 8385 3070

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AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Thursday 17 May 2012

Joel Finler

'Jewish Refugees in British Films'

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special
 interest group

Tuesday 1 May 2012

Harry Bibring

**'The European Maccabi Games
 in Vienna'**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT LUNCH
 WILL BE SERVED AT 12.30 PM**

Reservations required

Please telephone 020 7431 2744

MAY ACTIVITIES

The Computer Club, facilitated by Lilli Meinck, will take place on Tuesday mornings

Tue 1 Jackie – Exercise Class

Thur 3 The Centre is closed: the Synagogue is being used as a polling station

Thur 10 Book Club. French Conversation Class

Thur 17 Rosalie – Exercise Class. Luncheon Club

Thur 24 Book Club. French Conversation Class

All activities begin at 10.30 am. Admission is £7 to include lunch from 12.30 pm, or £2 for activity alone. There is a nominal charge of £3 for a carer accompanying a member for the day, including lunch.

MAY ENTERTAINMENT

Tue	1	KT Lunch
Wed	2	Michael Heaton
Tue	8	Margaret Opdahl
Thur	10	Ronnie Goldberg
Tue	15	Paul Toshner
Thur	17	Luncheon Club
Tue	22	Madeleine Whiteson
Thur	24	Nick Ryan
Tue	29	Paul Coleman
Thur	31	William Smith

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

90th birthday

Treitel, Kurt Max Born Berlin April 1922. Congratulations and love from your wife, children and grandchildren.

Death

Grenfell, Eva Hanna (formerly Loewy). Born Breslau 21 November 1921. Arrived in Britain on Kindertransport May 1939. Died London 8 March 2012. Deeply missed by husband Joseph, son Michael, daughter-in-law Sally and grandsons Dan and Saul.

CLASSIFIED

For Sale Nearly new Acorn stairlift. Dismantled by Acorn, who can install and adapt it. £800. Tel 07962 262 081.

New AJR Social Worker for Scotland



Myrna Bernard has been appointed Social Worker for Scotland.

Myrna is based in Glasgow and takes over from Eileen Brady, who now focuses on the North East.

Previously a Social Care Worker with Jewish Care Scotland for almost 14 years, Myrna is married with four children and five grandchildren.

She can be contacted by telephone on 07506 627 350 or at myrnabernard@ajr.org.uk

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OBITUARIES

Peter Hart, 12 August 1914 – 6 February 2012

When still young, Peter was apprenticed to the famous Berlin engineering company Orenstein and Koppel, which specialised in railways, escalators and heavy equipment and is still known today. This ended in 1933, when the Nazis forced out all Jews on the threat of withdrawal of state contracts.

To fulfil his dream of becoming a hotelier he was forced to leave his comfortable home, his parents Arthur and Helena, and his sister Ursula and move to Paris to find work. He was 18, penniless and spoke only schoolboy French, though later he would speak five languages fluently. He worked his way through all departments of hotels, ending in the kitchens learning to cook, an occupation he enjoyed until his death.

In 1939 Peter joined Baron de

Rothschild's Co-ordinating Committee for help and protection. The Committee trained refugees from Austria and Germany for manual jobs, which was all that was expected to be available to them. On the outbreak of war, the refugees and the Committee were interned in France as 'enemy aliens'. Peter recalled in his book *Journey into Freedom*: 'I was determined not to rot in the camp forever and made up my mind that I must find my way to England somehow.'

In 1940 Peter was moved to another camp in now-occupied France and joined Canadian and British civilians, later being freed and sent over the border to the



unoccupied zone. Here, betrayed by a farmer and sent to the camp at Septfonds, he endured appalling conditions for over two years.

Eventually Peter crossed the Pyrenees into Spain. The bravery of those who aided refugees was something he never forgot. In November 1942 he was arrested again and put in the Spanish camp Miranda del Ebro. On his eventual release, he worked in Madrid for a time for David Blickenstaff of the American Joint Committee.

In 1943 Peter made his way to Britain, enrolled in the Pioneer Corps, and in 1944 was transferred to the Intelligence Corps, where he eavesdropped on the conversations of German POWs. The intelligence he acquired was invaluable for the planned advance into Germany. Peter ended his wartime career by being assigned in 1945 to Wilton Park, where German POWs debated the processes of democracy with visiting dignitaries.

Demobbed in 1947, Peter returned to the hotel trade, working in the Howard Hotel in London. Here he came up with the idea for the first-ever hotel accommodation service, HOTAC, which was to become a world-famous company and lead to Peter's involvement with governmental committees on the development of tourism in the UK.

Having always loved the arts, Peter and his wife Lili, herself a talented poet, organised 189 outings for members of the Leo Baeck Lodge to art galleries, notable buildings, the theatre and opera. Peter served as the Lodge's Warden for six consecutive years and launched their annual talent contest. He created a link between the Lodge and the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition and supported their refugee and survivor interviews. This link led to sponsorship of the annual Holocaust Memorial Day event for over ten years.

Peter published two books: his wartime story *Journey into Freedom* and *Tales in Tandem*, a compilation of stories, fiction and non-fiction written with his wife, but each independently.

Lili Hart

Edgar Rothschild, 11 August 1924 – 16 February 2012

Edgar Herman Julius Rothschild was born in Hanover, only son of Landgerichtsrat Walter Rothschild and Charlotte, née Fiedler. When he was ten, the rise of the Nazi Party meant that his father was forced out of his position and the family moved to Baden-Baden due to family links and to be nearer the French border. However, Walter made no real attempt to leave Germany, saying 'When the judges leave there will be no justice here any more.' This did not prevent him from being arrested and taken to Dachau on Kristallnacht. Charlotte somehow arranged his release a month later and the pair were able to move to Switzerland, where Walter died in 1950 from his injuries.

Edgar himself was sent for safety to England (though the original idea had been for him to continue to America). He attended Seaford College for a while, then began work in a factory in London and, due to the Blitz, moved to Bradford to stay with the family of his former school head teacher from Baden-Baden, Dr Artur Flehinger, who had, through a Quaker initiative, found a position at Bradford Grammar School. This sequence of coincidences led to his identification with this Yorkshire city and community.

Following service with the RAF as a meteorologist in India and Europe, he settled in Bradford, where he met, and in 1952 married, Esther Bergson-Brown. Following a period as a draughtsman at English Electric's Phoenix Works at Thornbury in Bradford, he became a mathematics teacher.

Although he married Esther at Brad-

ford Hebrew Congregation in Spring Gardens, he had been a member of the Bradford Synagogue in Bowland Street from 1948 and became an active member, serving for decades in various honorary positions – Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-Chairman and then Chairman. In 1984 he was appointed a Life President of the congregation. A measure of the family's involvement in the synagogue is that two of his children became rabbis and the third ran a synagogue and a Jewish choir.

Edgar was a man of passionate interests, including music (in his later years he took piano lessons and struggled with complex Schubert pieces), woodwork (he established a fully-equipped workshop in his home), model railways (an enormous layout in the attic reflected the Alpine landscape he loved, but incorporated the station at Baden-Baden!), wine- and beer-making, electronics (for which he gained a diploma at Bradford College), bookbinding and piano-tuning. As a handyman, he largely rebuilt and furnished the family home in Heaton.

He reached out with unassuming friendship to the underdogs of society, never forgetting his own formative experiences as an outcast and refugee. He attended Bradford AJR meetings and was active in the Bradford Community Relations Council and Neighbourhood Watch. His chief love apart from his family was the succession of family dogs and injured birds and animals that came into his tender care.



At the age of 87 cancer was diagnosed but he was enabled to stay in his own home until the end, a patriarch, reaping some of the return for the love and care he had shown to others during his lifetime.

Edgar leaves Esther and three children – Walter, Joyce and Sylvia – and eight grandchildren – Nechama, Ben, Charlotte, Jacob, Richard, Raphael, Bracha and Zachariah.

The Rothschild family



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Gerda

When I first met Gerda Hoffer, who had been recommended to me as a teacher of German, she was living in a pleasant flat in Jerusalem's Rechavia quarter. A slight figure with a sharply intelligent face and long, white hair which she wore piled high in an elegantly bouffant coiffure, she set me to work almost immediately. To my surprise, I soon found myself writing little weekly essays in German as she tried to expand my vocabulary, guide me through the intricacies of German grammar and find subjects of mutual interest to discuss. She soon became a fixed part of my weekly routine.

We found that we had a lot in common, including a love of books (she had written several, all in German), an interest in politics (though we didn't always see eye-to-eye on everything), a general interest in culture and world events, and a total lack of patience. Gerda was also a convinced Zionist and claimed that despite having lived in England for over 30 years, she had never felt as at home there as she did in Israel.

Gerda was born in Vienna in 1921. Her father, Stefan Pollatschek, was a writer and part of the Jewish intelligentsia of the time, rubbing

shoulders and establishing friendships with many of the leading writers and thinkers who inhabited the city. As a published author, he managed to escape to England with the aid of the Thomas Mann Committee, together with Gerda and her mother, an avid bridge-player. In England Gerda worked initially as a children's nanny, then as a factory worker before studying Comparative Religion at London University and teaching German at the Berlitz Language School.

An ardent Communist in her youth, Gerda was even jailed for some time in Vienna for her political activities. As she grew older she modified her political views though she never lost her intense interest in world affairs. Her marriage to fellow-refugee, lawyer Fritz Hoffer, was a happy one, but they decided not to bring children into this cruel world. When Fritz died suddenly one night, after 30 years of marriage, Gerda was left distraught and alone in London. They had planned to emigrate to Israel together, and Gerda determined to achieve that goal on her own.

In Israel Gerda started writing, and several of her books found publishers in Germany. One of them, *Zeit der Heldinnen*, contains a series of well-researched biographies of Jewish women through the

ages; another, *The Utitz Legacy*, recounts her family's history in Bohemia and Austria, while her novel *Ein Haus in Jerusalem* describes the lives of the families from differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds who inhabit an apartment building in Jerusalem. Her last book, *Zwei Wege ein Ziel*, a joint autobiography together with Judith Hübner, was reviewed last month in the *AJR Journal*.

Eight years ago Gerda moved to sheltered accommodation in Jerusalem, *Nofei Yerushalayim*, where she still played bridge, made new friends and continued to cultivate her old ones. She was still giving German lessons to a few of her veteran pupils until a month before she died, and her many friends and pupils (who were also her friends) continued to visit her in hospital until the very end.

For me she was a teacher, friend and mentor, whose lively mind provided many insights into local and international events. Her untiring curiosity about other people, countries and societies brought her into contact with a wide variety of individuals, and her circle of friends and pupils was very wide indeed. Although she struggled with ill health throughout her life, in our lessons, which eventually turned into weekly conversations between friends conducted in German, Gerda preferred not to talk about her ailments, choosing to discuss a book or the political situation or to hear about what I had been doing.

Gerda passed away on 20 March 2012, at the age of 91. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

INSIDE THE AJR *continued from page 13*

Temple Fortune AJR, Present and Future
AJR Co-director Michael Newman updated us on the status and outlook of the AJR, which has about 3,000 members with an average age of 88. This presents significant challenges, including how and when to bring the 'second generation' on board.

David Lang

Next meeting: 29 May. Details to follow

Radlett A Terrible Story

David Lawson's talk on the life of Eva Erben was based largely on his translation of her memoirs. Eva spent her early teenage years in concentration camps, losing both parents. She escaped during a 'death march', was sheltered by a Czech family and now lives with her own family in Israel. David's brilliant telling of a terrible story created a sombre impression and for once our group was left speechless.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 16 May. Tim Pike (Bank of England), 'The Current Financial Climate'

Wessex History of hotels

Twenty-four of us met at the Miramar Hotel, where David Barnett explained how hotels were established in London 250 years ago. Greater prosperity led to people travelling for pleasure and hotels grew out of coaching inns, coffee houses and houses hired out for the 'season'.

Myrna Glass

Wembley A welcome surprise

Myrna got the ball rolling at our very well attended meeting by giving a detailed introduction and we all joined in with comments on various interesting subjects. A welcome surprise was that spring had sprung, so to speak: the doors into the garden were wide open. Even more welcome were Myrna's wonderful cakes.

Irene Stanton

Next meeting: 23 May. Social Get-together

North London The Story of the Globe

Val Alliez, a guide at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, told us it was Sam Wanamaker's

project to rebuild the theatre but he died before it was completed and became the success it is today.

David Lang

Next meeting: 31 May. David Lawson, 'The Jews of Ostrava'

Glasgow Book Group Forgiveness and Reconciliation

An enthusiastic group gathered at Agnes Isaacs's home to discuss Amanda Eyre Ward's novel *Forgive Me*, which raised a range of problems in connection with the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Halina Moss

Hendon Reminiscences

Members brought something they could talk about. Two items were particularly interesting: a carved olive wood etrog box with Hebrew lettering sent to Germany from Jerusalem in the late 19th century, and Hazel's leather cowboy hat and her account of her love of horses.

Shirley Rodwell

Next meeting: No meeting due to Shavuot