

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Across the divide to Eastern Europe

The great bulk of the AJR's membership has always consisted of Jewish refugees from the German-speaking lands of Germany and Austria that were situated to the west of the Iron Curtain after 1945 and formed part of Western Europe for the entire period of the Cold War. That also applied to East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, when the reunification of Germany brought about the reintegration of the former GDR into a reunited Germany; from then on, Jews who had been born in Leipzig, Dresden or East Berlin could look back on their native cities in much the same way as those who had been born in Frankfurt or Hamburg.

That was not the case for those refugees who were born in the formerly German areas to the east of the Oder-Neisse line, since 1945 part of Poland, or, in the case of the enclave of Kaliningrad

(formerly Königsberg), of Russia, for the entire German element in those areas was systematically removed after 1945. If they had returned, Jewish refugees from Silesia, East Prussia and eastern Pomerania, areas that had been part of Germany until 1945, would have seen only cityscapes from which everything German had been erased. The same is true of the port of Danzig (now Gdansk), which enjoyed the status of a free city between the wars, of the provinces of Posen and West Prussia, most of which became part of Poland after 1918, and of Baltic cities like Memel (now Klaipeda in Lithuania) or Libau (now Liepaja in Latvia) that were mainly or partly German-speaking until 1945.

The German and Austro-Hungarian Empires that extended across Eastern Europe before 1918 contained large concentrations of Jews in their eastern

reaches, communities that were often German-speaking and in many cases identified themselves more with German culture than with that of the local nationalities surrounding them. Their admiration for Germany, the country of Goethe, Schiller and Beethoven, is one of the ironies of history, given that it was Nazi Germany that destroyed the Jews of Eastern Europe, often with the willing assistance of the local populations. This article will concentrate on the eastern territories of the German Empire, and next month's will cover Austria-Hungary.

Those areas of the German Empire the population of which was in the majority Polish, Posen (Poznan) and West Prussia, became part of the newly re-established state of Poland after 1918. Posen had long been a source of abundant Jewish emigration to the cities of Germany to

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75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KINDERTRANSPORT LONDON, JUNE 2013



Erika Judge with HRH The Prince of Wales



(from left) Sir Nicholas Winton; Sir Erich Reich, Chairman, Kindertransport-AJR; Andrew Kaufman, Chairman, AJR



David Miliband

Maureen Lipman



These past few days in London some of the Holocaust survivors have gathered who came to London on sealed trains just before war took the Continent in its grip. There were in all perhaps 10,000 of these young people. They were all scared and alone, but saved from the murder that otherwise would have overtaken them. The tragedy of their journey can best be described by a simple fact – most never saw their parents again ...

The pride Britons can rightly feel about the kindertransport – the result, after all, of a deliberate political act – must be weighed against the shame that the world did so relatively little to help those who wanted to flee ...

The kindertransport is therefore both evidence of what

humans can do and evidence of what can happen when they don't. So on this 75th anniversary let us celebrate what was achieved, celebrate the remarkable people who lived and went on to paint great pictures and write great novels and build great businesses.

Let us celebrate, too, the people who just lived and had families and went about their lives in peace. Let us do that, but never forget that, for every child who was saved, there could have been, there might have been, there should have been, a hundred more.

From *The Times*, leading article, 25 June 2013

See inside page 3 and correspondence, pages 6-7

↪ Across the divide to Eastern Europe *continued*

the west, and that increased after the First World War, as Jews opted for Germany in preference to Poland. The family of Herbert Friedenthal, who was born in the city of Posen in 1909, became Herbert Freeden after emigrating to Britain and was one of the founding editors of this journal when it first appeared in 1946, was typical of the middle-class, German-speaking Jews who moved to Berlin to avoid Polish anti-Semitism and to demonstrate their preference for the liberal, progressive values and the high intellectual and cultural standards with which pre-Hitler Germany was synonymous for Jews across Eastern Europe.

Small towns in the province of Posen often contained Jewish communities from which emerged impressive numbers of famous figures. The small town of Rawitsch (now Rawicz), for example, was the birthplace of Marcus Brann (1849-1920), the noted Jewish scholar and historian who succeeded Heinrich Graetz at the head of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau in 1891; the mathematician Alfred Loewy (1873-1935); the sociologist and Zionist Arthur Rupp, who was born there in 1876, moved with his family to Magdeburg in 1886 and was to play a pioneering part in the creation of the city of Tel Aviv; and Max Auerbach, who moved to Berlin, where his son Frank, a Kindertransportee now celebrated as one of Britain's greatest artists, was born in 1931.

Most of West Prussia, including towns such as Thorn (now Torun) and Graudenz (now Grudziadz), was allocated to Poland after the First World War. It became known as the Polish Corridor, the area that divided the main body of Germany from East Prussia, which, with its German majority, remained part of Germany until 1945. However, Danzig, the largest city in the area, situated at the mouth of the River Vistula, had a large majority of Germans and could not be allocated to Poland without seriously breaching the principle of national self-determination that underpinned the territorial settlement created by the Treaty of Versailles. To give the new state of Poland, which would otherwise have been landlocked, an outlet to the Baltic Sea, the victorious Allies declared Danzig a free city under the control of the League of Nations, thus ensuring that German territory could not block Poland's access to maritime trade and commerce.

Danzig, a classic Hanseatic city, had a Jewish population of some 10,500, residing amidst a German majority whose language and culture it largely shared. In the interwar years, the city became an important place of refuge for Jews fleeing Poland and the Soviet Union since it was both a free city to which entry was not limited by visa restrictions and a port

of emigration. Though the Nazi Party took control of Danzig after 1933, the city remained separate from Germany – Hitler's attempt to incorporate it into the Reich by force in September 1939 led to the outbreak of the Second World War – and the Jewish community was to a small extent better placed than its counterparts within Germany. Many of Danzig's Jews shared the fate of Sigismund Markus in Günter Grass's novel *The Tin Drum* who commits suicide to escape the marauding Nazis, but many more succeeded in emigrating, probably because it was somewhat easier to emigrate from a free port than from Nazi Germany proper. The chairman of the Jewish community of Danzig was then Ernst Berent, who played a major part in organising the emigration of the community before escaping to Britain in November 1938, where he became an active member of the AJR.

Of these eastern provinces, it was Silesia that played host to the greatest concentration of Jews. Its largest city, Breslau (now Wroclaw), contained the third largest Jewish community in Germany after Berlin and Frankfurt, numbering over 23,000 at its peak. Breslau's Jews excelled in a wide range of professions and activities, from the scholar Heinrich Graetz to Ferdinand Lassalle, founder of Germany's first workers' party. Abraham Geiger, one of the founding fathers of Reform Judaism, held the post of Chief Rabbi in Breslau in 1840-63, during which period he helped to found the Jewish Theological Seminary, the first modern rabbinical seminary in Central Europe. But the city was also the setting for the widely read novel *Soll und Haben (Credit and Debit)* (1855) by Gustav Freytag, Silesian-born but not Jewish, in which honest, virtuous Germans are contrasted with the mercantile villainy of Jews and the uncivilised wildness of Poles. It is perhaps not surprising that the Viadrina, the first Jewish student fraternity, was founded at Breslau University in 1886, becoming the model for Jewish self-defence organisations across Germany.

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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.

AJR LUNCH

SUNDAY 20 OCTOBER 2013

This year's AJR Lunch will take place at the Hilton Hotel, Watford

Entertainment by singers from Covent Garden

Fish meal – vegetarian/kosher available on request

Transportation by coach will be available

£17.50 per person

Further details to follow in September issue of Journal

Among the Silesian Jews who fled to Britain were Nobel Prize-winning scientists like the physicist Max Born and Fritz Haber, a chemist whose work made possible the fertilisers that feed the world (and the poison gas used by the German army in the First World War), the sociologist Norbert Elias, Alfred Kerr, Berlin's premier theatre critic, and the spinal injuries specialist Ludwig Guttmann. Hans Reichmann, chairman of the AJR in 1954-63, came from a Silesian family, while his wife, the historian Eva G. Reichmann, was born in Silesia, as was her sister Elisabeth, who in Britain married the writer Max Beerbohm.

Far to the east, stretching along the Baltic coast as far as the Lithuanian border, was East Prussia, which had been colonised by the Teutonic Knights in the thirteenth century and whose indigenous population had been largely germanised. In the sixteenth century, this Duchy of Prussia came under the rule of the Elector of Brandenburg, who ruled from Berlin. Only with the partition of Poland in the late eighteenth century was the predominantly Polish region of West Prussia acquired by Frederick the Great, thus linking East Prussia to the rest of his realm. It nowadays requires an effort of the imagination to recall that the Russian city of Kaliningrad was until 1945 Königsberg, capital of a German province and city of the philosopher Immanuel Kant.

The most easterly of the major German cities, Königsberg also contained a significant Jewish community, its numbers boosted by Jews fleeing from neighbouring Tsarist Russia. It was a centre of liberal, progressive politics in the nineteenth century, when Jews like the outspoken left-winger Johann Jacoby (1805-77) and the Liberal Eduard von Simson (1810-99) were notable players on the national stage. Jews also lived in the vanished German towns of Elbing and Allenstein (now Elblag and Olsztyn in Poland), Insterburg and Tilsit (now Chernyakhovsk and Sovetsk in the Kaliningrad enclave of Russia), or Heydekrug (now Silute in Lithuania).

Anthony Grenville

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KINDERTRANSPORT, LONDON, JUNE 2013

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KINDERTRANSPORT REUNION

Almost 600 people attended a Reunion at the JFS (Jewish Free School) in north London commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Kindertransport. They included 'Kinder' and their families not only from the UK but from Israel, the US, Australia, Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany.

Guests, who included Sir Nicholas Winton, were welcomed by AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman and Kindertransport-AJR Chairman Sir Erich Reich.

Among guest speakers were the former Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, whose father was a refugee from Nazi oppression; Maureen Lipman, who

starred in the film *The Pianist*; Baroness Hanham CBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; Sir Andrew Burns, UK Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues; James Libson, Chairman, World Jewish Relief; and Anthony Spiro, Chairman, The Wiener Library.

JFS students performed a dramatic re-enactment of the historic November 1938 House of Commons debate on the Kindertransport.

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and Rev Bernd Koschland led the service of remembrance. AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman gave a vote of thanks.

KINDERTRANSPORT REUNION PHOTOS: ALAN EZEKIEL



Former Kindertransport-AJR Chairman Hermann Hirschberger (left) and Rev Bernd Koschland



(from left) AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman, Wiener Library Chairman Anthony Spiro, Mrs Christiane Boomgaarden, German Ambassador Georg Boomgaarden, AJR Trustee Gaby Glassman



Sir Andrew Burns, UK Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues



(from left) Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Israeli Ambassador Daniel Taub



World Jewish Relief Chairman James Libson



Baroness Hanham CBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Second and Third Generations Special Reception



Melissa Hacker (left), Kindertransport Association USA; Melissa Rosenbaum, Second Generation Network UK PHOTO: THOMAS BONIN

A Special Reception, organised by the Second Generation Network UK and the Kindertransport Association USA and held at the Wiener Library, was attended by some 160 people. The focus of the event was how their parents and grandparents had arrived in this country, where they had come from, and the various ways in which they had travelled. There was also an opportunity to socialise and network, eat and drink, and meet old friends and make new ones.

Among those who participated in the Reception were the Austrian Ambassador, Dr Emil Brix; the German Ambassador, Georg Boomgaarden; Councillor Robert Szaniawski of the Polish Embassy; Anthony Spiro, Chairman of The Wiener Library; and Professor Tony Kushner of the University of Southampton.

'Forward from the Past': Symposium on the Kindertransport

A crowded one-day Symposium on the remarkable growth of interest, scholarly and artistic alike, in the Kindertransport was held at the German Historical Institute London (GHIL). The Symposium was organised by the Leo Baeck Institute London (LBI) in co-operation with GHIL, Aberystwith University and the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, University of London.

Entitled 'Forward from the Past: The Kindertransport from a Contemporary Perspective', the conference focused on newly developed research, including the Kindertransport in British historiography, its contemporary memorialisation, and the 'Second Generation' perspective.

Among scholars who addressed the conference were Raphael Gross (LBI); Tony Kushner (University of Southampton); Andreas Gestrich (GHIL); Bea Lewkowicz (Institute of Germanic & Romance Studies, University of London); Andrea Hammel (Aberystwith University); Daniel Wildmann (LBI/Queen Mary College, University of London); and Suzanne Bardgett of the Imperial War Museum.

Reception at St James's Palace



Gunter and Rosalind Ruf (left) and Ann and Bob Kirk with The Prince of Wales



On the day following the Kindertransport Reunion, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales hosted a lunchtime reception for some 400 guests – Kinder and their families – at St James's Palace.

Prince Charles listened to Kinder's personal stories of their flight from Hitler's Europe and asked them, among

other things, if they had ever returned to the towns of their birth and about the arrangements made for them when they had arrived in this country.

ST JAMES'S PALACE PHOTOS: PAUL BURNS PHOTOGRAPHY
Photos may be purchased up to the end of August 2013 at <http://www.everybodysmile.biz/paulburnsphotography/royal/> (click Kindertransport – password KT24)

Two dear friends, two very different fates

I attended an unusual book launch in Berlin's Centrum Judaicum in June this year. The book* was dedicated to the memory of some 1,000 Berlin Jews who were deported to the Minsk ghetto in 1941-42; all but a few were murdered there, together with thousands of others from other German cities and tens of thousands of Russian Jews. These lives would have passed into oblivion had it not been for the commitment of students from Humboldt University, who in 2009 began the heroic undertaking of uncovering the fate of some of these Berlin Jews and reconstructing their lives. This book encompasses 59 biographies, remembering a total of 129 people, and careful research has yielded not only their life histories but also documents and photographs of them and their families. Of the 1,000 Jews deported in 1941, only three men and one woman survived. The woman was Margot Aufrecht (see below).

The launch was attended by hundreds of people and was extremely touching. The introductory greeting came from Dr Hermann Simon, the Director of the Centrum Judaicum, and he was followed by Dr Michael Wild, Professor of Twentieth-century History at Humboldt University. The two editors, Anja Reuss and Kristin Schneider, who had also written the chapter about Margot Aufrecht, then explained how the book had come about.

In 2009 a group of students had decided to embark on the research that led to the book. Initially their findings were displayed in a travelling exhibition in 2011 and this was eventually expanded into book-form. The book has several introductory and informative historical chapters providing background information and details of the deportations, which were carried out with customary Nazi brutality. Shamefully, the collection point was the synagogue in Lützowstrasse, which had already been desecrated. The building was kept in total darkness and the overcrowding, with appalling sanitary

facilities, was hideous. Each person had been allowed one suitcase or bundle and most were robbed of valuable items such as jewellery and watches. Those carrying money preferred to throw it into the toilets rather than hand it over and the toilets soon became clogged. Personal details were ascertained with the utmost bureaucracy. Men, women and children were required to strip naked for body searches; for orthodox women, this was a particularly humiliating procedure in the presence of men.

Two nights had to be endured in the synagogue. Representatives of the Jewish community did their best to ameliorate conditions for the elderly by providing mattresses, but there was little food and hygienic conditions

relationship between the indigenous Russians and the more highly educated and generally better-off Jews from Berlin, some of whom entered the ghetto with jewellery and watches they were able to trade. Their fate was, of course, ultimately the same. Dr Lipsky mentioned the name of Margot Aufrecht as one who had also survived.

Why was I at the book launch? Margot Aufrecht had been a close pre-war childhood friend of Ruth Albert, née Loeser. Ruth had come to England on one of the last Kindertransports and we had become friends. She died in January 2013 (see my obituary of her in the May 2013 issue of the Journal) and had left among her possessions three letters written to her by Margot

towards the end of 1945, when Margot still resided in the rebuilt Bergen-Belsen camp, to which she had been taken three months before its liberation by British troops. Ruth's daughter Franny Swann does not speak German and she asked me to translate the letters for her. Needless to say, they were incredibly tragic as Margot, for whom Ruth represented a lifeline, described not only her life in Bergen-Belsen but also some of the

extreme hardships she and her brother had to endure in the Minsk ghetto.

There is no record of the letters Ruth had sent her but Margot's first letter was clearly in response to one joyfully received from her friend. How could Ruth have known that Margot was in Bergen-Belsen? I think I can provide a clue. Margot and her younger brother Herbert, who was shot in Minsk together with his parents, had attended as day pupils the school in the Berlin-Pankow Jewish orphanage for boys when they could no longer continue their education in their local primary schools. One of the teachers there was Heinz Nadel, who escaped to England in 1939 and joined the British Army soon after his arrival. He served in the Intelligence Corps and his unit entered Bergen-Belsen within a few days of its



Margot Aufrecht (left) as a young girl (courtesy of Ruth Lismann and Anja Reuss); Ruth Albert, née Loeser, taken in Berlin at the age of 13 (courtesy of Franny Swann and Leslie Baruch Brent)



soon became catastrophic. The 1,000 detainees were then taken to Bahnhof Grunewald and sent in 20 overcrowded third-class carriages, with wooden benches, to Minsk, a journey that took four days. On arrival, they were led into the ghetto, which was already vastly overcrowded with Russian Jews. Many of the Russians were shot in order to accommodate the new arrivals, who also included Jews from Vienna.

The editors read excerpts from three of the biographies. The high point was a speech, given in somewhat imperfect German, by Dr Felix Lipsky, a Russian Jew who was one of the very few survivors. He had been taken to the ghetto with his family as a three-year-old and he recounted some of his still vivid memories of hunger, deprivation and mass shootings. Striking among them was his account of the problematic

continued opposite ➔

Would it always be like this?

'Come along, come along!' – the first words I heard on stepping onto English soil. It was one of those cold, damp February days: 3 February 1939. Someone handed me a small brown paper bag. It contained a sandwich and a squashed tomato. The bag burst and my breakfast rolled under the waiting train. More 'come along' calls so I stepped onto the train with rucksack, heavy case and heavier heart and sat in the corner seat of a compartment smelling of dust: the seating was covered in fabric which actually emitted little clouds of dust as you sat down.

All of us had just arrived on the ferry from Hook of Holland quite exhausted – so much so we couldn't speak. My mind was empty – a long night sitting on a wooden chair on the creaking boat, the goodbyes to Mutti and Papi, and the unknown still to come. The train took all the children on this Kindertransport Number 29 from Harwich to Liverpool Street Station in London. I was huddled in a woolly coat and hat, warm but unbecoming. I felt miserable.

Buses took us to Toynbee Hall in the East End and there we stood with our labels around our necks waiting until the person appeared with a photo which identified us as 'their child'. All this took a very long time but I was lucky: Mr and Mrs W found me and

*When 3 o'clock arrived
a group of children swept in
attired in velvet cloaks worn
over long pink or pastel green
taffeta dresses, their feet in
ballet-type slippers or patent
leather ankle-strap shoes, with P,
my foster sister, and her parents
receiving greetings, presents and
many 'Hello, how are you?' I
was stunned. I wanted to creep
away, be allowed to cry.
I knew I didn't belong there.*

I managed to say a few words in my prepared English.

All I remember of the long journey to Welford-on-Avon, a village close to Stratford-on-Avon, is that I was very sick and unfortunately, before we set off on the four-hour trip, the family took me to the Cumberland Hotel and gave me a drink of whiskey to steady my tummy – a very empty tummy. A very miserable journey it proved to be. Margit, my cousin, had come to welcome me; she was working in Birmingham and left for America soon after to join her parents, my Tante Meta and Onkel Arthur.

I was too exhausted to take in any more new faces and my home for the

next six months. How I managed the next few days I don't remember at all. My birthday was very soon after my arrival and I would be 12 years old. The daughter, youngest of three, was a year younger than I and her birthday had been the previous month. A party for both of us was arranged. My most suitable dress was a simple frock in a Scottish plaid design with white collar and cuffs and sturdy black lace-up shoes. When 3 o'clock arrived a group of children swept in attired in velvet cloaks worn over long pink or pastel green taffeta dresses, their feet in ballet-type slippers or patent leather ankle-strap shoes, with P, my foster sister, and her parents receiving greetings, presents and many 'Hello, how are you?' I was stunned. I wanted to creep away, be allowed to cry. I knew I didn't belong there.

Then, after tea with red jelly and much conversation, which went over my head, there was worse to come. Dancing. I was linked to a line of girls who obviously knew every step and word of 'The Palais Glide' and 'Underneath the Spreading Chestnut Tree', followed, with some relief, by 'The Lambeth Walk' – which at least required walking to the tune played by the music teacher at the piano. I felt a failure and very alone. Would it always be like this?

Stephanie Kester

Two dear friends, continued

liberation by British troops. He was instrumental in supporting the surviving children and organised schooling and entertainment for them. One day he ran into the emaciated and very ill Margot, who recognised him. Heinz Nadel, by then Harry Harrison, kept in touch with several former pupils of the orphanage after the war and Ruth Albert must have been among these. I recall this encounter in my autobiography (*Sunday's Child? A Memoir*, Bank House Books 2009, ISBN 9781904408444), in which I devoted a chapter to Harry Harrison with the title 'Quiet Hero of Berlin', a title *The Guardian* had given to my obituary of him in 1989.

Having translated Margot's three long handwritten and badly faded letters, I felt emotionally so engaged that I decided to discover what happened to her subsequently, the correspondence between the two friends apparently having ceased. Several approaches

proved futile until my friend Karin Manns in Berlin discovered, after many hours spent on the internet, that a book about Berlin Jews incarcerated in the Minsk ghetto was due to be published in June and that one of the 59 chapters was devoted to Margot and her family! A frantic email correspondence between one of the editors and myself ensued and, as a result, the letters, together with a photograph of the young Ruth, were incorporated into the chapter at the very last moment.

And so the two friends were re-united – at least on paper – although both were already dead, Margot having died in 1988. She had emigrated to Australia in 1948 to join an uncle mentioned in one of her letters and there she had married and had two children. I have exchanged emails with her daughter, Ruth Lismann, and it turns out that Margot had left her children completely in the dark concerning her wartime experiences, which she was evidently determined to put behind her once

and for all. At Ruth Lismann's request, I sent her my translation of the three letters her mother had written and, not surprisingly, she and her brother were deeply shaken by these revelations and by the information in the chapter devoted to their mother in the book.

What had seemed an impossible task that I had set myself was, surprisingly, accomplished and several weeks of searching and several nights of lost sleep were amply rewarded. The book's editors are hoping that an English translation will appear in due course.

Leslie Baruch Brent

**Unvergessene Lebensgeschichten. Ein Gedenkbuch für die nach Minsk deportierten Berliner Jüdinnen und Juden (Unforgotten Biographies: A Memorial Book for Jewish Women and Men Deported from Berlin to Minsk), edited by Anja Reuss and Kristin Schneider, Berlin-Minsk: Metropol Verlag, 2013, hard cover 496 pp., ISBN 978-3-86331-116-2, 224 Euros*



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

KINDERTRANSPORT 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Sir – A Big Thank You to the AJR and everyone involved in making the 75th Anniversary of the Kindertransport happen. What an inspiring three days! All three days will long remain in my mind as they have given me so much to think about – memories to savour and treasure.

The main event at JFS was magnificent. Yes, it was crowded and there is always something to kvetch about – the lighting, the loos, whatever. But that it was a marvellous occasion cannot be in doubt. The reception at St James's Palace could not have been more different – but what an experience! And the symposium at the German Historical Institute was very different again – a sort of looking beyond the 'feel-good' celebration at a more nuanced understanding of what was a major rescue operation – but at the same time could have been earlier, more extensive and not restricted to children.

But it simply can't stop here! The presence of so many people from the Second and Third Generations of the Kindertransport surely indicates the enthusiasm for this movement to continue – both in Holocaust education and commemoration. But please, AJR, don't wait five years – the US Kindertransport Association has a gathering every second year!

For the meantime, rest assured you did a wonderful job organising this triple commemoration.

Ruth Barnett, London NW6

Sir – I want to thank the AJR and all involved in organising the magnificent two days of celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Kindertransport.

The Sunday went off very well – indeed, it was marvellously organised. The timing was just right and the food plentiful. It was a great thrill to see so many 'Kinder', and in some cases their descendants, enjoying themselves and listening to the speeches by the various dignitaries who had given up their time to honour us with their presence. It was gratifying to see the ambassadors of Germany and Austria. David Miliband had come all the way from New York to speak to us about his father, who had also been a refugee from Nazi oppression.

Being 92 years of age, I had the support

of my son Jonathan, who acted as my carer. I met people from my own town, Danzig. One lady told me she was born a few houses away from where we lived. Others too sought out Kinder from their home towns.

The reception at St James's Palace was a once-in-a-lifetime event. The Prince of Wales took a genuine interest in the assembled Kinder and spoke to a large number of us. A member of the Prince's staff ensured that the maximum number of assembled Kinder, and in some cases their families, had an opportunity to be addressed by him. I had my RAF tie and Arctic Circle badge signifying I had taken an active part in the war. I did this to show that we didn't just take for granted the asylum given to us but that a number of us had demonstrated our gratitude by joining HM Forces. The Prince of course recognised the tie and the badge. He asked about my wartime activities as a pilot and whether I had been awarded the new Arctic Star, which I had. I know of a number who joined when their age permitted. I met at the reception one Kind who had been in the Royal Navy and also sported the rare Arctic badge. He had been on a warship guarding the convoys on the very dangerous route to Russia. Another Kind had also been a pilot in the RAF.

The atmosphere couldn't have been more relaxed. The food offered was what we called in German 'Gabelbissen' – excellent quality and plentiful.

Time passed too quickly and my wife Esther and I left, as scheduled, at 4 pm. Thank you, AJR, for having asked me to attend.

Alex Lawrence, Marlow

Sir – A short note to thank all involved in the visit to St James's Palace. It was a truly unusual and enjoyable experience. I'm sure all present felt the same – not many of us get to visit the Palace and I'm certain we will happily dine with family and friends relating our experience.

Susie Shipman, Ilford, Essex

Sir – I would like to express my deep gratitude to all AJR staff who worked on the St James's Palace reception. It was magnificent and, from my observations,

went without a single hitch or hiccup. The two people I happen to know personally besides Michael Newman – Andrea Goodmaker and Susan Harrod – seem to have worked their socks off up to and including the day of the event and I would ask you to give them a special 'thank you' on my behalf. The catering was superb and it seemed to me that every one of those present had an exceptional and unforgettable experience.

Harry Bibring, Bushey

Sir – Just a brief note to thank the AJR for the great work you did organising the reception with HRH The Prince of Wales. It was a splendid occasion in an impressive setting and, you know, I did get the impression that Prince Charles rather enjoyed it!!! He was probably aware that the first train full of Kindertransport kids left Germany 75 years ago and he expected to meet the 'halt and the lame' but discovered that most of us 'golden oldies' are quite sprightly and on the ball!!! So, again, many thanks.

Bea Green, London SW13

Sir – Elfriede and I would like to tell you how much we enjoyed the Kindertransport meeting. It was extremely well organised and proved to be a very moving experience. Please convey our thanks to all involved in making this such a successful event.

Fritz Starer, Watford

Sir – I was privileged to attend the 75th Anniversary of the Kindertransport at JFS. It was a most emotional and uplifting afternoon and I would like to thank everyone involved in the organisation for their hard work. It is most important that we never forget the reason why the Kindertransport was so vital and it is thanks to so many courageous people that so many people were able to attend and share their stories and memories.

Diana Abelson, Fulham, London

Sir – I want to congratulate everyone at the AJR on the splendid 75th Anniversary Reunion. I attended Sunday and Monday with my daughter Janet and my brother Harry Heber. We all enjoyed it very much indeed. The organisation, the transport, the entertainment, the speakers – all were excellent. A memorable occasion. Many thanks.

Ruth Jacobs, London N20

Sir – When Prince Charles honoured us at our 70th Anniversary celebration, I said that I came from Vienna and worked in industry for 42 years as a Chartered Engineer, contributing to Britain by war work on shell-producing lathes; designing an instrument tracking the first British satellite, the Telstar, creating a multi-processing machine to operate on Rolls-

Royce cylinder blocks, both forerunners of the computer; reading and sorting marked football pool coupons; supervising the design of the first automatic clutch for the Singer car and more, being awarded several patents. Lastly, helping exporters at BSI impacted positively on the British economy.

Only five years later I conversed with His Royal Highness again at our 75th Anniversary. Reminding him of the previous occasion, I showed him some 20 pence coins, saying that they, as well as the 50 pence coins, all bearing a picture of his mother, are carried in the pockets and handbags of all the people of the land. The coins have a similar, distinct shape, enabling them to be sorted and counted. I designed that shape. Prince Charles was visibly astonished and exclaimed 'I'll tell Mum' and 'Were you working in the Royal Mint?' 'No, but for it,' I replied.

Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx

Sir – I am writing on behalf of my mother, Ann Cohen (formerly Hannelore Horn), and myself to tell you how much we enjoyed the Reunion. Everything was organised with the AJR's usual efficiency and it was wonderful to see so many people supporting the event.

The guest speakers, notably David Miliband and Maureen Lipman, were most entertaining and the re-enacted debate by the JFS drama students was quite enlightening.

It was interesting to meet people who had shared the same experiences as my mother and to make new friends.

The reception at St James's Palace hosted by Prince Charles was certainly memorable and impressive. The event held by the Second Generation group at the Wiener Library was also interesting and enjoyable.

As a result of our being at the Reunion, my mother was invited onto a local radio station to talk about her life and journey courtesy of the Kindertransport.

Keep up the good work, AJR, and we look forward to the 80th Reunion PG!

Sue Lynn, Manchester

Sir – Thank you so much for the wonderful Kindertransport 75th Anniversary celebration. The whole day was perfect and reflected the joyful and sad memories of the past. It was a long day but a very happy one.

The re-enactment of the House of Commons debate was of particular interest to me. My parents, brothers and I were at Zbaszyn station to go to Russia and, just as the train came, a man for the camp came running and shouting, waving a white paper: 'Margot, don't go on the train! I have your document to go to England!' My parents and brothers, without a word to me, ran for the train and left me standing. The man took my

hand and we went back to the camp. My life was saved.

My thanks also go to the young people from JFS for their lovely singing. One particular song touched my heart: 'Bei Mir Bist Du Sheyn' brought back memories of a time I was 'in hospital' at the camp and a doctor sang it to me in Yiddish.

To add to the 75th Kindertransport Anniversary was the reception given by HRH Prince Charles at St James's Palace, which was very much appreciated.

Margot Showman, Manchester



YOUTUBE DOCUMENTARY

Sir – Following my return to Germany from the Kindertransport Anniversary celebration, I found a TV documentary about my father (a Kind) and my grandfather on YouTube in a complete version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w5LjZU8xM>. This may interest other members of the AJR. Also, I would like to know if other members of the AJR were on the *Europa* on 13 June 1939 with my father Kurt Beckhardt and if they went to the Barham House boy's camp near Ipswich?

Lorenz S. Beckhardt

*Science Editor TV, WDR Fernsehen
Kultur & Wissenschaft, 50600 Cologne,
Germany*

WHO WAS HENRIETTE EISENBERG?

Sir – My wife's aunt, Grete Reichl, was an escort on a Kindertransport which left Prague on 11 May 1939 and arrived in London on 13 May. Grete is no longer alive for us to ask her the following question.

In letters to Grete from her mother and aunt, still in Prague, in the summer of 1939, there are mentions of an American lady, Mrs Henriette Eisenberg, who apparently led that and some subsequent groups of children from Prague to Britain. Mentions of Mrs Eisenberg also appear in letters Grete Reichl's mother wrote from occupied Prague to a cousin in Greece in 1941.

These mentions cease after the US entered the war late in 1941. We have tried to find out more about this American lady but have drawn a blank. Others involved, e.g. Nicholas Winton and Trevor Chadwick, get frequent mentions. Who was Henriette Eisenberg? She seems to have played an important – if unrecorded – role in rescuing children from Czechoslovakia. Perhaps her American nationality made it easier to travel to and fro between Prague and London. Do any Kinder recall her?

Ours may be a forlorn hope: the children involved, all sad at leaving their parents but some excited by the train and boat journey, may not have paid much attention to the adults in charge, who were probably not known to them. But one never knows.

*Tim Ottevanger, Ashby Parva,
Leicestershire*

ARTISTIC LUNACY

Sir – Gloria Tessler (July 2013) reviewed a recent R. B. Kitaj exhibition at the London Jewish Museum. There were, in fact, two exhibitions of his work, which ran in parallel. The Jewish Museum entitled their exhibition 'Obsessions – The Art of Identity', whereas the Pallant Gallery in Chichester called their exhibition 'Obsessions – Analyst for our Time'.

Perhaps naively, I had not realised until I was given the book *R. B. Kitaj – Obsessions* that these exhibitions were based on a *single* show curated by the Jewish Museum of Berlin in late 2012. Apparently someone decided, in their own artistic lunacy, to divide Kitaj's work so that 'art with a Jewish theme' (whatever that means) went to London, whereas the 'non-Jewish art' (again whatever that means) went to Chichester.

This is particularly depressing and obtuse as Kitaj spent his whole life infusing his art with his sometimes combative but always perceptive concept of the 'Diasporist Jew'. He wrote two books on the subject: *First Diasporist Manifesto* and *Second Diasporist Manifesto*. The following two quotations are illustrative: 'The Diasporist lives or paints in two or more societies at once'; 'My Jewish Art lives a more modernist secret life. The Jewish Diaspora is not the only one. It's just mine.'

King Solomon realised that two halves don't make a whole and I believe that Kitaj would have been appalled by this arbitrary division of his work. However, on a positive note, the book produced by the Berlin Jewish Museum is superb.

Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove

THE MOST FAMOUS JEWISH FAMILY IN HAMBURG

Sir – Thanks for the latest *AJR Journal* – very interesting as usual.

Just a comment on the revue by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson of J.A.S. Grenville's book on Hamburg. Probably the most famous Jewish family in Hamburg, though for a relatively short period and with a sad ending, was the Mendelssohn family. Moses Mendelssohn moved to the city, where he met and married Fromet Gugenheim. He had already established a significant reputation as a German as well as Jewish philosopher and writer of many books. He had six children, one of whom, Abraham, became the father of Felix, one of the world famous composers of the nineteenth century. I could write at length about both Moses and Felix but there is much information on the web.

Joe Stirling, Norwich

THE FATE OF WALTER BENJAMIN

Sir – I was interested in the review by Henri Obstfeld of *Cruel Crossing: Escaping Hitler across the Pyrenees*. One of the

continued on page 16 ➔

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

If you ask people living in Manchester or Salford today if **L. S. Lowry's** paintings resemble their home town, they will probably look blank. His northern cities with their 'dark satanic mills', the dour heritage of Britain's industrial revolution, have disappeared. In Lowry's early-20th-century mill-towns, with their smoking chimneys, etiolated white streets and skies, people are swept, bowed down with responsibility, towards the factory, the protest march or the football club. Even the church offers no sanctuary – just a dour and gothic sense of swallowing up mankind. Far-sighted Jewish industrialists, impressed by his record of what would become a swiftly changing world, are claimed to have been



Philip Guston *Gladiators* (1940) Museum of Modern Art, New York / Scala, Florence

the first to snap up Lowry's paintings.

Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life at Tate Britain (until 20 October) seems a strange title for an exhibition that so totally reflects the past. But in this regard Lowry was a modernist and, more importantly, a symbolist, a socially aware artist who shows us how the machine age dwarfs humanity against the looming edifice of the mills and the tiny, back-to-back tenement houses of the working poor.

Originally influenced by Utrillo, Lowry was encouraged by his teacher, Valette, to instil a more rounded, European atmosphere into his work. His skylines, with their reeking chimneys, were dark and threatening. Eventually commercial interests persuaded him to lighten the background, using flake white and raw amber. Against this pallor, Lowry's walking masses possess no individuality. And yet it is the light of man that engages him.

Seminar on Lives and Culture of Refugees from Nazism 10-11 September 2013

The AJR is once again joining forces with the London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC) and Sussex University's Centre for German-Jewish Studies (CGJS) for a Seminar which will take place at the LJCC, Ivy House, on Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 September 2013.

Building on discussions over the past two years, the organisations will reflect on the lives and culture of the Jewish German and Austrian refugees who fled Nazism.

As well as hearing from eminent historians and the refugees themselves, the Seminar will focus on the refugees' personal legacies and the effect on subsequent generations. We are also delighted to include a greater contribution from the Second and Third Generations.

Full details of the event are on the AJR's website at www.ajr.org.uk and there is information on how to book on the LJCC's website at www.ljcc.org.uk

Most of the work here is repetitive, with no sign of his more emotional paintings of mining tragedies. But in the repetition he is really on-message, drawing you into his world – his panorama of little people crushed by the machine age. Finally, in two panoramas, Lowry accepts some grandeur in the industrial development which has subsumed the countryside – but they don't quite come off.

This is all a far cry from artists like **Diego Rivera**, whose paintings of Mexico in all its primary colours and dour restraint, inspired by Mayan art, reflect the country's early-20th-century turmoil. The **Royal Academy's exhibition, Mexico: A Revolution in Art, 1910-1940** (until 29 September), conveys the cultural renaissance spawned by revolution and political unrest in a series of photographs and paintings redolent of the fiction of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Between 1910 and 1920, presidential assassinations and revolution are depicted in an artistic obsession with death – hanged skeletons are photographed rotting on trees, or ritualistic imagery, whose brilliant colours tell a more sombre and symbolic story.

Artists from Europe and America flocked to Mexico in the wake of a new political invitation to restore art to the desolate country; political correctness was observed at first but was soon disregarded in favour of freer expression. **Roberto Montenegro's** *Mayan Women* are almost reptilian in character, with dotted houses and trees as inscrutable as their faces. **David Alfaro Siqueiros's** portrait of assassinated revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata has a terrifying ghostly appearance: there is death in his eyes beneath his heavy eyelids. Probably **Philip Guston** best captures the upheaval in his 1940 painting *Gladiators*, in which faceless bodies writhe in a work suggestive of Picasso's *Guernica*.

REVIEWS

Dangerous territory

DER STAUBLESER (The Dust Reader)
by Josef Brainin

Vienna: Braumüller GmbH, 2013, 294 pp., ISBN 978-3-99200-081-4 available at amazon.co.uk

A problem often faced by people as they get older is worry about what will happen to the objects they have accumulated over a lifetime – some of real value, some purely of sentimental value, and many of no value to anyone other than themselves. If they happen to live in Vienna it could well be Alfred whose task it will be to solve this problem. In this perceptive novel, Alfred is a highly reputable antique dealer who also arranges house clearances and in doing so seeks to identify with the people who lived there, learning from the objects and even the dust left behind. He is also a connoisseur, who appreciates not only *objets d'art* but also beautiful women.

In his antique shop Alfred ensures that his clients, whether buying or selling, are given full satisfaction – and, in the case of ladies, this may have other implications. One of the ladies he befriends is Christiane, whose husband is a prominent businessman whom she persuades to invest in a newly enlarged business for Alfred. All goes well until she introduces Alfred to her daughter Isabelle and, unfortunately for all concerned, he falls deeply in love with her and they decide to marry. At that stage, the past intervenes. Alfred is told by Isabelle's father – gently at first and firmly later – that this is impossible as he won't fit into the family. He then realises that being Jewish, although he is scarcely aware of it himself, excludes him from society even in the present day. Unsurprisingly, Christiane too is enraged about his affair with her daughter and her revenge takes many forms. Her husband, however, seems more upset at the prospect of his daughter marrying a Jew than about his wife's infidelity. The novel's author uses this episode and similar incidents to discuss the ongoing, but usually subtle, anti-Semitism still existing in Austria.

The first half of the book tells of Alfred's lifestyle – his adventures and misadventures – as well as providing a very interesting insight into the world of antique dealers. It is, however, in the latter half of the book that the real drama takes place. An elegant, elderly American lady comes to Alfred's shop on the advice of his sister, her friend in America. She tells him a tragic story following the 1938 *Anschluss*. The lady, Betty Silver, was only a young girl at that time and had a close friend, Ruth, living nearby. She remembers vividly how her parents' apartment was ransacked by

continued opposite ➔

the Nazis and their valuable possessions destroyed or stolen, except for one painting. This was smuggled into Ruth's family's house. As it turned out, Betty and her family managed to escape but Ruth and her family became victims of the *Shoah*. It is now Betty's mission in life to recover the painting and she wants Alfred's help in this. It is important to her for its memories of her childhood and her lost friend Ruth. All she has to go on is a family photograph in their flat with the painting in the background. Alfred reluctantly agrees.

Through his network of colleagues and the chance discovery of incriminating documents in the clearance of a house belonging to an ex-Nazi, Alfred discovers the present owner of the painting: a well-established lawyer in partnership with his father. The latter was formerly a high-ranking Nazi concerned with the valuation and auctioning of property confiscated from Jews under legislation existing at that time. He used his position to ensure that the painting was undervalued so that it could be bought cheaply by someone acting on his behalf. The Jews received no compensation anyway and thus it was the state which was defrauded.

Alfred now faces the problem of how to retrieve the painting and this leads him into very dangerous territory as he has to face the existing network of ex(?)-Nazis. He is forced into resorting to actions which he would never have considered under other circumstances. Despite setbacks, all ends well and he is able to personally return the picture to its rightful owner in southern California.

When considering whether or not to review this book I was concerned about reading a novel in German as I expected this would require a considerable amount of concentration and effort. I now feel this was well worthwhile and hope an English translation isn't too far away.

George Vulkan

A thought-provoking journey

**WALKING WITH THE LIGHT:
FROM FRANKFURT TO FINCHLEY**
by Jonathan Wittenberg

Quartet Books 2013, 306 pp.
hardback, ISBN 9780704372795,
available at amazon.co.uk

In this powerful memoir, Jonathan Wittenberg, Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue, describes his 2010 mission taking the torch Ner Tamid, its Eternal Light, from his grandfather's old synagogue in Frankfurt to co-shine forever at his own synagogue in Finchley.

On this most thought-provoking journey, walking along the Rhine he discovers what befell fellow Jews and their synagogues before and after Nazism. He uses his profound scholarship to explore the growth of their communities from biblical times and reflect deeply on the future.

Although buildings and synagogues are destroyed, residents deported and murdered, heroic stories abound as

survivors overcome the devastating past and rebuild their lives.

During the 20-day trek through Mainz, Bonn, Cologne and Duisburg and into Holland, company is provided by his faithful black-and-white hound Mitzpah. A beautifully clear map inside both front and back covers shows the route.

Ironically, once he finally manages to transport his furry friend to Frankfurt, Jonathan is unable to go on a specially arranged tour with well-wishers as the coach can't take dogs!

Jonathan relates how his grandfather, Dr Georg Salzberger, loved Frankfurt, birthplace of Goethe, moving there in 1910. His synagogue, the Westend-Synagoge, was the only one in the city to survive Kristallnacht, although the interior was burned. Rabbi Salzberger escaped with his family to England in April 1939 and returned to Frankfurt to give a moving address at the synagogue's re-dedication in 1950.

Sometimes the book is fairly harrowing reading, yet Jonathan is always fair and even-handed. Its structure – a chapter for each day of travelling – helps ensure he never gets stuck in a groove.

His impressive knowledge is put to admirable use in examining the evolution of Jewish history, culture, biblical and religious and intellectual thought, and the repressive effect of Nazism.

By contrast, Mitzpah's 'blog' provides lighter moments as he eats pizza, runs ahead and frightens cows.

Jonathan is accompanied for much of the journey by a film crew, who warn him not to hurry and give them 'proper space'. Reading the book, I could occasionally see what the film crew meant. But what an impossible thing to do when there is so much ground to cover both historically and geographically in such a short time.

The narrative is well written and easy to read. The writer makes light of any tribulations, bad weather and blisters, but sometimes a family tree or a glossary of people mentioned would have been handy.

It is especially poignant to read about hidden children in Holland and the author is particularly good at exploring the psychological issues of separation from their parents.

How fitting that immediately they get home, man and dog set off for the Kindertransport memorial at Liverpool Street Station before the light is at last installed in the newly-built North London Synagogue.

Janet Weston

Exhibition

Visual feast

MAN RAY PORTRAITS
Scottish National Portrait Gallery,
Edinburgh (in collaboration with
National Portrait Gallery, London)

The first major museum retrospective of Man Ray's photography is on show at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (to 22 September 2013).

It includes many works by the Jewish photographer never before seen in the UK.

A walk through the exhibition is akin to passing through a Who's Who gallery of avant-garde artists, friends and cultural figures of the twentieth century. The impressive line-up includes Pablo Picasso, James Joyce, Henri Matisse, Igor Stravinsky, Salvador Dali, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, Coco Chanel and Wallis Simpson.



Man Ray,
*Solarised
Portrait of
Lee Miller*
c. 1929
© Man Ray
Trust/ADAGP,
Paris and
DACS, London
2012, courtesy
The Penrose
Collection.
Image
courtesy the
Lee Miller
Archive

Emmanuel Radnitzky, who became known as Man Ray, was born in Philadelphia in 1890 and raised in Brooklyn, the eldest of four children of Russian-Jewish immigrants. He became an influential artist, photographer and film-maker and was one of the leading figures of the Dada and Surrealist movements. Alongside the French artist Marcel Duchamp, he sought to establish a New York Dada movement but in 1921 followed his friend to Paris, which became his spiritual home. He fled as a result of the German invasion in 1940 but returned in 1951.

The exhibition – a visual feast for any lover of photography or art – was previously on show at the National Portrait Gallery in London (see review by Gloria Tessler in May issue of the Journal) and focuses on Man Ray's career in America and Paris between 1916 and 1968. It features more than 150 vintage works from international museums and private collections.

Some of it demonstrates his use of revolutionary photographic techniques and early experimentation with colour, such as his solarised photographs of his lover Lee Miller from 1929. Among the many iconic images on display is that of the nude Kiki de Montparnasse, another of his former lovers, in *Le Violon d'Ingres*, 1924, to which he added the 'f-holes' of a stringed instrument.

His work appeared in leading magazines such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* and in 1968 he was commissioned by *The Sunday Times* to photograph the French actress Catherine Deneuve.

Man Ray once said: 'It has never been my object to record my dreams, just the determination to realise them.' He certainly did that. He died in 1976, leaving a huge legacy to the art world.

Alex Galbinski

‘I could just be that light in the darkness’ The AJR and the Anne Frank Trust

This year, with huge thanks for the support from the AJR, we have been able to refresh and renew the ‘Anne Frank and You’ travelling exhibition. The panels in the exhibition section that focus on our contemporary world were created in 2005, so some of the information has been looking seriously out of date for some time.

We launched the new exhibition panels at Z-Arts in Manchester in March and then it visited Bradford College and Newham Town Hall in east London. In June it was on show in Southport, Lancashire, a completely new venue for the exhibition.

Although we have added some shocking new stories, like that of the murder of young Jimmy Mizen in south London in 2009 and continued acts of racism by football fans, there were some more positive additions too. We were able to update the story of Stephen Lawrence with the news of the convictions in January 2012 of two of the gang who killed him. Doreen Lawrence OBE attended the launch of the exhibition in Newham in May and met up with old friends and AJR members Herbert and Lilian Levy. Herbert and Lilian first met Doreen in 1997 when we launched an Anne Frank exhibition at Southwark Cathedral. Herbert’s photo

as a blond child in pre-war Berlin is still featured in the exhibition and he is still called on by the Trust to speak in schools.

Another attendee at the Newham exhibition was David Gold, the Chairman of West Ham United Football Club and a well-known entrepreneur, who related to the very multicultural audience how his own Polish-Jewish immigrant great-grandfather had been so impoverished and persecuted by anti-Semitism that he had hanged himself in his local synagogue.

Our public exhibition ‘Anne Frank and You’ is now organised in a rather different way from previous years, when many AJR members were our highly valued exhibition guides. The exhibition is now an integral part of the programme we offer schools in specific regions around the country, where we take a smaller exhibition on Anne Frank’s life into secondary schools and train teenagers to be peer educators. Many of these young people go on to become ‘Anne Frank Ambassadors’, given additional training by the Anne Frank Trust and with part of their role being to guide the public around ‘Anne Frank and You’. These young people engage very closely with the Anne Frank story and the programme we offer gives them important developmental life skills, including the

self-confidence to communicate with others and impart their knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust.

In Bradford, as in many of the areas in which we work, there is a high proportion of young Muslim students and it is heartening to see them explaining to the public Kristallnacht and earlier and subsequent events. As reported in the Leeds *Jewish Telegraph*, community barriers were being broken down by the Anne Frank exhibition.

Esther Olusaniya, a 15-year-old ‘Anne Frank Ambassador’ who spoke at Newham, said: ‘Being a part of the Anne Frank Ambassadors’ scheme has meant me gaining a sense of responsibility. I now work towards embodying Anne Frank – her values, her message. Dare I say, I could just be that light in the darkness. That’s how the Trust makes me feel. As if I could go out there and make a difference.’

The Anne Frank Trust wishes to thank the AJR for its continued and valued support of our work.

For further information about the Anne Frank Trust, visit www.annefrank.org.uk or telephone Gillian Walnes on 020 7284 5858.

Gillian Walnes MBE
Co-founder and Executive Director
Anne Frank Trust UK

Hooray for Hollywood!

The History of the Hollywood Musical – Tuesday 1 October 2013

Award-winning singer and entertainer **Robert Habermann** performs a selection of great songs from Hollywood with celebrated pianist **Trevor Brown**

Come and enjoy a selection of hit numbers including: “Secret Love”, “Road to Morocco”, “The Tender Trap”, “Moon River”, “An Affair to Remember” and many, many more.

12pm lunch 1.30pm The Show

Venue: The AJR Centre at Belsize Square Synagogue, 51 Belsize Sq. NW3 4HX

Cost per person (payable in advance): £10.00 lunch and Show £3.00 Show only

VISITORS WELCOME – why not bring a friend?

History of Hollywood at AJR Centre: 1 October 2013

Please complete, detach this form and return it to LORNA in Head Office, together with a cheque made payable to AJR. Please send it to:

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Number of people for the Show and lunch.....Numbers for the Show ONLY.....

Name(s):

.....Cheque forenclosed

Address.....

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per person

Please note that if the performance cannot be completed owing to bad weather, tickets will be exchanged for an alternative performance. If you are unable to make the alternative date arranged by AJR, there is no time limit on exchanging your tickets. However, no refunds will be given.

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

CHILD SURVIVORS’ ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN-AJR

AJR members who lived under Nazi occupation in 1939-45 and were 17 years old or younger at the end of the Second World War are welcome to join our active group.

For further information, please visit the Child Survivors’ section of the AJR website or contact Joanna Millan at Joanna.Millan@sky.com

Visit to Oshwal Centre Wednesday 11 September 2013

The Oshwal Centre, in Potters Bar, is a major attraction for Jains and non-Jains worldwide.

We will arrive at the Oshwal Centre for 11.00 am, where we will have refreshments before having a guided tour of the Centre, the Temple itself and its beautiful gardens.

Later we will go by coach to the Dutch Nursery in Potters Bar. Lunch will be served and you will have the opportunity to look around the Garden Centre at your leisure.

Please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

www.fishburnbooks.com

Jonathan Fishburn buys and sells Jewish and Hebrew books, ephemera and items of Jewish interest.

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A PAGE IN THE BOOK OF OUR HISTORY

We took the comfortable night ferry from Harwich to Hook of Holland. Of course, we had travelled this route in both directions several times before, but this one was special. It was not going to be an ordinary holiday. We were excited and not a little nervous, not quite knowing what to expect and how we would feel on arrival at the place that had so many years ago been a point of departure for Ruth. After all, a lifetime lay between that first journey in 1939 and this one, 74 years later. The first was into an uncertain future and out of a familiar but no longer safe environment; this one bore no risk, was voluntary and involved just two old people trying to link up with the past.

As a small child, Ruth had travelled, like the rest of the children, without parents or any other family members, bewildered and lonely, not understanding why she had been taken away, seemingly abandoned by her mother, father and brothers. Because she was so young she had been spared the deep feelings of anxiety that many older children had felt. On the other hand, she couldn't yet partake in a certain sense of adventure that some of the older ones had experienced. While these events had left no active memory, they had nonetheless produced scars on the adult's mind. There had never been anybody to share the experience with and to strengthen and preserve whatever weak memory there might have been. It's as if her life had begun in 1939 in England and not in 1935 in Germany. The brief yet so important period of early childhood – first in Silesia, then in Austria, then in Berlin – is as a blank sheet. She has been robbed of part of her life. There is now a void, sometimes painful, where

there should be memory.

When we heard from Lisa Bechner in Berlin that there was an art event in Hook of Holland which included the 'flag project' under the title 'freedom' and that two photographs of Ruth were displayed, along with others, as flags, we were excited. We simply had to go and see for ourselves.



The inscription at the foot of the flag reads 'Kindertransport Organisation Deutschland by Lisa Bechner Berlin. Design by Heather [indistinct]'

In Hook we were welcomed by Christel Groels, chairwoman of the organisation responsible for the *Kunstplaats* event. Though she was not the actual organiser she was more than willing to take us to view 'the flags'. Since the event was to finish the next day, we had put our visit a day forward so as not to miss them. As we got to the location, close to the beach, where she expected a row of flags, we found they had already gone. But we walked up to the deserted beach to the other flag location, with seagulls swooping down on us and the cold wind in our faces. Ruth tried to imagine it was February 1939. She felt cold, sad and lonely. However, high up on a flagpole, were her face and name fluttering bravely in the breeze, together with those of two other 'Kinder', Peggy Parnass and Fanny Brie-Rosenthal.

We were able to talk to our guide, who

also of course was disappointed about the premature removal of some of the flags, and found her very receptive to the story of the Kindertransports. With the *Vlaggenprojekt*, people in Holland had opened a page in the book of our history. They realised that these events, dating from the time of their grandparents, must not be forgotten and were keen to pass the knowledge on to the younger generation. We are also grateful to Lisa Bechner and the Kindertransport Organisation Deutschland, whose initiative brought the event about. For that and the kindness Dutch people showed the Jewish children, we want to thank them.

Ruth and Jurgen Schwienig

ARTS AND EVENTS AUGUST DIARY

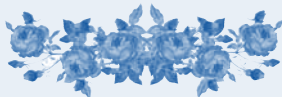
Until 2 October 2013 'Child Refugees: Five Portraits from the Kindertransport' Exhibition at the Wiener Library, tel 020 7636 7247. Free admission

Wed 21 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Raymon Benedyk, 'My Time as a Bevin Boy' At home of Sue Raingold, 2.30 pm. Tel 020 8907 4553

Sun 25 'Family History Open Day' At the Wiener Library, 1 pm – 4 pm. An ideal place to start learning about the impact of the Holocaust across the generations. Free admission, appointments with experts on a first-come-first-served basis. Tel 020 7636 7247

OUTING TO SISSINGHURST CASTLE

(near Tunbridge Wells, Kent)
WEDNESDAY 14 AUGUST 2013



The legendary poet and writer Vita Sackville-West and her diplomat and author husband Harold Nicolson began the transformation of the land at Sissinghurst Castle in the 1930s. Harold's architectural planning of the garden rooms and Vita's vibrant planting reflect the romance and intimacy of her poems and writings.

We will arrive at 10 am for a private tour of the gardens. This will be followed by an early lunch. We intend to finish by 1 pm.

Transport will be available from Kent and Brighton. Members from London can take the train and meet the coach at Tunbridge Wells.

£20.00 pp, including entrance, tour, lunch and transport

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

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INSIDE the AJR

Cardiff 'Nicky's Family' – Unmissable!

Our thanks to John Fieldsend for showing us his DVD 'Nicky's Family' – on the forever humble Nicholas Winton, who brought 669 children out of Prague. Not 'just' that but also interviews with the children and their children and what they have done with their lives. All so tangible – as if we were living it with them. Unmissable.

Marian Lane

Leeds CF 'Israel Inside'

An enjoyable afternoon at the home of Vanessa Glass. We watched 'Israel Inside', a film on amazing inventions by Israelis, e.g. electric cars, drip irrigation, and an invention to help wheelchair-bound people to walk. The discussion after the screening was followed by tea and delicious cakes baked by Barbara and Vanessa.

Rachel Mendel

Superb Day at Holyrood Palace

A group of AJR members attended the Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace as guests of the Holocaust Memorial Trust. A superb day, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Agnes Isaacs

Wembley Reports on KT Reunion

We heard from members who had been guests at St James Palace and had met Prince Charles, while others had attended the Kindertransport Reunion at JFS. This was followed by Myrna's delicious tea.

Ruth Pearson

Liverpool A Day Out in Sunny Llandudno

We enjoyed a day out in sunny Llandudno with lunch at the St George's Hotel followed by a delicious tea at the home of Second Generation Lisa Dackes. Special thanks to Eric Cohen (also SG) for organising and driving the 15-seater coach.

Susanne Green

Ealing Decline of Public Services

Jenny Manson, a former Inland Revenue civil servant, spoke about her new book *Public Service on the Brink*. The book contains accounts by prominent individuals in the public sector of their experiences and on how the level of service has declined in many areas. Followed by a lively discussion.

Leslie Sommer

Ilford Astonishing Story

Angela Schluter made us all sit up with her astonishing story of her mother's suffering, resulting in a marriage to a Nazi officer. She met her father once in later years and it wasn't a happy occasion. We

were told he remarried several times.

Meta Roseneil

Newcastle Yad Vashem Study Tour

Methodist Lay Preacher Margaret Harrison enthralled an enthusiastic audience with recollections of her 10-day study tour to Yad Vashem. A long-time member of the Council of Christians and Jews, Margaret was particularly moved by the memorial to child victims of the Holocaust.

Agnes Isaacs

Kent The Lives of Gilbert and Sullivan

Rob Lowe gave an illuminating talk on Gilbert and Sullivan, with many references to their true-life experiences with lawyers and the constabulary. Both were knighted: Sullivan first and Gilbert 20 years later!

Esther Rinkoff

East-West Encounters, Northern-Style

Scotland and Newcastle members held a get-together in Edinburgh. Some 40 people arrived from East Renfrewshire, Glasgow and Newcastle to join members from Edinburgh. Reports by AJR Director Carol Rossen and Head of Social Services Sue Kurlander were followed by discussion groups on 'Second Generation: Are subsequent generations the heirs of the Holocaust?'; 'As a Holocaust survivor, how has that influenced your priorities and values?'; and 'When is it right for a country to interfere in the affairs of another country?'

After lunch, we heard an account by Wiener Library archivist Howard Falksohn on the history and current activities of the Library. A concert of klezmer music performed by 'Celter-schmelter' (mother and son Gica Loening and Fin) and the drinking of farewell tea brought the day to a conclusion.

Halina Moss

Café Imperial D-Day Plus 69 Years

Where were we all on D-Day? 93rd Company was in Rustington, but then D-Day plus 12 Dieppe. But Bill Howard was on Omaha Beach!

Hazel Beiny

Edgware History of Reuters

A very interesting talk by Greg Breitschman on the history of Reuters news agency. Greg answered the many questions we put to him.

Felix Winkler

Midlands W (Birmingham) From Ostrava to Cleethorpes

Virtually a full house at Andrew Cohen's, where we now meet. Fred Austin told the moving story of his early life and meeting up with Margaret: from Ostrava to Cleethorpes via Leicester, where they met in 1947.

Esther Rinkoff

HGS History of GlaxoSmithKline

David Barnett gave a fascinating talk about Joseph Nathan, who emigrated to New Zealand from London's East End in the mid-19th century. There he developed a dried milk product he called Glaxo. In 1946 Glaxo Laboratories helped develop penicil-

lin. In 2000 it became GlaxoSmithKline, the world's largest pharmaceutical company at the time.

Harriet Hodes

St John's Wood The Story of Jewish Refugees in Britain

Dr Anthony Grenville spoke about the arrival and settlement of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria in this country. In the Q&A session it was asked what had happened to the £50 guarantees for the Jewish refugees who came here ... Answers on a postcard please.

David Lang

Radlett Childhood Journeys to this Country

Under Esther's benign chairmanship, we all gave accounts of our childhood journeys to this country and of our early attempts to grapple with the English language. Each account was met with sympathy and recognition.

Fritz Starer

Welwyn Garden City Backgrounds, Parentage and Lives

There were two new faces at Monica Rosenbaum's home, where we gathered for lunch. We chatted about our backgrounds, parentage and lives. All most interesting and enjoyable. Thank you, Monica, for your hospitality and thank you, Hazel and Ruth, for the delicious lunch.

Leonora Koos

Wessex No Rain This Year!

25 of us enjoyed an outing, organised by Herta Kammerling, to the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens. We viewed the beautiful gardens, filled with an amazing variety of trees, shapes and greens, beautifully landscaped. And this year it didn't rain!

Lea Lindall

Brighton-Sarid (Sussex) Shoplifters' Tricks

David Wass, a retired member of the Met and later a store detective at Fenwicks, entertained us with stories of shoplifters and their tricks. He taught us how not to become victims of 'con artists', especially when drawing cash.

Ceska Abrahams

Norfolk Lots of Food for Thought

Not only did Myrna shlep all the goodies from the delis of Wembley, she also brought us a disc of the Vienna HaKoah lady swimmers' reunion with food for thought. In the film, a 107-year-old man explained that HaKoah was formed in 1909 because Viennese sports clubs refused membership to Jews. Even so, 30 years before the *Anschluss* they managed to combine their hatred of Jews with lots of their proverbial *Gemütlichkeit*, all covered liberally with *Schlagobers*, or *smetana*, as we Bohemians called it.

Frank Bright

North West London The Select Few

A select few came and lunched. The discussion was on the Kindertransport Reunion of the previous day, everyone's story of escape from Germany, and happier travels. A lovely time was had by all.

Hazel Beiny

North London Welcoming Back Helen Fry

A pleasure to welcome Helen Fry back again. We enjoyed the review of her book on how Jewish refugees listened in on captive German high-ranking officers at Trent Park and elsewhere. A wonderful morning, enjoyed by over 25 members of our group.

Herbert Haberberg

Nightingale Inaugural Meeting

AJR member residents of Hammerson/Nightingale Home met for the first time. A plan was made for the next meeting – to talk about the most impressive person they have known. Anyone within the Clapham area is welcome to join us.

Hazel Beiny

Book Club Full House

The books we've read in the last six months are: *The Girl You Left Behind* by Jojo Moyes, *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachael Joyce, and *Villa Air-Bel* by Rosemary Sullivan. All were voted excellent. Our next book: Elisabeth De Waal's *The Exiles Return*. A full house and a delightful afternoon.

Hazel Beiny

Pinner The Dreyfus Affair

Raymond Goldberg related the story of Alfred Dreyfus, who became a scapegoat in an accusation of treason in 1894 because he was Jewish. Dreyfus was fully exonerated in 1906, restored to the rank of Major, and bravely distinguished himself in the First World War.

Walter Weg

Marlow A Refugee to As Far Away As Possible

Prof Michael Spiro told us how he and his parents had fled Chemnitz for New Zealand. As they couldn't take their money out of Germany, they bought tickets from a travel agent to the place furthest away from Germany – the clerk thought this might be Australia. They later moved to New Zealand, where Michael had his basic education. Eventually they came to Britain, where he became an academic at Imperial College in London. A most interesting talk.

Alex Lawrence

Harrogate/York Vitality of a Small Nation

We watched 'Israel Inside', a film which vividly portrays the vitality of this small nation. In the animated discussion which followed, we noted that the film avoided any mention of serious difficulties and problems and we talked about some of these.

Marc Schatzberger

Essex (Westcliff) The Longest Pleasure Pier in the World

Otto Deutsch spoke about the history of Southend to 21 AJR members from London, along with Esther Rinkoff, Myrna Glass and Carol Hart from Head Office and 8 local members. Otto mentioned that the pier was built in 1837 and had later been

AUGUST GROUP EVENTS

Leeds CF	4 August	Theatre Outing; Speaker: Glen Miller
Ealing	6 August	Judith Lawson, Guide at Kew Gardens
Glasgow	7 August	Outing to Kibble Palace, Botanic Gardens
Ilford	7 August	11th Anniversary
HGS	12 August	Professor Derek Taylor: 'The Jewish Contribution to the British Economy' Social
Prestwich/Whitefield	12 August	Outing to Prittlewell Priory
Essex (Westcliff)	13 August	Annual Lunch
Oxford	13 August	The Mayor of Hatfield, Councillor Howard Morgan
Welwyn GC	13 August	Outing to Sissinghurst Castle
Kent	14 August	Professor Derek Taylor: 'The Life of Rabbi Schonfeld'
St John's Wood	14 August	The Mayoress of Cambridge
Cambridge	15 August	Speaker: Chava Rosenzweig
Liverpool	17 August	Outing to Festival Open Day at Edinburgh Synagogue
Glasgow CF	18 August	Social Get-together – speak about an inspirational person
Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)	19 August	At Beenstock Home
Broughton/Crumpsall	19 August	Lunchtime Social Get-together
Marlow	19 August	Stewart Mackintosh: 'Talking to a Mop'
Edgware	20 August	Royal Overseas League Hotel for lunch and piano recital
Edinburgh	21 August	Jane Williams, Herts Library Service
Radlett	21 August	Social Get-together
Nightingale	22 August	Details to follow
North West London	27 August	Social Get-together
Book Club	28 August	Social Get-together
Wembley	28 August	Social Get-together
Newcastle	29 August	Theatre Outing: 'Singing in the Rain'
North London	29 August	12th Anniversary – Annual Lunch

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Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298
H.obstfeld@talk21.com

KT members reunited



(from left) Rosi Rubin (Schul), Margot Showman (Fajgman), Rebecca Scherer (Krenzler)

Manchester members Rebecca Scherer and Margot Showman were reunited a few years ago following an article in the local *Jewish Telegraph*. They met up with fellow camp member Rosi Rubin at the recent Kindertransport Reunion. All were in a camp in Zbaszyn, Poland, from October 1938 to August 1939. In the camp, Rosi looked after Rebecca; Rebecca took care of Margot both in the camp and on the *Warszawa* Kindertransport voyage, sailing into London the day before war broke out. Rebecca would like to hear from anyone who was in Zbaszyn or on the *Warszawa*.

Susanne Green

extended to its present length of one and a third miles, making it the longest pleasure pier in the world.

Larry Lisner

Oxford 'Bringing Israel Studies to the UK'

We enjoyed an unusual talk by Derek Penslar of Oxford University entitled 'Bringing Israel Studies to the UK'. Prof Penslar teaches this course as part of Middle East Studies

Anne Selinger

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Activities August 2013

Lunch is served at 12.30 unless otherwise stated

- Thursday 1 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10.30-12.30 Art Class – all welcome
11.00-12 Seated Exercises
13.45 Entertainer – Ronnie Goldberg
- Tuesday 6 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10-12 One-to-One Computer Tuition
11.00 Seated Exercises
13.45 KT Lunch – Ruth Barnett will show a DVD on the Palace of Justice in Berlin
- Thursday 8 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10.00 French Conversation
10.30 Let's Read and Discuss (a book or a poem)
11.15 Seated Exercises
13.45 Entertainer – Paul Coleman
- Tuesday 13 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10-12 One-to-One Computer Tuition
10.30 Current Affairs Discussion Group
11.30 Seated Exercises
13.45 'Friendship, Fiction and Friction' – in conversation with Ruth Sands and Monika Sears
- Thursday 15 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10.30-12.30 Art Class – all welcome
11.15 Seated Exercises
13.45 Entertainer – Margaret Opdahl
- Tuesday 20 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10-12 One-to-One Computer Tuition
11.00 Seated Exercises
13.45 'Golden Era of Songs' – music from the 30s to the 50s with vocalist Linda Watts
- Thursday 22 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10.00 French Conversation
10.30 Let's Read and Discuss (a book or a poem)
11.15 Seated Exercises
13.45 Entertainer – Frank Crocker
- Tuesday 27 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10-12 One-to-One Computer Tuition
11.00 Seated Exercises
13.30 Film – André Rieu Concert
- Thursday 29 August**
10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
10.30-12.30 Art Class – all welcome
11.15 Seated Exercises
11.30 Current Affairs Discussion Group
13.45 Entertainer – Will Smith



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FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Marriages

Congratulations to Diana and Donald Franklin on the marriage of their daughter Alisa to Liev Garcia; to Andrea and Philip Goodmaker on the marriage of their son Anthony to Dani; and to Lorna Moss on the marriage of her son Alexander to Jessica Mitchell.

Birth

Congratulations to Carol and Nigel Hart on the birth of their granddaughter Miriam Elka.

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OBITUARIES

Brigitte Olga Beattie, born Munich 2 September 1926 – died London 4 June 2013

Brigitte's father was a writer, her mother a social worker. They met when students at Munich University and married young. Like many intellectuals of the period, they were Communist sympathisers.

The family moved from Munich to Berlin but in 1933 fled to Amsterdam and later to Paris: Brigitte's mother, Hilda, had been working in Berlin for the Comintern and was the courier for one of the three Bulgarians wrongly accused of setting fire to the Reichstag.

In Paris, Hilda was in charge of a home for displaced children run by the OSE (Organisation de Secours aux Enfants) and, whereas her older brother, Hannes, came to the UK in 1938, Brigitte stayed with her mother.

The displaced children's home was evacuated from the Paris region to near St Raphael in the South of France as the Germans invaded. In 1940 it was by chance that Brigitte accompanied her mother to Nice to attend to errands for the home: they went to the British embassy, where Hilda was told they must immediately be evacuated on the last boat leaving the South of France for England. This was an old coal cargo boat and a U-boat tried to torpedo it on its way to

Gibraltar. There they were transferred to a more luxurious liner.

On arrival in the UK, they had hoped Hannes would be waiting for them but he had been interned on the Isle of Man. He later served in the British Army.

Brigitte's parents had separated in Berlin and were divorced. Although her own mother was British-born, Hilda had a German passport and was unable to stay in the UK. However, a kindly postal worker in north London said he would marry her so she could acquire citizenship. When he went to apply for a marriage licence, he remembered to take her date of birth but, when asked the name of his prospective bride, could only say 'Hilda'. He was refused permission to apply for marriage but later went to Paris and, with the help of the British consulate, they were married, although it was a marriage in name only. This enabled Brigitte and her mother to come to the UK.

Thus Brigitte began her schooling in Berlin, continued in France, and ended up at



Hornsey School for Girls in London before studying at the French Lycée in London.

Like her parents, Brigitte had left-wing views: she stood on a soapbox at Speakers' Corner, took part in CND marches from Aldermaston, and was determined to fight for good causes.

She had two children – Malcolm and Sylvia from her first marriage – and a daughter, Danielle, from her second marriage, to Jimmy (James Beattie), a cheerful Scotsman. Like Brigitte, Jimmy loved to travel and was keen on languages. They spent a year in Switzerland working in an office but decided to become mature students. Jimmy undertook a degree course in French and German and encouraged Brigitte to study to become a primary school teacher. Sadly Jimmy needed heart surgery and, although he initially recovered, he died in 1968 while a student. Nonetheless, Brigitte completed her teacher training and later specialised in teaching French in primary schools in north London.

Her life was hard – but she was courageous and determined in all she did. She was very quick and agile. She stayed well in command of her life even when she had to move into a care home and never lost her interest in the outside world and, above all, her family.

Brigitte will be sadly missed by her three children, her four grandchildren, her brother and all her family – but she will never be forgotten.

Jean Robertson

Vladka Meed, born Warsaw 29 December 1921 – died Paradise Valley, Arizona, USA 21 November 2012

Vladka Meed (née Feigle Peltel), author of *Both Sides of the Wall* (published in Yiddish in 1948 and in English in 1972 with a foreword by Elie Wiesel, and later in German, Polish and Japanese), died in November last year at the age of 90. She was one of the most prominent, fearless and effective underground couriers of the ZOB (Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa), the Jewish clandestine combat organisation in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Vladka joined the Jewish Bund at the age of 14 and remained active in it after the German occupation, when the outlawed political organisations in the Ghetto began to prepare for resistance. Due to her 'non-semitic' appearance, which made it possible for her to move between the Ghetto and the rest of Warsaw, she was smuggled out of the Ghetto with false identification papers. Vladka was her new name, which she kept.

Vladka immediately began to act as a secret Jewish courier. Her apart-

ment served as a safe house and many resistance fighters and others passed through it. She acted as a contact for the Ghetto. Following the Ghetto uprising and its annihilation, Vladka regularly smuggled herself into labour camps, bringing in money which somehow reached occupied Warsaw from the Jewish Labour Committee in the US via the Polish government-in-exile in London. She also brought in literature concealed in her underwear and shoes.

At the same time, Vladka was helping Jews, especially children, who were in hiding outside the Ghetto. My twin sister and I, then aged 11, were among those she helped to survive by bringing money each month and escorting us to new hiding places when necessary. All were



extremely dangerous assignments.

In 1945 Vladka married Benjamin Miendzyzecki – Meed – a fellow courier in Warsaw. In 1946 they left Poland on one of the earliest ships carrying survivors to the USA. Vladka and Ben both worked tirelessly to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust and especially of the Jewish resistance. In 1981 they founded the World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

Vladka received a 1973 award of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organisation, the 1993 Hadassah Henrietta Szold Award, and the 1995 Elie Wiesel Remembrance Award; she also received an honorary degree from Hebrew Union College and Bar Ilan University.

Vladka is survived by her son Steven and daughter Anna. Her parents, brother, sister and other members of her family were murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Wlodka Blit-Robertson



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Passing out

In Israel it is a matter of routine for the majority of the population that when a child turns 18 they enlist in the IDF in order to give two or three years of service to the country. Now it is the turn of my grandchildren to serve.

So it was with mixed feelings that I attended the passing-out ceremony of my oldest grandson, Gil. As I look at his impressive six-foot frame, it is with a pang that I remember him as a toddler who always had a healthy appetite, grew at a rapid pace, played football and basketball with his friends, and wasn't a great one for talking. In fact, in common with many of his generation, he seems to have developed a special way of talking and a unique vocabulary that makes it difficult to understand him even when he does speak.

Like many of his friends, on completing high school, Gil was eager to join a combat unit. Not for them the life of the backroom boys who sit before computer monitors or in offices. These boys are only too eager to launch themselves into military training of the most rigorous kind, testing their ability to endure hardship and prove

their mettle.

The passing-out parade was held in a grassy area surrounded by woodland. At the centre was a memorial for soldiers from the force who had fallen in battle, fronted by a small parade ground. As is customary at such events, the parade was preceded by a meeting between the families and the soldiers, who had just completed one and a half years of training. Each family had come laden with food and drink for the young men, who fell eagerly upon the feast set out on tables among the trees. The mothers of the soldiers in Gil's unit had organised themselves into a group which was in constant contact through the 'WhatsApp' application. This means that throughout the training period they shared information, even got together at one stage, and served as a support group for one another.

Another Israeli tradition on such occasions is to have special shirts printed denoting the family's pride in their offspring. This too had been co-ordinated by the mothers of Gil's unit and each mother had a pale mauve T-shirt with a cartoon of a soldier saluting a mother on

the front and the slogan 'OK, YOU'RE A FIGHTER BUT YOU'RE STILL MY SON!' and her son's name on the back. The mothers had also ordered special cakes iced in the force's colours, decorated with army boots and insignia made out of sugar. An amazing sight!

Following a brief ceremony and speeches by officers, the families were treated to a film showing some of the training the soldiers had been undergoing in the preceding 18 months. It was then that I felt like passing out myself (in the other sense of the phrase). The training was extremely strenuous and demanding. Not everyone who began the course had the strength and stamina to complete it. By the end, it was clear that the participants had been toughened up and were no longer boys but men: they had also developed a special bond, becoming a band of brothers, each of whom would be prepared to lay down his life for the others.

After a brief respite, the real work of being a serving soldier begins for Gil and the others in his special unit. This means that for the next 18 months the family will tune into every news broadcast, keeping its eyes and ears open for information about the political and military situation, knowing that Gil and his companions are on the front line and that their lives may well be in danger at any given moment. Our emotions are a combination of pride and fear. We're keeping our fingers crossed and hoping for a peaceful time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *cont. from p.7*

famous cases was, of course, the Jewish philosopher, critic *et al* Walter Benjamin. He was fleeing from France to Spain, from where he hoped, like others before him, to make his way to Lisbon to reach the USA (not yet in the war) in the summer of 1940. He did make it across, but at a point when the Spaniards had agreed to return all escapees to the French police. Benjamin, fearing that the French would hand him over to the Germans, committed suicide instead, by taking morphine tablets. And who knows, the French might indeed have handed him over! *Ruth David, Leicester*

GERMAN BOOKS – A GOOD HOME NEEDED

Sir – No doubt like many other members of the AJR, I am facing the problem of how to dispose of an accumulation of German books. These cover a great variety of types

and topics, ranging from pre-1914 to the present day. In most cases, I just want to find a good home for them as I don't like the idea of books ending up on a skip. I would welcome any suggestions from readers!

George Vulkan, Kenton, Harrow

RETURNING THE HELP

Sir – I read with interest the article in your June issue by John Goldsmith about his parents Ruth and Max (whom I knew as Mac) Goldsmith.

We were loosely related through marriage and my mother was a great friend of Ruth. They were a devout Jewish couple, as I recall from my mother. They lived in Leicester and on Friday evenings when they held Shabbat they would invite total strangers in to celebrate with them. This caused Ruth some anxious moments

as some of the strangers looked far from desirable.

No doubt this reflects the gratitude Max and Ruth had for those 'in power' who helped them get out of Germany then as Max, who was head of Dunlop Rubber Co. as I recall, later returned the help given him in his hour of need.

Steven Frank, Chorleywood, Herts

AJR JOURNAL RECEIVED IN ISRAEL

Sir – Since making *aliya* in 1995, I've been fortunate enough to receive every AJR magazine sent to me by the late Stefan Simon and have always been most impressed with this high-quality and impressive journal, often delighted to read letters submitted by close friends e.g. Jo Kolman (Greenford) or Bettine le Beau.

Gish Truman Robbins, Pardesiya, Israel

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