

# AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Memorable memoirs

I am currently writing a book, generously supported by the AJR, on the depiction of Britain and the British in texts by refugees from Hitler. While there are numerous studies of British attitudes towards the Jews who fled to Britain after 1933, as yet no one has sought to analyse systematically the reactions of the newcomers to their country of refuge and the images they created of it. Instead, the newcomers mostly feature merely as the passive recipients of British generosity or as the passive victims of British indifference and, on occasion, outright hostility. To redress this balance, to give the refugees their voice and to reinvest them with active agency in determining their lives, I have been researching autobiographies, memoirs, diaries and collections of letters by refugees, many of which make for compelling reading.

Elisabeth Castonier (1894-1975) sought refuge in Britain in 1938, one of a number of gifted female refugee writers from Germany and Austria that included Gabriele Tergit, Hilde Spiel, Ruth Feiner and Anna Gmeyner. The stories she wrote set in Mill Farm, near Alton in Hampshire, began to appear in 1959 and, much loved though they were, are now sadly little known in Britain. My text, *Mill Farm: Menschen und Tiere unter einem Dach* (Mill Farm: People and Animals under One Roof) (1984), is an edition based on three collections of stories written between 1959 and 1964. One of these collections was originally entitled *Die Herzogin Nana* (Duchess Nana) after its main character, a Persian Blue cat of delicate, ladylike sensibilities almost human in her fastidiousness. Castonier's autobiography

*Stürmisch bis heiter: Memoiren einer Außenseiterin* (Stormy to Fair: Memoirs of an Outsider), a bestseller following its publication in 1964, is now familiar mainly to experts on exile literature; Deborah Vietor-Engländer, a British-born scholar now resident in Germany, has championed Castonier alongside other major literary exiles such as Alfred Kerr and Hermann Sinsheimer.

Castonier's work is characterised by its humour and lightness of touch, as well as by a joyously positive and life-affirming attitude to the experiences she recounts and a deep human sympathy towards those she describes, even (or indeed especially) when they belong to the animal world.

Castonier was born in Dresden on 6 March 1894, the daughter of Felix Borchardt, the half-Jewish son of a German banker who had bequeathed his son a fortune, and his wife Elizabeth, the flighty and self-obsessed daughter of a Russian aristocrat and an English mother. Felix Borchardt had the means to finance his career as an artist, which he chose to pursue in Paris, where Elisabeth, his only daughter, grew up in almost unimaginable luxury. She enjoyed a thoroughly cosmopolitan childhood in artistic circles, during which she met the sculptor Rodin and visited the Impressionist painter Monet at his home at Giverny, where, as she notes in her memoirs, Renoir and his wife were also present.

But Castonier was a born rebel. Her

secondary education in Germany was punctuated by expulsions from select boarding schools for young ladies, on one occasion because she lent a fellow pupil Elinor Glyn's supposedly scandalous novel *Three Weeks*. Her family returned to

Berlin before 1914 so it was in Germany that Castonier began her literary career. By the end of the First World War, she had broken with both her parents, whose marriage had collapsed when her mother moved to Munich to join her lover. As her mother would not house or keep her, Castonier took up residence in a series of inexpensive lodgings in Schwabing, the centre of Munich's bohemian and artistic world. She came to know many of the major figures in German

cultural life, including Franz Blei, Oskar Bie, Alfred Kerr and Theodor Wolff. In 1923 she married Paul Castonier, a Danish opera singer whose career remained stuck at the level of short-term provincial engagements; they separated amicably after several years. Chronically short of money, Castonier earned her living by her pen, in a wide variety of literary and journalistic endeavours.

She made her breakthrough with the dramatised version of one of her novels early in 1933, but the Nazi regime put an end to her literary career. She moved to Vienna, but was driven out by the Anschluss; she settled in Positano, but was forced to leave Italy as Mussolini's regime increased its pressure on the refugees from Germany. As she had invested what

*continued on page 2* ➔



Elisabeth Castonier  
(1894-1975)

## Sir Nicholas Winton receives highest Czech state award

Sir Nicholas Winton, who saved 669 children, most of them Jewish, from the Nazis, has been awarded the Czech Republic's highest state honour.

On 28 October 2014, the anniversary of the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918, Sir Nicholas, 105 years old, was given the Order of the White Lion by Czech President Milos Zeman at a special ceremony in

Prague Castle's Vladislav Hall.

Sir Nicholas paid tribute both to the British people who gave the children homes and to the many Czechs for their 'enormous help' in that difficult period.

Asked by the BBC what he made of today's world,



Sir Nicholas responded: 'I don't think we've ever learnt from the mistakes of the past ... The world today is now in a more dangerous situation than it has ever been and, so long as you've got weapons of mass destruction which can finish off any conflict, nothing is safe any more.'

 Memorable memoirs *continued*

remained of her inheritance in a London bank, she came, reluctantly, to Britain in autumn 1938, at the height of the Munich crisis. Life in Britain was initially hard for her. She struggled to earn her living, though she was befriended by Audrey Mildmay, the opera singer wife of John Christie, founder of Glyndebourne, and had articles published in the *News Chronicle* and *New Statesman*; she also had a series of books about animals published. Characteristically, when she was finally offered secure, well-paid employment as an interpreter in a government department, she turned it down, opting instead for the job as a farmhand that a British farmer, Jane Napier, had offered her, for a far smaller wage and in an occupation utterly unfamiliar to her.

Castonier was to spend some ten years working and living on Mill Farm, in the small village of Froyle in Hampshire, where, by now in her fifties, she fell under the spell of the English countryside, whose misty skies and gently undulating landscapes she saw as the counterpart to a way of life and a set of values that she came to admire and love. The work on Mill Farm was heavy and unrelenting, borne as it was by two women no longer young. Such permanent helpers as they had were the trusty Old Hand and the elderly female factotum nicknamed Gremlin, whose friendly and helpful spirit suffused the household and whose death, bereft of family but surrounded by the instinctive support and compassion of animals, is at once among the saddest and the most uplifting passages in *Mill Farm*. Gremlin is portrayed as a kind of *genius loci*, as if she had sprung from the same countryside as the farm and the ancient, increasingly decrepit farmhouse.

The ten years that Castonier spent working on the farm had, as she puts it in her autobiography, made her a new person, enabling her to return to her writing with fresh energy and creativity and a fresh perspective on the world. Much of this was due to the animals around her: among the cast of characters that populate *Mill Farm* are the parrot Pollykeye, the tomcat Rum,

the grey mares Ma Belle and Fairy Queen, the sheepdog Bimbo, the cock Rigoletto and the gander Rosenkavalier, as well as Herzogin Nana and the – aptly named – wild heron Luzifer, whose antics during the visit of an elderly aunt of Jane Napier caused me to laugh out loud in the hushed precincts of a British Library reading room. The humans, though plainly taking second place to the animals, are also delineated with affectionate humour, for instance the aged local doctor, Dr Pain, who disapproves of modern, scientific medicine and the new-fangled, centralised National Health Service, but who insists on being buried with his battered bag of instruments, just in case some angelic denizen of the hereafter might be in need of the traditional modes of assistance that he had so selflessly dispensed to his human patients.

Mill Farm, whose farmhouse is depicted almost as an organic extension to the landscape around it, came to stand for the qualities that Castonier loved in England and the English: their humane, unshakable conservatism, their self-deprecating humour, their determination to defend their freedoms, and the tolerance and respect for the individual that she saw as the hallmarks of English life. From Waterloo Bridge, Castonier had watched the armada of ‘little ships’ setting sail for the beaches of Dunkirk in May 1940; Britain’s stubborn defiance of Hitler’s armies convinced her that the country’s centuries-long freedom from invasion had allowed it to develop its own traditions and values by a process of gradual, organic evolution that set it apart from its Continental neighbours.

*Mill Farm* opens with a memorable image of an almost mythical island nation:

Ein durchsichtiger, opalfarbener Dom aus Nebel und Dunst wölbt sich schützend über der Insel Großbritannien und isoliert sie von den anderen Weltteilen. Denn England ist ein Weltteil für sich, auch wenn behauptet wird, dies wie ein zeretztes Segel geformtes Stück Erde inmitten des Meeres sei in Urzeiten von Europa losgerissen worden.

(A transparent, opal-coloured dome of fog and mist rises like a protective arch over the island of Great Britain, isolating it from other parts of the world. For England is a part of the world unto itself, even though it is claimed that this piece of land, set amidst the ocean in the shape of a tattered sail, was torn loose from Europe in prehistoric times.)

The book closes with Castonier’s reflections on the vibrant and colourful odyssey of her life, now reaching its twilight among the pastel shades of the English countryside.

Anthony Grenville

## Claims Conference Late Applicants Fund

The deadline for applications to the Claims Conference Late Applicants Fund is **31 December 2014**. The €50m Fund accepts applications from heirs of former owners of Jewish property/assets located in the former East Germany for which the Claims Conference received proceeds.

Following the demise of Communism in 1989 and the formal re-uniting of East and West Germany in 1990, the unified German government introduced the national German restitution law allowing owners, or their heirs, of properties in the former East Germany to submit claims for the return of their properties.

With the expiry of the timeframe to file claims in accordance with the national restitution law in 1992, the Claims Conference filed a blanket claim for properties that were once owned by Jewish victims of the Holocaust who lived in that part of Germany that came under the Communist sphere of influence at the end of the Second World War.

In 1996 the Claims Conference created the Goodwill Fund, through which properties were returned to their rightful owners with 20 per cent of the value being kept by the Claims Conference for allocation to worldwide social and welfare programmes, including the Emergency Fund disbursed by the AJR.

For full details of the Late Applicants Fund, including a list of former owners, properties and assets, visit [www.claimscon.org/?url=LAF](http://www.claimscon.org/?url=LAF) where you will also find a link to download the application form.

All communications regarding the Late Applicants Fund should be submitted to: Claims Conference Successor Organization, Sophienstrasse 26, D-60487 Frankfurt am Main, Germany, fax 0049-69-97-07-08-11, email [claims-conference-laf@claimscon.org](mailto:claims-conference-laf@claimscon.org)

## AJR ANNUAL ELECTION MEETING POSTPONED

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to postpone the Annual Election Meeting of the AJR which was due to take place in November.

The meeting will now take place at 10:30 am on Tuesday 16 December at Belsize Square Synagogue, 51 Belsize Square, London NW3 4HX.

If you would like to attend, please notify AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070 or at [enquiries@ajr.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ajr.org.uk)

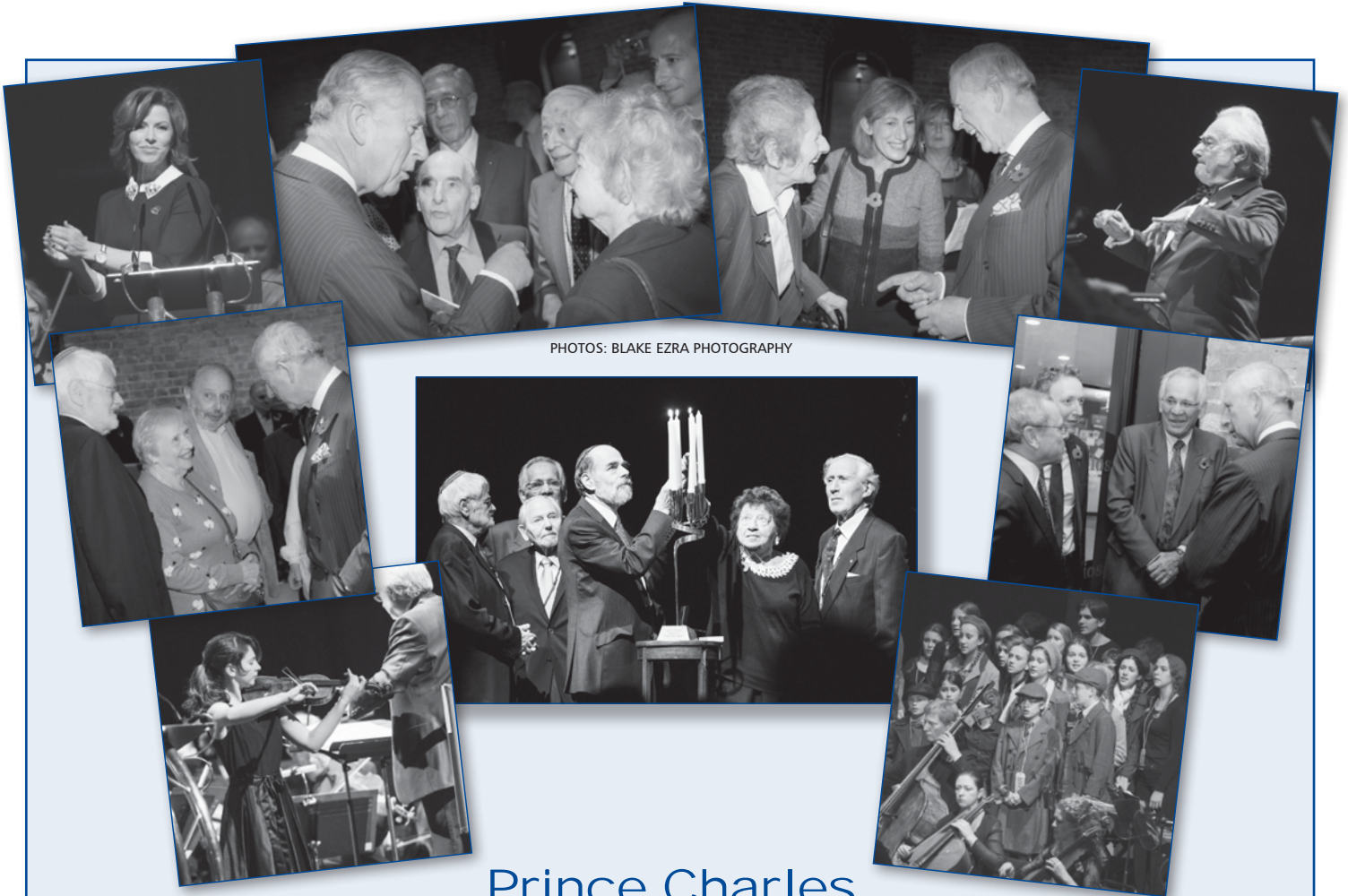
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PHOTOS: BLAKE EZRA PHOTOGRAPHY

## Prince Charles meets Kinder at memorable London premiere of *The Last Train to Tomorrow*

**H**is Royal Highness The Prince of Wales was guest of honour at the London premiere of *The Last Train to Tomorrow* by the internationally acclaimed composer and conductor Carl Davis CBE.

The special concert, organised by the AJR and attended by over 1,200 people, was held on Sunday 9 November, on both Remembrance Sunday and the anniversary of Kristallnacht.

The event was held at London's Roundhouse, historically a turning point for trains and located close to Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road, where many of the Jewish refugees who fled Nazi oppression settled.

Natasha Kaplinsky, the newsreader and television presenter and a member of Prime Minister David Cameron's Holocaust Commission, introduced the event. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, whose grandfather, Georg Salzberger, was the Rabbi of Frankfurt's Westend Synagogue, which was destroyed on Kristallnacht, oversaw the candle-

lighting ceremony.

During the interval, His Royal Highness took the opportunity to chat with Kinder.

Commissioned by the Hallé Orchestra, *The Last Train to Tomorrow* tells the

*The January 2015 issue of the Journal will feature a selection of reactions to the special concert.*

*Given the popularity of the souvenir brochure, the AJR is to issue a re-print. If you would like a copy please send a cheque for £5 to the AJR, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL.*

*If you wish to purchase a CD please visit [www.carldaviscollection.com](http://www.carldaviscollection.com) or <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Last-Train-Tomorrow-Davis-Collection/dp/B00N83U810>*

story of the Kindertransport through a sequence of songs written by the celebrated children's author Hiawyn Oram. The song cycle was performed with great passion and power by Finchley Children's Music Group and the City of London Sinfonia conducted by the composer.

The special concert also featured Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro Overture* and Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto*. Fourteen-year-old soloist Louisa Staples, from the Yehudi Menuhin School, made a great impression on the audience.

Among those present were Sir Andrew Burns KCMG, UK Envoy for Post Holocaust Issues; Lord Alf Dubs (himself a Kind) and Lady Dubs; Malcolm Singer, Director of Music at the Yehudi Menuhin School; Vivian Wineman, President of the Board of Deputies; and representatives of the Austrian, Czech and German Ambassadors to the UK. Unfortunately, Sir Nicholas Winton, now 105 years old, who rescued almost 700 Kinder from Czechoslovakia, was unable to be present.

The concert, an outstanding success, concluded the series of events the AJR had organised to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport.

## Invitation to Flossenbürg

How could I refuse? Such a nice invitation from Annette, archivist at Flossenbürg: 'I would be so happy to welcome you here!' and 'I can organise an English tour for you.' Surely Jews don't usually receive such invitations from concentration camps. Or 'Memorials' (*Gedenkstätten*), as they are called today.

But where is Flossenbürg? I know where Auschwitz and Dachau are. And Sachsenhausen and Terezin. And Bergen-Belsen is somewhere in northern Germany, I think. But Flossenbürg? Who knows? Is it in Germany at all? Where is my atlas? Here it is .... There, it's a tiny village, right on the border with the Czech Republic. Far from any large town or city. Maybe that's why they built it there.

On a momentary whim, I had written to Dachau Camp – sorry, I mean Dachau Memorial – and asked if they had any record of my father's time in the camp. And very quickly they'd replied that he had arrived from Flossenbürg (what/where is Flossenbürg, I had thought) in December 1944 and he had been liberated by the Americans in Dachau in April 1945.

So I wrote to Flossenbürg Camp – sorry, I mean Memorial – and Annette had responded with the following information: Germany had invaded Hungary in March 1944 and immediately began the deportation of the Jews. The provincial areas, including Miskolc, where my mother and her parents lived, were cleared quickly and nearly all their Jews were sent to Auschwitz. In Budapest, where my father and his family lived, the Jews were herded into the newly created ghetto, most to be taken to Auschwitz. But not my father. How did he end up in Flossenbürg? However helpful she was, Annette could not definitively explain this.

Maybe they needed some fit slave workers for the mines in the area. Annette said the SS had transferred him within a few days of arrival to the nearby Hersbruck sub-camp, where prisoners were forced to dig a system of tunnels in the mountainside. In these tunnels, she explained, the BMW Company had planned to produce engines for the armaments industry, shielded from Allied air raids. However, the facility never went into operation and around half of the 8,000 inmates died as result of the appalling conditions. As the Americans approached, the camp was evacuated and its prisoners sent on a death march to Dachau. No wonder that when the war was over my father spent two years being treated for tuberculosis in German hospitals before being allowed back to Hungary in 1947. But how on earth had

he managed to survive four months in Dachau after a death march? There are no answers.

Annette asked if she could compile an exhibition about my father's life before and after Flossenbürg for visitors to the Camp – sorry, I mean Memorial. No one had ever asked before for details of my father's experiences. While he was alive, he had never spoken about it. And no one had bothered to ask. Even



Stephen (Istvan) and Eva Wirth with daughter Linda, London 1973

when my mother had responded to Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation's invitation for survivors to have their testimonies recorded for posterity, his organisation had replied no thanks – even though she had been a slave labourer in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Their publicity says they were founded to 'gather video testimonies from survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust' and today they are still continuing to gather more. This saddened her. She never did understand why they turned her down. So her story remained untold.

I gave Annette the information she had asked for. She asked for photographs – but there were so few to choose from. I told her that my father had met my mother after the war in Budapest and that they had married and fled Hungary during the 1956 Revolution. I described how hard life was for them as homeless and poor refugees in London, but they built up their lives and had three children. I told her that their younger son Leslie – my brother – died in an accident aged three, and that their daughter Linda – my sister – took her life as a young adult. I felt visitors should know that survivors' tragedies didn't end when the Holocaust was over. Annette thanked me. And later, when she had finished work on the exhibition, she invited me to visit Flossenbürg and the exhibition. Fly to Nuremberg, she suggested, then take the train to Weiden (where is Weiden, I thought) and then take a local bus to Flossenbürg.

It was unnerving to see Flossenbürg as the destination on the front of the bus. The final stop. A long bus ride into the

country. Soon I was the last passenger left on board. How beautiful the scenery is. A huge impressive entrance building, presumably once the guards' and SS quarters, and now the offices of the Camp – sorry, I mean Memorial.

Annette welcomed me and made me a cup of coffee. (I bet my father didn't have such a reception when he arrived, I thought). A cup of coffee to pay for months of slave labour? But I must stop thinking like this. It's a different time now. Annette is genuinely so friendly and helpful – she wasn't even born during those events. Nor were her parents. Stop those thoughts – now! She talked about her work at the Memorial.

Annette took me on a personal tour. The barracks, the laundry, the execution sites, the roll-call areas, the sick bay, the isolation blocks. Just like the other sites I'd visited but on a smaller scale and in a different order. And all so beautifully landscaped now. But where are the visitors? Just a couple there, a small group here.

No coach loads of tourists, no survivor families, no Israelis and no loud school groups. Almost nobody. Presumably people do the 'Auschwitz experience' instead. The silence and stillness are good. But how can they build those new houses that overlook the site? Who chooses to live there? Maybe those houses are cheaper. Or do they attract buyers who wish to remember. But how can you bring up children in those houses with those views?

Annette shows my father's name in a vast book on display containing a list of all prisoners. And then the exhibition of my father's life. Respectfully put together. So my father's story is told after all. I thank Annette for all she's done, for the kind invitation and for the tour. She explains that they are now working to establish a memorial for the Hersbruck sub-camp and that I should return when this is finished.

I am again the only passenger in the bus. From the train I quickly take a picture of a station called Hersbruck. No indication or sign of the sub-camp. Maybe next time.

I have some hours in Nuremberg before my flight home. Unlike Berlin and Munich, the town centre displays absolutely no indication of its major Nazi past. Nuremberg had always been way ahead of the game. Already in July 1933 SA stormtroopers had broken into hundreds of Jewish homes and beaten up Jews. The Great Synagogue had been destroyed months before Kristallnacht – no time lost there, then – so on the infamous night itself they could only destroy the smaller Adath

*continued on page 5* ➔



# MANFRED ONE AND MANFRED TWO

I'm eight years old, staring at a white sheet pinned to our living room wall. I'm sitting in darkness, watching grainy black and white film. My dad is the projectionist.

A single shaft of light projects the flickering images of my parents' wedding. The only sound is the whirring of spools turning on the 8mm movie projector. The characters on the sheet are laughing, hands holding wine glasses, arms raised, toasting and – by the way their lips are moving – often singing.

There are only a few shots of my teenage mother, the bride with flowers in her hair. She waves shyly with one hand, the other holding her long shiny dress, nervous she'll trip on her stiletto heels. There are many shots of my dad, Jack the Lad, aged 24, dark eyes flashing, kissing his bride, kissing his mother, pushing and shoving his younger brother, and lunging forward to grab the camera.

I'm noticing another figure always somewhere in shot. He also looks about 24. He is laughing, he plays camera tag with my dad. One films a few seconds, then the other one. They film each other. He pulls faces at the camera, he makes my dad pull faces, he kisses the bride, then the bridesmaid, once, twice.

'Who's he?' I ask.

'My best man, Manfred Marks.'

'He's funny.'

'He was.'

'Has he visited us?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

No answer.

'Why not, daddy?'

No answer.

'Where is he?'

Pause.

'He just disappeared.'

What did that mean? How can you just disappear? I think of the pot labelled vanishing cream on my mum's dressing table. Did he apply it and then pouf, he disappeared? Was it a

joke? Has he disappeared forever? Silence, except for the whirring of the spools.

I glance back to the screen. My dad and his best man are now dancing together – a Russian dance, going down on their haunches, kicking their legs and falling over each other helpless with laughter.

'How did he disappear?'

Silence except for the whirr of the projector.

'Is he your best friend, Manfred Marks?'

'Yes, he was. We were at school together, we were always in trouble with the teacher, he called us Manfred One and Manfred Two.'

'Which were you?'

'Manfred Two, I was the younger.'

'If he is your best friend why doesn't he write to you?'

I understand about writing letters. Every month I listen to the letters read out by my gran and great aunts. So why didn't he write?

Just the whirring of the spools.

I watch Manfred One on the film blow kisses at the camera. Two stare frozen at the screen. I really wanted to know what happened but I daren't ask any more. A fog of silence has descended.

A long pause, everyone kissing everyone else on the screen. Eventually, I try again.

'Daddy ....'

'Yes?'

'How can you just disappear?'

He turns to me in the dark. I scrutinise his face, lit up by the projector beam. For a moment I feel scared, I think he's angry with me, I know what happens if I go too far. I move carefully away from him, silently out of reach of his hand just in case. He holds my gaze for a long time.



Carry Gorney, aged around 8

'His mum said they came at dawn. There was a knock on the door and they took him away. We never heard again.'

I shift slightly in my seat and pull my socks up.

'Did they come at dawn for you?'

'I had already left. We left straight after the wedding.'

I turn back to the screen. My parents are running along a

station platform each carrying a large, stiff leather suitcase. Manfred Marks is leading a gaggle of waving, leaping young people throwing confetti. The images wobble as the camera is passed around. The next shots are from the train; my father is filming his friends. There is a long close-up of Manfred Marks's face and his eyes seem to meet mine in our darkened 1950s living room. Then the screen goes black. The whirring has stopped.

We sit in silence for what seems forever. I suck the ends of my pigtails.

'Daddy, who are all those people throwing confetti?'

'Friends.'

'Where are they now?'

'They just disappeared.'

Where did they go, I wonder, where did they go?

Carry Gorney

*This article is an extract from **Send Me a Parcel with a Hundred Lovely Things**, a memoir by Carry Gorney. The book was published in November 2014 at £11.99 plus £3.00 pp.*

*To order a copy, please visit <http://www.carry-gorney.co.uk/sendmeaparcels/> Alternatively, please send a cheque to Carry Gorney at Ragged Clown Publishers, c/o 1 Ferdinand Place, London NW1 8EE.*

## Invitation to Flossenbürg *continued*

Israel Synagogue. The racial laws will, of course, forever be linked with this city. And Hitler had chosen it for his Nazi rallies. So maybe it was apt that the war trials were held here.

I take the tram out and see that the vast rally grounds are now empty and silent in the summer heat. Diners sit at outside tables by the lake alongside the grounds, seemingly oblivious to the past, and chat over their beers. Joggers pass by.

Another tram takes me to the court building which hosted the war trials. There are no trials in Room 600 today so they allow me inside with some Japanese tourists. But the room looks so small for such a major trial. Could the 21 defendants, judges, lawyers, interpreters and world's media really fit in there? There's a new exhibition of the trials in the rooms upstairs. It looks impressive but I buy the guide book instead and leave. Enough Holocaust

for one visit.

Back home, I email Annette and ask how the survivors' reunion went. She replies it went very well, although there were fewer survivors this time. She says she no longer works at Flossenbürg. She's taken a job in Prague. Good, I think. She's probably had enough Holocaust for one lifetime. Too much is not good. I wish her well. But the Holocaust doesn't stop for me ....

David Wirth



# Letters to the Editor

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

## THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES!

Sir – Your October issue brings memories of my own experiences bubbling up.

My twin brother Ralph and I came to England at the age of ten in April 1939 as refugees from Berlin. Unlike cousins who came on the Kindertransport, we were fortunate to come as a family with our parents. The article about Judith Kerr and that by Carry Gorney remind me of our own experiences – for instance my mother asking for a *Flasch* of orange juice at the local Co-op in Kilburn, where we settled, and our father, coming from a large centrally heated apartment, trying to light a fire in our small, damp basement rooms.

Another memory: our parents stocked up with the kind of clothing they thought the British wore. For my brother and me, this meant wearing knickerbockers – to the delight of the local kids in Kilburn, who ran after us jeering ‘German Jews!’

In September 1939 our lives were transformed when our school was evacuated to the village of Bedmond in Hertfordshire. With our very basic mastery of English and wearing labels identifying us as ‘German’, it was hard to find foster parents to take us. Eventually we came to the last house in the village, ending up with Mr and Mrs Gentle and their son Jack – who had committed themselves to take two girls. But Mrs Gentle took pity on us and let us stay until her husband came home from work. In the event, we stayed for much of the war. They became our second parents and we are still in regular touch with Jack.

Other memories are bleaker – in particular the early struggles of our parents. Our father Louis was interned on the Isle of Man and our mother Socha had to find a way of making a living in London and facing the Blitz. But they survived and the family was reunited. Neither ever lost their love of England. Socha, born in 1900, lived until nearly 100. An artist, at the age of 92 she proudly showed off her still active Camden Institute student card.

One other story triggered by Judith

Kerr’s Bovril experience. Shortly after the war we were with friends on a cycling tour which took us from London to Wales. At the time, navigation was made more difficult because signposts had been removed in case of a German invasion. At one point, we were completely lost when we found ourselves in a small town with a railway station. Luckily, it seemed to have retained its Welsh-language nameplate: GWR (Great Western Railway). We searched our ordnance survey maps for GWR but, to our distress, we couldn’t find it ....

Thanks for the memories!

*Frank Land (b. Landsberger),  
Ivybridge, Devon*

Sir – I am probably the only one of your readers who has had occasion to be cross with Judith Kerr – but I hasten to add she was innocent of all blame!

My mother, paternal grandmother and I, aged about 11, found ourselves in the same Putney boarding house as the Kerrs after the war. We had spent the previous years in India leading a relatively privileged life, which came to a sudden end with the early death of my father and the approach of Indian independence. My mother had also recently discovered that all her immediate Czech family had been murdered by the Nazis. After a few wanderings we ended up in the multinational microcosm in Putney.

Many fellow guests were what Russians called after 1917 ‘former people’, the Kerrs being prime examples. Others included a retired British ambassador and his wife, who was paid to coach me in Latin. I must, however, have been one of the few schoolboys in Britain to have previously heard of Alfred Kerr because my German-born father had several of his books. I still remember where they stood on his shelves.

Although I have quite vivid memories of several fellow guests, I regret to say I only dimly recall the lively young Judith Kerr. Why was I cross with her? Because on returning from my boarding school on one occasion, I found she had been

allocated ‘my’ room! However, this was overtaken by events and in due course we were able to move into our own house. Many years later her books were read by my own children.

*Peter Roland, Bognor Regis*

Sir – I read with interest your article about Judith Kerr and her fictional Anna in *The Other Way Round*.

My story is not fiction and totally opposite to that experience. My sister, at the time three-and-a-half, and I, nine-and-a-half, were taken in by a family in Ashton-under-Lyne. They lived in a terrace house containing two bedrooms, a ‘front’ room, a kitchen with a bath, and an outside toilet. They had a daughter, Mary, who was sent to live with her grandmother as they didn’t want us to be separated. We couldn’t have wished for kinder people.

We came from Prague from a very modern apartment but the change of lifestyle didn’t faze us at all and my memories of ‘Mammy and Daddy Radcliffe’ and all their friends are very happy ones. ‘Daddy’ Radcliffe was a councillor and the secretary of the local Labour Party. Consequently we were taken to all the evening ‘socials’, which were very family affairs, very soon learned to dance the *Veleta* and the *Military Two Step* etc, and enjoyed the hospitality for which Lancashire is famed.

*Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines,  
Preston, Lancs*

## ‘B..... FOREIGNERS’

Sir – Fear not, dear Edith Argy (October): Frank Beck and I are two more ‘bloody foreigners’ for *whom* - or is it *who?* – the bell tolls.

*Mary (Putzi) Brainin Huttner, London N3*

Sir – It may be of some comfort to Edith Argy to know that there is another finicky foreigner among the honourable members of this learned Association who takes English grammar seriously and who disapproves of the natives’ scant regard for their own language.

Arriving on this blessed plot in June 1946 from less happier lands, I had not the slightest knowledge of the King’s English. At first, I fell prey to the many words, e.g. *Holborn, sword, knock, knee, knitting, cupboard, Greenwich*, etc, whose pronunciation cannot be divined from their spelling. As for grammar, and particularly the correct use of *am, was, were, shall be, shall have been, who* and *whom*, I am indebted to Mrs Irma Löwenberg, a refugee from Essen, a superb linguist who had been a housewife in Germany and became here, of necessity, a teacher of languages. As for spelling, I have been consulted by

locals. As for my German, all I have kept is the accent.

*Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

Sir – I can assure Edith Argy that she is not the only one. I feel exactly the same way about the *who* and *whom* issue. What gets on my nerves even more is the fact that practically no one knows for sure when to say *I, me* or *myself*. I actually don't mind the rather uneducated way of saying *me* instead of *I*. I do it as well sometimes for fear of sounding snobby. But what I hate is phrases like *for my husband and I* or *with my sister and I*, used by what I would term semi-literate people who consider themselves educated.

By the way, at the risk of sounding pedantic, re that little rhyme about 'Bescheidenheit', we used to say 'Bescheidenheit ist eine Zier, doch weiter kommt *man* ohne ihr' (i.e. 'man' rather than 'du' and the fact that it is grammatically incorrect to have 'ohne' followed by the dative) is of course what is called poetic licence, rendering the saying even more amusing. To me, it sounds as if it's by Wilhelm Busch but I can't recall that it is.

*Margarete Stern, London NW3*

#### ÉMIGRÉ AUNTIES

Sir – I enjoyed Carry Gorney's delightful article in last month's Journal about aunts who knitted. (Note that their way of working differed from the way the English knitted, and they were very conscious of that!)

Had they lived in Hampstead, they would have gone to the Swiss Cottage Wool Stores on Northways Parade for their wool. There my mother ran a wool shop from the time she became a naturalised Englishwoman and was able to leave domestic service until she retired. Her neighbours were a refugee tailor, a refugee optician and, of course, the Cosmo restaurant. Her clients included numerous refugees who went there as much for a gossip as for their knitting wool.

Maybe some of your readers remember.

*Frank Beck, London NW3*

#### CHILD SURVIVOR PENSIONS

Sir – We Child Survivors heard with great satisfaction that the German Government together with the Claims Conference have announced their intention to grant a one-off special payment to Child Survivors in recognition of their emotional loss. Many of the Child Survivors, including myself, lost all their families. Not only did we lose our families but also our identities. The main reason for setting up the Child Survivors' Association was that this fact was not recognised by the German Government and indeed by many older survivors.

We note, however, that included in the announcement was that this was over and

above the pensions that we all receive. We wish to correct this statement. Many Child Survivors do not receive a pension from Germany or from their country of origin. We do not know where this understanding originated and many of us were turned down by the Claims Conference and do not know why we do not qualify for a pension.

The Article 2 Fund is means-tested and assists those in greatest need. A pension should be paid to *all* survivors as a right just as in the UK. Our families lost their ability to claim their pensions due to their early deaths in the camps. We are their heirs.

*Joanna Millan, London NW8*

#### RECOLLECTIONS OF KITCHENER CAMP

Sir – Two photographs are shown in Professor Michael Streat's letter (November). I am fairly sure that in the first photograph at the bottom of page six, the man in the direct centre of the group, sitting on the far side of the table and wearing his shirt buttoned to the neck but with no tie, is Hans (subsequently John) Segall, a Berliner. His brother and sister-in-law, Fritz and Dora Segall, were apparently well-known Berlin socialists and I believe Dora was well known in AJR circles.

I have no details as to how Hans Segall reached Kitchener Camp but he told me it was purely transitory and he had agreed to re-emigrate to South Africa. Eventually, however, he joined the Pioneer Corps and so was allowed to remain here. On demob, he worked for a refugee firm, OP Chocolate, in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales. Subsequently he became the London sales agent for a German raincoat manufacturer, Niehues & Dütting of Nordhorn.

Does anybody know what happened to him eventually?

*(Mrs) A. Rosney, London W5*

Sir – Reading the letter by Fritz Lustig in your October issue, I was happily surprised by his knowledge of the musicians in the Kitchener Camp / Pioneer Corps Orchestra. I am working on an 'Austrian Biographical Dictionary of Musicians Persecuted Under Nazism' and would be delighted to receive further information about refugee musicians in the UK, especially from Kitchener Camp or the Pioneer Corps. Mr Lustig seems convinced there is no interest in his recollections but, as my letter shows, I'm very glad he wrote to the editor!

*Dr Primavera Driessen Gruber, Vienna*

#### DYNAMIC PERSONALITY

Sir – We were fascinated by the life history of your speaker, Dame Stephanie Shirley, at the recent lunch meeting in north-west London. She spoke sincerely and we enjoyed reading her autobiography. It tells the success of a Kindertransport child who came here in 1939, was looked after by

caring foster parents, and benefited from a high-class education.

At 20 she started working at the beginning of the computer age. But it was a man's world and she would never reach her full potential, so she started off using her dinner table for designing software. She acquired blue chip and other high-powered clients; employed only female staff who worked from their own homes on a freelance basis; and founded a limited company which became highly profitable.

On retirement at 60, she used her wealth for charitable purposes. She has a City livery company and various educational institutions, particularly for handicapped children like her only son. She has advised the government in various ways and was rewarded by being created a Dame.

It was a pleasure to be addressed by such a dynamic personality.

*Mr and Mrs K. M. Treitel, London NW11*

#### MEMORABLE AFTERNOON

Sir – Yesterday (at the time of writing) Lee Rodkin and I enjoyed a wonderful AJR-sponsored concert at the London Jewish Cultural Centre, preceded by a delicious lunch, all free of charge.

The London International Orchestra, numbering over 20 players, gave us a nostalgic selection of music by Strauss and Lehar, as well as some Italian songs by a superb Welsh tenor. Not least, a cellist playing *The Swan* and a violinist's beautiful rendering of *Schindler's List*. A balalaika player was a wow and stole the show.

It was also another opportunity to chat with other refugees, which I consider a great boon. It is always a distinct pleasure getting to know other AJR members as well as greeting old friends.

Thank you AJR for giving Lee and me such a memorable afternoon.

*(Mrs) Meta Roseneil, Buckhurst Hill, Essex*

#### UNHELPFUL MUSEUM

Sir – I refer to Edith Argy's September article 'A day in Vienna', in which she described the contact she made with the Landstrasse Museum.

I too was in Vienna six or seven years ago and tried to contact the same museum. At that time, it wasn't open very often and provided a telephone number for enquiries. Although I expressed interest in the area in which I had grown up and would have liked more information about some of the families and my school friends, I had no response from the curator. I found this surprising given that my father had been established for several years as a GP in the Radetzkystrasse, where he had had Jewish and non-Jewish patients alike. I hope the museum has since made more progress.

*Eva Frean, London N3*

*continued on page 16* ➔

# ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

What makes a great master? For me, it's sensitivity and luminosity – and who better to demonstrate these qualities than Rembrandt? The **National Gallery** has chosen the artist's most mature phase as the exemplar of his greatest genius. In an exhibition which includes 40 paintings, 20 drawings and 30 prints, **Rembrandt: The Late Works** explores this final burst of energy, including several self-portraits which show the artist's deepest introspection as he delves into the secrets within a face growing from maturity to elderliness. His familiar stubby features and serious expression beneath the artist's cap do not essentially change but there is a perceptible dwindling of his remarkable vitality and a sense of his own fragility.

These are the years from the 1650s to his death in 1669 at the age of 63, showing the artist at his best, reflecting back to us his creative growth developed through tragedy and personal setbacks. The self-portraits, some in oils, some etchings, include one in which he features as the *Apostle Paul*; in another, *Self-Portrait with Two Circles*, he appears with his brushes and palette suggesting a creative other-worldly significance. It is certainly true



Rembrandt van Rijn: *The Jewish Bride* (1654)

of Rembrandt that everything can be said within a human face.

Rembrandt lived and worked in Amsterdam, an area highly populated by Jews from the ghetto. Betsy Wieseman, who sensitively created this excellent exhibition, pointed out that Rembrandt would have known members of the Jewish community and was intrigued by Judaism as he was by all religions. She alluded to the artist's fascination with the Old Testament and certainly Rembrandt mined it for narratives to prove his fascination with biblical history. Clearly he managed to capture the emotion and spirit of the Old Testament in order to understand humanity. There is no better example of this than his painting *The Jewish Bride*, on loan from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. It is understood to be a reference to the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca and such is the tenderness of the bridegroom as his hand gently meets that of his bride at her breast, that its subtle sensuality reaches us down the ages – truly a biblical love affair.

Other versions may be more cynical. Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, is shown *Holding King David's Letter*. She must choose her husband or her king and there is a deep female knowledge in the play of her features as she considers her options. Another biblical subject is *Abraham Entertaining the Angels*, a drypoint etching, and *Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph*, in which the youngest son, Benjamin, is the first to receive the blessing.

But it is Rembrandt's celebrated use of light, of which he stands the undisputed master, where we see him exploring New Testament subjects. A spiritual effulgence emanates from the canvas. There are darker paintings such as *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* – who can forget that ghostly green pallor of the corpse? – or his pen-and-brush drawings of a hanged woman on a gibbet. Some of his drypoint etchings, particularly the delightful *Young Woman Sleeping*, have an almost Modernist poignancy.

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CONTEMPORARY  
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## REVIEWS

### Uplifting story

#### A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

by Yisroel Abelesz

*Yisroel Abelesz, 2012, 300 pp.*

*paperback, originally published in*

*Hebrew, glossary of Hebrew and Jewish terms, ISBN 978-965-92014-0-2*

Jews were enthusiastic Hungarians already during the revolution of 1848; they suffered many casualties for their patriotism. Full emancipation came in 1867, leading to their becoming prominent in art and commerce. In the First World War, they fought on the side of the Habsburg monarchy, the losing side. The defeat led to the loss of two-thirds of Hungary's territory and much bitterness. The short-lived revolution of 1919, led mainly by Jews, and Rákosi in the 1940s, added to the covert anti-Semitism.

This is the background to the story of Binyamin and Yisroel Abelesz. They grew up in Kapuvár, a small but ancient town in north-west Hungary, where there was a community of 500 Jews, mostly successful and involved in commerce. The Abelesz family belonged to the orthodox section of the community. From the book it appears that they experienced no anti-Semitism. Typical of the government of the time was a saying attributed to the then prime minister: 'The anti-Semite is a person who hates Jews more than necessary.'

Binyamin, the older of the two brothers, was called up into the army three times. However, he had no intention of joining and, with the help of a rabbi, managed to avoid doing so. On the third occasion, he pretended to be insane. However, in the end he did join up, as this was judged to be preferable to entering the ghetto. He experienced many hair-raising episodes. One of the most bizarre of these was that his love of football enabled him to play with the German commander, who in turn provided him with assistance. He escaped and, with good fortune and the help of a number of non-Jews, he was liberated by the Soviet army.

He returned to Kapuvár, to find the family house now occupied. Of the 500 former members of the Jewish community, only 100 returned.

Binyamin and his family moved to Budapest but found life under Stalin and Rákosi unacceptable: Israel became the goal. The opportunity came in 1956 and, with difficulty, they got to Vienna. Yisroel, who by this time was living in England, sought to convince them to join him there, but to no avail – they made their way to Israel. Binyamin's story ends with his joining the army.

Yisroel's story is no less exciting than



that of his brother. His problems began with the German occupation of Kapuvár. Before being deported to Auschwitz he had the opportunity to experience the efficiency of the Germans and the extreme cruelty of the Hungarian gendarmerie. In Auschwitz, as a 'gift' of Mengele, he was sent to the right column. His sole aim was to survive and tell people of his experiences. Despite the indescribable horror, he did survive and is still telling people about what he went through.

Yisroel returned to Kapuvár to rebuild his life. Surprisingly, the family's possessions were returned by those his family had trusted before their deportation. In my experience, this was anything but the norm.

In 1949 the Communists took over in Hungary. To them, the Abelesz family, with their wholesale business, were capitalists. Yisroel decided to leave Hungary. With the help of Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, he arrived in England. Two of his brothers joined him here. As with the refugees of 1956, the Anglo-Jewish community did not welcome the 1949 arrivals. Yisroel was not to marry until he had found a bride who also came from Hungary.

Yisroel started up in property with a small loan. His wife too managed to obtain a loan with the help of a non-Jewish bank manager who did not demand security and she started up a leather business.

Yisroel felt the strong pull of Hungary and began visiting the country regularly. To the present day he is active in arranging the restoration of neglected Jewish cemeteries there. Indeed, all proceeds from the sale of this book will go to the renovation of Jewish cemeteries in Hungary.

One cannot help but find the story of these two brothers uplifting. The courage and determination they displayed in their observance of religious practices even at the risk to their lives is admirable. Irrespective of their terrible experiences, they became upright and successful men.

Janos Fisher

## A side of America that's less well known

### SCHLEPPING THROUGH THE AMERICAN WEST: THERE IS A JEWISH STORY EVERYWHERE

by Donald H. Harrison

Harrison Enterprises, 2014, 229 pp. paperback

Since both grandfather and grandson are residents of California's southernmost town, San Diego, and also to mark the latter's bar mitzva, *San Diego Jewish World* editor Donald Harrison took his grandson on a road trip up the west coast of America and down

again, visiting 32 towns and sites along the way – and finding a Jewish connection in all of them.

The Jewish connections that the two found were not the obvious ones of synagogues or cemeteries, but rather more obscure links to Jewish individuals who had left a mark of one kind or another along the way, whether through their career, interests, public service, or the impression they left on others. Thus, for example, in Temecula, California, there is a museum commemorating Erle Stanley Gardner, who lived there. Gardner wrote detective mysteries, prominent among them being the Perry Mason stories, which were later adapted for television. Gardner's fascination with real-life murders and mysteries led him to write for *The New York Times* a book review of *Compulsion*, a fictionalised account of the murder committed by Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, Jewish law students who sought to commit the 'perfect crime' in 1924 but were tried and sentenced to life in prison.

In Riverside, California, Harrison visits the renowned Mission Inn, which has had well-known Jews as its guests, among them actress Sarah Bernhardt, publisher Joseph Pulitzer, actor Paul Newman, and physicist Albert Einstein. The proprietor tells interesting anecdotes about each and every one, including Newman's preference for a suite close to the nearby race course and Einstein's annoyance at breakfast on the terrace when a parrot belonging to the hotel stole his muffin!

In Las Vegas, Nevada, Harrison visits the Mob Museum, which commemorates criminals belonging mainly to the *Cosa Nostra* and the *Kosher Nostra*. There he learns that Jewish crime figure Meyer Lansky aided Italian crime boss Lucky Luciano to 'organize the most powerful underworld organizations into a confederation called the Commission. Like a board of directors, it recognized different families' spheres of influence in cities nationwide....' There are references to, among other Jewish mobsters, Benjamin 'Bugsy' Siegel, Louis 'Lepke' Buchalter, Micky Cohen and Mendy Weiss.

In Lethbridge, Alberta, just over the border that divides America from Canada, the travellers encounter Goldie Morgentaler, who teaches English and Yiddish literature at the University of Lethbridge. Professor Morgentaler's mother, Chava Rosenfarb, was a Yiddish-language writer and her father, Dr Henry Morgentaler, was the defendant in litigation against abortions. In her search for employment, Morgentaler accepted a post at the university as a specialist in Victorian literature in a town whose Jewish population has shrunk to almost zero. She admits that there is some anti-Semitism on campus, expressed in anti-Israel demonstrations, and that that

has led her to limit her Yiddish literature class to 'more mature' third-year students. But these trends, she points out, are offset by the pro-Israel stance adopted by many of the fundamentalist Christians who live in the area.

In Spokane, Washington, Harrison meets English as a Second Language teacher Pamela Pollack Fremd and is given extensive information by her brother about the town's efforts to promote inter-group harmony in response to white racist activists in nearby Idaho. Each year the local Conservative synagogue, Temple Beth Shalom, hosts The Kosher Dinner with over 2,000 attendants, many of them Christians as well as Jews who have not previously been in contact with the community. The event has been a community mainstay since 1940 and the menu includes herring and *challah*, *tzimmes* and *knishes*; the entertainment is provided by a *klezmer* band.

Some of the Jewish connections are rather tangential, as in the case of Lakehead, California, whose caves trigger Harrison to expatiate on the Cave of the Patriarchs and the caves at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The biblical association and other legends associated with the Cave of the Patriarchs are discussed at length, as is the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but Lakehead cannot claim to have much in the way of a Jewish story.

Likewise, in Browning, Montana, where there is a Native American (Indian) Reservation, Harrison buys a children's book recounting a legend about a talking mouse and uses the occasion to recount the biblical story of Balaam's ass. He makes the valid point that no one in synagogue laughs at this tale of a talking animal and, similarly, no one should scoff at native legends about humans communicating with members of the animal kingdom.

The only Jewish connection of Carmel, California, is its name, which is taken from the Carmel Mountains in northern Israel. In Solvang, California, a town founded by Danish immigrants, Harrison finds a museum dedicated to the work of Hans Christian Andersen. In this instance, the Jewish connection is with the Jewish families of Copenhagen, who took an interest in Andersen's work and invited him to their homes for dinner.

There's plenty more, as we discover a side of America that is less well known and Harrison reveals an amazing capacity for finding a story of Jewish interest wherever he goes. The book is written in a lucid and entertaining way as the author *schlepps* the reader along with him, using his insatiable curiosity, enquiring mind, and engaging personality to winkle out information from the individuals he encounters along the way.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

## In Berlin, history is all around – and within

Writing so soon after attending a conference of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants (WFJCS&D) in Berlin, I am still 'processing' an experience the scope of which gave me a sense of wonder and gratitude.

My family history differed from that of most other attendees, my father being 14 when he left Leipzig on the Kindertransport in 1939. WFJCS&D survivor members were all aged 16 or under in 1945 so most Second Generation participants reflected this family history.

Approximately 350 people went to Berlin – many for the first time and some for the only time – to share this historic event. They came from many countries around the world. Most came from the USA. One man came from Mexico to be with his mother.

The venue was the Berlin Hilton, situated in the heart of the city. The programme was filled with inviting workshop sessions. On Sunday, following the welcoming speeches and candle-lighting ceremony, I joined members of the Second and Third Generation to 'Get acquainted'. As there were 70 Second and 19 Third Generation attendees, we split into two groups. What a range of experiences! Melissa Hacker, KTA (US Kindertransport Association chair), facilitated this session. Sadness – and laughter – were clearly to be joint components in discussions. With so much to say, it was 'late to bed' for most of us.

Among the Second Generation workshops I attended was one on the theme 'What Are Our Thoughts and Feelings about Being in Germany?' This was facilitated by Dr Charles Silow, a psychologist and Director of the Program for Holocaust Survivors and Families in Detroit, Michigan. My thoughts on this subject are mixed as I am from a marriage between a Jewish refugee and a German Catholic. I agreed with another person of the same parentage to request a group for those like us in future ....

Charles also facilitated the workshop 'Finding Happiness Despite Our Sadness and Responsibilities'. This attracted fewer numbers, permitting a deeper sharing of experiences. One issue was whether or not we had children. Some of those present, like myself, did not. Charles's introduction was: 'Our families' suffering causes us pain. How can we deal with these feelings? Is there a way to channel these emotions into something positive?' A ground rule for

all sessions was 'What goes on in the room stays in the room.' We did find positives ...

'Dialogue Between the Generations' – for all generations, my special interest – was facilitated by Dr Elisheva van der

special interest is the intergenerational transmission of trauma, a subject he has researched in Germany. His book *Love After Auschwitz: The Second Generation in Germany* was published in 2006.

Dr Grünberg said that research shows members of the Second Generation are often driven to speak out against things they feel are wrong, both in their private and professional lives. This linked nicely with the work of Karen Zauder Brass, whose *I Am a Standupster: A Second Generation Holocaust Survivor's Account*, published in 2012, contains her reflections as a Holocaust and anti-bullying educator.

Daisy Miller, who was born in Yugoslavia and survived in hiding in Italy, chaired the final plenary: 'Where Do We Go From Here? Our Obligations and Responsibility for the Future, a Discussion between First, Second and Third Generations'. Daisy, a co-founder of WFJCS&D, worked as an interviewer at the USC Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education and has participated in the planning of most of the Child Survivor conferences since the first one in 1987. The panel speakers were American and Israeli. The main message was 'We will not forget!' All are working to care for survivors and to educate the wider population in order to promote inter-community understanding.

Much learning also came from informal discussion with conference participants over meal times or coffee at outside venues. The networking opportunities were innumerable. I was greatly impressed by a 22-year-old from America who had come alone as her siblings did not yet directly engage in these discussions. She hoped to be able to talk with them when she returned home.

I found this conference moving and valuable and recommend it to AJR members. The next conference is in Houston, Texas, in October 2015.

Britain was not well represented in Berlin. Rabbi Walter Rothschild, from Bradford and now living in Berlin, took part and I believe most others from Britain came from London. Did the location – Germany – put off potential participants? It is expensive but funding was found to assist some to attend.

More than ever I found Germany, particularly Berlin, engaging with its history, in thoughtful, respectful ways. I stayed near the centre, in two locations, one near Potsdamer Platz.

*The goal of this workshop is to share, listen and hear one another.' The large group mostly succeeded. I now accept that some of our elders are fixed in their view that 'the Second Generation are not interested', however much we insist we are!*

Hal, a Dutch Hidden Child Survivor and psychotherapist and Clinical Director of AMCHA, the national Israeli centre for psycho-social support for Holocaust survivors 'and their offspring'. Her introduction was: 'Holocaust survivors have a story and it is important to share it. Second and Third Generation members have also been impacted by the Holocaust and need to be able to talk about their feelings and experiences as well. It is important to be considerate of each other and to allow each other to share and tell as each experience can be deeply affecting and have life-long ramifications. The goal of this workshop is to share, listen and hear one another.' The large group mostly succeeded. I now accept that some of our elders are fixed in their view that 'the Second Generation are not interested', however much we insist we are!

Morning and afternoon sessions began with plenaries. Drs Jacques Barth and Kurt Grünberg addressed the theme 'Trauma and Resilience Across the Generations'. Dr Barth, born in Holland of Dutch and Polish survivor parents, is a US Professor of Medicine who taught at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles; he is also a member of a Second Generation group in Los Angeles and Amsterdam. Dr Grünberg, a German-born son of survivors and a psychoanalyst at the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt, has been Research Director at the Jewish Psychotherapeutic Counselling Centre. He is a founder member of the Meeting Point for the Survivors of the Shoah and a psychoanalyst in psychotherapeutic encounter groups for Child Survivors in Germany. His

## A momentous week in Berlin

Each year since 2008, Lisa Bechner, the representative of the Kindertransport in Berlin, has organised an event on 31 August or 1 September to commemorate the final Kindertransport train out of that city in 1939. Each year, the event has been sponsored by one of the embassies in Berlin and this year it was the turn of the Belgian embassy.

Appropriate to the Belgian embassy's hosting of the event, the main speaker at their gathering was a former hidden child, born in Berlin and surviving the war hidden in Belgium: Bronia Veitch. Bronia told a harrowing story, which she has written in her book *A Beautiful Resistance* (ISBN 978-1-291-50854-3) as homage to her rescuers. As a *Kind* also born in Berlin, I was invited too. Bronia and I, having met only that morning, discovered that we were both born in Berlin in the same month, January 1935.

Following refreshments at the embassy, we were all taken by coach to the Kindertransport memorial (*Züge ins Leben – Züge in den Tod: 1938-1939* (Trains to Life, Trains to Death, 1938-1939)) at the back of Friedrichsstrasse Station, where many more people were already seated and a crowd of the general public had gathered. The two-hour service of remembrance, organised by Lisa Bechner, included pieces by the Youth Symphony Orchestra of the Berlin Händelschule and speeches by the ambassadors of Belgium, Britain, Israel and the USA; the Vice-President of the Berlin police; representatives of the Protestant Church and of the Mayor of



Bronia Veitch

Berlin; Bronia Veitch; Frank Meisler (the sculptor of the memorial); and myself. The Mayor sent a large bouquet of white roses for the memorial sculpture and a large number of police cadets in blue uniform surrounded the gathering, providing this moving and inspiring event with an air of sobriety.

The following day, Bronia and I were welcomed at the Moses Mendelssohn Secondary School, where we spoke to three groups of students. The day after that we were invited to the police academy by their trainer, Marc Salbrecht, to meet the cadets who had so helpfully provided our guard at the service. After a delicious, typically German lunch with them, Marc drove us back to our hotel via the Schaubühne on the Kurfürstendamm, where my mother had run a cinema advertising business until the Nazis confiscated it in 1933.

Our last talk took place the next day in the Public Affairs Offices with employees who controlled traffic and provided back-up support for the police. They were an amazing group of people who were very keen to hear from us but needed us to speak in German. This was most worthwhile as their interest and appreciation were overwhelming and they showered us with gifts afterwards.

Our final day in Berlin was more relaxing, with a sight-seeing bus tour of the city organised by Lisa, including a visit to the Sinti and Roma Porrajmos (Holocaust) Memorial and a boat trip on the Spree. Many thanks to Lisa Bechner for organising this momentous week in Berlin!

Ruth Barnett

### HOLOCAUST GENERATIONS CONFERENCE

Sunday 18 January 2015

The inaugural Holocaust Generations Conference will be held in central London on Sunday 18 January 2015.

The Conference aims to bring together First, Second and Third Generations of Holocaust survivors and refugees. There will also be an announcement of the findings of an Institute of Education survey of pupils' attitudes towards Holocaust education in schools.

The Conference will aim to promote community, networking and learning. Among major themes will be history, psychology, culture and legacy.

For further information, please visit [www.holocaustgenerationsconference.org](http://www.holocaustgenerationsconference.org) or email [conference@ajr.org.uk](mailto:conference@ajr.org.uk)

### ARTS AND EVENTS DECEMBER DIARY

**Thur 4** Swaran Singh 'Crooked Timber of Mankind: Reflections on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Pogroms' Swaran Singh experienced first-hand the killings which followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi. At Wiener Library, 6.30-9.30 pm, tel 020 7636 7247

**Mon 15** Prof John Röhl 'Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941): A German Trauma' At Sternberg Centre, London N3, 7.45 pm, tel 020 8349 5700. Free admission (Centre for German-Jewish Studies)

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### In Berlin, history is all around – and within *continued*

This was round the corner from the Deutschlandhaus, a building being restored as a 'Foundation of Flight, Expulsion and Reconciliation'. During its refurbishment, a poster display had been placed outside, almost directly opposite my hotel, so I was only a few steps away from images and descriptions of events discussed at the conference. Five minutes further along the main street is the 'Topography of Terror', a permanent outdoor exhibition of posters about the Nazi era, together with a booth showing historical films.

In Potsdamer Platz, ten minutes' walk brings you to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the 2,711 concrete *stelae* erected in 2004 with a linked underground 'Place of Information', including a link to the Yad Vashem database. Nearby are the Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate. Germany is currently remembering the 25th anniversary of the *Wende*, the end of the Berlin Wall, which formerly stood here. In the smart Potsdamer Platz shopping mall Arkaden, large posters and a massive TV screen showing contemporary footage

of GDR residents streaming through gates opened on November 9 1989 plus an actual exhibition of the building of the wall – bricks and shovels – make that momentous time inescapable too. November 9 is also the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*.

There is much else to see, peaceful parks and lakes to visit, international cuisine and entertainment to enjoy. I look forward to my next visit. But for me in Berlin, history is all around. And within.

Barbara Dresner



### GLASGOW 'The Challenge of a Sculpture'



Lyn Wolfson (left) and Agnes Isaacs

Some 30 members attended a most interesting talk and slide show given by the sculptress Lyn Wolfson about her training and career. Lyn brought along some fascinating sculptures for the audience to examine. There followed a delicious afternoon tea and a chat during which a few first-time attendees got to meet some of the regulars.

*Anthea Berg*

### BIRMINGHAM Jewish Immigration to England

We turned out in force to hear Dr Anthony Joseph share with us his lifelong interest in genealogy and Jewish immigration to England from Russia and Poland in the 18th-19th centuries. A vote of thanks by our lovely Esther Rinkoff concluded a very interesting meeting.

*Mindu Hornick*

### DIDSBURY Good Conversation and Afternoon Tea

The usual mix of good conversation and, of course, the customary afternoon tea interspersed with even more chattering!

*Wendy Bott*

### PINNER Number One Hits

We were delighted to welcome back our member Alf Keiles, who played us a charming selection of Number One hits from the early part of the 20th century. Almost all the tunes were familiar and, although tea was ready, Alf was persuaded to play a couple of extra tracks before he was allowed to stop.

*Robert Gellman*

### EDINBURGH Causes of Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism features in our present and our past – are we doing something

that brings out this reaction? While there were mixed views it was felt that we, as individuals in our group, did not in any way attract this unwanted reaction. The lively debate was followed by a lavish tea provided by Vivien Andersen. As usual, a superb afternoon.

*Agnes Isaacs*

### HGS A Lovely Morning

We were joined in the new room at Hammerson House by visitors from Nightingale Clapham. Alan Bilgora played us a number of old recordings by Jewish opera singers. A lovely morning.

*Hazel Beiny*

### RADLETT Much to See, Good Food, Good Conversation

We visited Shenley Park, once the site of a psychiatric hospital near St Albans but now an attractive recreational area comprising 45 acres of meadows and woodland, together with an unusual walled garden and an amphitheatre. There was much to see, good food and good conversation. Once again, our thanks to Esther for organising the visit.

*Fritz Starer*

### BRIGHTON-SARID Sukkot, Festival of Joy and Cheer

Rabbi Pesach Efuno gave a talk about Sukkot. He explained the meaning of the *lulav* and *etrog* and stressed the value of joy and happiness when facing the challenges of winter.

*Ceska Abrahams*

### EDGWARE Pictorial Trip to India

Stewart Morris treated us to a pictorial trip to India. To those of us who had visited India it brought back happy memories; to the rest of us Stewart explained most interestingly the photos on his computer. A very enjoyable afternoon meeting.

*Felix Winckler*

### The Vital Role of Latimer House

What a surprise to discover the vital role of Latimer Place – nestling in the beautiful Chiltern Hills but a key espionage centre during the war! Historian Helen Fry told us how high-ranking German generals were held captive and bugged by 'secret listeners' – Jewish refugees working for the British. The refugees' invaluable linguistic skills helped crack secrets of the Nazi war machine. The property was visited by Churchill and, in earlier centuries, by Charles I and Charles II. Our day included a very welcome and scrumptious afternoon tea.

*Janet Weston*

### HARROGATE/ YORK Israel and Public Relations

We met at Inge Little's house, where we heard a moving tribute to her made by one of her daughters at her recent 90th birthday celebration. Guest speaker Neil Solden spoke about public relations in the context of the general bias, especially that of the British media, against Israel.

*Marc Schatzberger*

### OXFORD Amusing Stories

Meeting at Richmond Road Synagogue, we enjoyed coffee and cake and then listened to Chris Moncrieff, former Political Editor of the Press Association, who regaled us with amusing stories from his interesting career.

*Kathryn Prevezer*

### DUNDEE Important to Keep in Touch and Great to Catch Up!

The small group of friends were delighted to have the opportunity to meet up again in Dundee. We had such a lovely afternoon and lots to talk about. There was much to discuss concerning Israel and how best to support it, as well as Scottish independence and the latest AJR news. It's so important to keep in touch and great to catch up!

*Agnes Isaacs*

### KENT Operation Exodus

A most interesting talk by John Fleetcroft on Operation Exodus – making *aliyah* – prompted a very lively discussion. John had family links with one of our late members and his slides illustrated helping people in straightened circumstances in the former Soviet Union.

*Janet Weston*

### BOOK CLUB Well Written but ...

*Ishmael's Oranges*, by Claire Hajaj, was the book reviewed. The consensus was that it was a well written, excellent book but difficult to get into. The next books chosen to be read are Natasha Solomon's *The Gallery of Vanished Husbands* and Lawrence Osborne's *The Forgiven*. We were joined by two curators from the Jewish Museum, who spoke to us about the Museum's forthcoming exhibition on 'Jewish Weddings'.

*Hazel Beiny*

### EAST MIDLANDS (NOTTINGHAM) Catching Up on News

This was a very well attended social meeting with old friends catching up on news over a simple but excellent lunch prepared by our hostess with delicious desserts brought by members. The meeting was kept in order by Esther: we so much appreciate her coming. This time, she was ably assisted by Kathryn, our local AJR representative, whom we were delighted to welcome.

*Bob Norton*

**BRADFORD CF Bradford Ladies 3 – Leeds 0**

Our Leeds speaker took *hasbara* as his topic but his opening assertions met with such a robust rebuttal from the audience that time ran out before he could develop his theme. Result: Bradford Ladies 3 – Leeds 0. Splendid stuff!

*Stephen Tendlow*

**WEMBLEY Jews and Jazz**

A very interesting meeting, with Alf Keiles explaining to us the origins of jazz and the Jewish contribution to it. The cheerful melodies he played us were followed by a nice afternoon tea.

*Avram Schaufeld*

**GLASGOW BOOK CLUB Looking Forward to Reading *The Land Agent***

The Book Club attended the launch of J. David Simon's latest novel *The Land Agent*. We've already read and enjoyed all his books and are looking forward to reading this one. Earlier in the day we had the opportunity to listen to survivor Judith Rosenberg speak about her life and work with the Targu Mures Holocaust Group.

*Agnes Isaacs*

**CAMBRIDGE Economy Update**

A most stimulating talk by Tim Pike from the Bank of England on 'Economic Reality in a Diverse Society' led to a very intense and interesting group discussion equally enjoyed by members.

*Keith Lawson*

*continued on page 14* ➔



**Retiring – An Enormous Decision**



I am leaving the AJR after being with the organisation for 16 years.

I still remember that first week sitting there at my desk in Hampstead thinking to myself what have I done! How am I going to cope with working with Holocaust victims? It was a subject which – to my shame – I knew little about.

However, over the years of working with the AJR, I have met some amazing people. First the members, who have shared with me their difficult Holocaust experiences, their lives and loves, and their ups and downs. They have imparted wonderful wisdom and advice, much of which will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I have met great professionals: psychiatrists, psychologists, CN nurses, consultant doctors, physios and OTs, social workers from other organisations. I have made relationships with great carers and cleaners. I have worked closely with family members of my clients, especially children and grandchildren, and have learnt a great deal over the years of what it is like

to be the child of a Holocaust victim. I have had the pleasure of working with amazing colleagues, who have greatly helped to support the work I have done and who have helped me to learn such a lot.

I will greatly miss the work and the wonderful people involved in it but I have taken the enormous decision to retire at this time for several reasons. I want to be able to spend more time with my children and grandchildren: I have twin grandchildren expected at the end of January 2015 so I expect to be quite busy in the first half of the year. My husband and I would like to do more travelling, especially around the UK. We want to spend more time playing bridge. I am looking forward to getting involved with the University of the Third Age and generally having more time to myself to read, relax and be 'a lady that lunches'.

I would like to wish all my clients and colleagues good health, good luck and contentment.

**Helena Reid**



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**DECEMBER GROUP EVENTS**

Ealing	2 Dec	Chanukah Quiz
Book Club	3 Dec	Discussion
Ilford	3 Dec	Chapel End Savoy Players
Pinner	4 Dec	Chanukah Party
Wessex	4 Dec	Rabbi Jesner from BHC
Leeds HSFA	7 Dec	Chanukah Event
Cheshire	9 Dec	Social
Essex (Westcliff)	9 Dec	Chanukah Party
Edgware	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
HGS	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
North London	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
North West London	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
Radlett	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
St John's Wood	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
Welwyn GC	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
Wembley	11 Dec	Groups Chanukah Party
Manchester	14 Dec	Chanukah Party
Brighton-Sarid	15 Dec	Chanukah Party
Liverpool	15 Dec	Chanukah Party
Kent	16 Dec	Chanukah Party
Leeds	16 Dec	Chanukah Party
Glasgow CF	17 Dec	Chanukah Party
Cambridge	18 Dec	Simon Layton: 'Piracy's Stateless Subjects'

Inside the AJR  
continued from page 13

**AJR Goes to the Movies**

AJR members were invited to their own private viewing at the Everyman Cinema in Belsize Park of *The Hundred-Foot Journey* - an invitation not to be refused!

The action of the film takes place mainly in a quaint village in the South of France and involves competition between two restaurants – an Indian one and a Michelin-starred classical French one run by a haughty proprietor (played by Helen Mirren). The two cultures collide but eventually learn to combine their skills and customs. The film abounds with wonderful images of fine produce, food preparation and mouth-watering dishes.

Our thanks to Hazel Beiny and Esther Rinkoff for setting up such a successful outing.

*Mary Vulkan*

**BRISTOL All Very Beautiful**

Jane Hewison, daughter of member Hilla Hewison, showed us many slides of her work as an embroiderer, giving examples of traditional religious items. Her work is all very beautiful.

*Kathryn Prevezer*

**NORTH LONDON Food for Thought**

Our guest speaker was Jenny Rossiter, her subject 'Octavia Hill – Social Reformer and Founder of the National Trust'. The lady in question lived in the 19th century, which leaves the interesting thought that in those years her efforts must have raised considerable opposition. It certainly gave food for thought.

*Herbert Haberberg*

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The meals are freshly cooked every week by Kosher to Go. They are then frozen prior to delivery.

The cost is £7.00 for a three-course meal (soup, main course, desert) plus a £1 delivery fee.

Our aim is to bring good food to your door without the worry of shopping or cooking.

For further details, please call  
AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070.

**'FORCED WALKS'  
15 April 2015**



'Forced Walks' is a participatory walking art project led by artists Lorna Brunstein and Richard White.

On 15 April 2015, the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, Lorna and Richard will make a walk based on the testimony of a survivor of the Nazi Death Marches. Using the original route as a guide, the walk will take place in the UK through a familiar landscape in an area close to their home.

Lorna and Richard are inviting others to join them on foot or online or to make their own walk in their area.

Documentation of the project and creative responses to the experience will form the basis of an exhibition later in the year.

For further information, please see  
<http://forcedwalks.wordpress.com/>

If interested, please contact Lorna and Richard on [forcedwalks@gmail.com](mailto:forcedwalks@gmail.com)

**Books Bought**

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**Are you, or is someone you know, a Jewish Holocaust survivor in financial difficulty?**

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We help UK-resident Jewish Holocaust survivors/refugees with less than £10k p.a. in income (excluding pensions/social security) and less than £32k in assets (excluding primary residence/car).

For information please contact The Association of Jewish Refugees on 020 8385 3070.

[info@sixpointfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@sixpointfoundation.org.uk)  
[www.sixpointfoundation.org.uk](http://www.sixpointfoundation.org.uk)

**KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH**

**Wednesday 10 December 2014  
at 12.30 pm**

Please join us for our next lunch at North West Reform Synagogue, Alyth Gardens, Finchley Road, London NW11 7EN

**Mignonette Aarons**

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Chanukah songs

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email [lauraj@benuri.org.uk](mailto:lauraj@benuri.org.uk)

## OBITUARIES

### Helga Ehlert (née Dresner), born Leipzig 9 February 1924, died Elmshorn, Schleswig-Holstein 27 September 2014

Helga Ehlert was born in Leipzig in 1924. Her parents, Elias and Gretl, had moved there from Cracow, Elias's birthplace. The family were furriers, with shops in the Brühl and Reichstrasse. Elias's brothers Ignatz and Wladislaus and the two widowed grandmothers, Oma Dresner and Oma Cohn, all lived nearby. Helga's brother Rolf was born in 1924.

Helga's chapter in *Juden aus der DDR und die deutsche Wiedervereinigung: Elf Gespräche* (Jews from the GDR and German Reunification: Eleven Conversations) (Robin Onslow, Berlin 1996) was entitled 'Ich fühle mich nicht als Deutsche' (I don't feel German). She never felt at home after returning to East Germany postwar, often saying she should have stayed in the UK.

She and Rolf arrived in the UK in June 1939 with the Kindertransport. She would proudly sing the Polish national anthem as the Polish consul in Leipzig had sheltered Jewish families in his compound during the *Polenaktion* and *Kristallnacht*.

Helga described her family as close and affectionate and knew it was hard for her parents to send their children to safety in the UK. They returned to Poland, aiming to settle their elderly mothers and hoping their US visas would arrive so they could reunite with the children in America. The 40 remaining letters from their parents, preserved in the Wiener Library, reveal a warm family life.

Rolf and Helga settled temporarily with distant relatives in Scotland. Life with the Scottish Dresners presented challenges: the Leipzig Dresners were not particularly observant. Missing her parents dreadfully, Helga relished the freedom to enjoy teenage activities forbidden under the Nazis. Then came another move – to Millisle Farm near Belfast, where the local Jewish community had arranged *Hachshara* (Zionist) training for young refugees. Helga worked with the chickens, Rolf with the cows.



They did not go to Palestine. Helga, described by other Millisle residents as 'the beauty', did war work in Manchester. There she met and fell in love with Herman Ehlert, a member of the Freie Deutsche Jugend. After the war she visited the American relatives, who had hoped the entire Dresner family would emigrate there, but the US visas arrived only in 1946.

Helga's parents, uncles and Oma Dresner did not survive. Oma Cohn miraculously survived Theresienstadt. A letter from Ignatz's widow containing the heart-breaking news of their other relatives' fate is also in the Wiener Library.

Helga didn't settle in America despite affectionate care from the New York and

Chicago relatives. She realised she wanted to marry Herman Ehlert. This meant moving with him to East Germany, leaving Rolf in England. They stayed in touch by letter. She reunited with Oma Cohn, who returned to Leipzig. Helga visited Rolf once with her son Thomas, born in 1951. The Cold War put an end to further visits. Helga taught English and became an interpreter.

When widowed, Helga remained in her flat near Alexanderplatz, Berlin, gradually rebuilding her Jewish identity. She visited her first cousin Werner in Israel several times and came to the UK periodically, meeting up with old friends, including former school friend Thea Hurst in Manchester. She spoke on GDR television about her family history and contributed to other books and activities in memory of her murdered relatives.

Helga was extremely fond of her grandchild Tim. He, Thomas, Thomas's wife Petra, her UK nieces and nephews and US cousins will miss her greatly. Helga was an entertaining, shrewd and sometimes very funny person whose tenacity enabled her to reach the age of 91 despite a life often full of challenges and loss.

**Thomas Bonin and Barbara Dresner**

### Geoffrey Perry

I was saddened to hear of the death of Geoffrey Perry (obituary in November issue). For a while in the late sixties we worked together at the Thomson Organisation, owners of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*. Lord Roy Thomson bought out Geoffrey's publishing firm because he wanted to get his hands on *Family Circle*, one of Geoffrey's publications. He then launched *Living* as a sister magazine.

This was when I came across Geoffrey. I was Creative Director of Thomson Group Marketing, who did all the marketing and advertising for the Thomson Organisation. Geoffrey was very unhappy with my interference but I had the might of the Organisation behind me and so he had to put up with my ideas, like them or not! We didn't become friends but I greatly respected his determination to have his views heard and discussed. He couldn't win me over but he never stopped trying.

**Peter Phillips**

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### AJR GROUPS ANNUAL CHANUKAH PARTY

Thursday 11 December 2014

at North West Reform Synagogue,  
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Cost £8.00 per person payable on the door  
(places must be booked in advance)

Starts at 11.30 am  
Ends at 2.30 pm

'The Palace of Knightsbridge'

Morning talk by Richard Furnival Jones, who worked for Harrods for over 40 years and retired as manager of the Food Halls. He will tell us about the history of this famous store.

This will be followed by a delicious lunch.

After lunch we will have further entertainment by Bronwen Stephens, a professional opera singer, who will perform a selection of well-known songs from opera and theatre.

It is essential that we know exact numbers for catering. Please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

### Unique community

Founded in 1997 by a social worker, Shuki Levinger, and Yael Shilo, a textile artist trying to find a way to help her special-needs stepson, Kishorit is today a thriving community situated in the pastoral hills of Galilee. It provides a safe haven as well as a warm and loving home and a source of employment for its almost 150 members. All of these have been diagnosed with autism, Down's Syndrome, schizophrenia or allied conditions.

The village is adjacent to Kibbutz Kishor and its way of life is based on that of the kibbutz – 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' – with the community serving as the focal point of daily life.

The village is staffed by professionals in a number of fields and is also on its way to becoming a self-supporting entity, with various branches of agriculture, crafts and animal husbandry. For instance, in addition to growing fruit and vegetables, there is a special section where miniature Schnauzer dogs are bred. These are then shown at dog shows all over the world, accompanied by

members of the community. Kishorit is very proud of its dogs, which have won numerous international prizes.

Almost all the members work in one branch of activity or another as working and contributing usefully to the wider community is regarded as having a beneficial effect, enabling individuals with disabilities to fulfil their potential and live independent lives. There is an organic goat dairy, a workshop producing wooden toys and a TV production studio. Recently, a vineyard was planted and a winery established, with members producing their own wine. The products of the winery and the other areas of activity are on sale in the community's shop. Some members are assigned to duties in the community's kitchen, laundry or farm and each individual is given pocket money in return for their services. A staff of some 175 professionals and volunteers, some of them permanent, others part-time, help the members of the community to function as independently as possible.

Social and sporting activities are also an integral part of life at Kishorit, with basketball

and football games, yoga and karate classes and video games, cookies and coffee at the community's club. Therapy of the more conventional kind is also provided and this even extends to relationship counselling for members who feel ready to embark on closer ties with a boyfriend or girlfriend within the community.

The demand for places at Kishorit far exceeds supply and many families have to be turned away, to the regret of the organisers. There are, however, plans to establish a small sister community nearby for Arabs with special needs. The intention is to maintain close co-operation and interaction between the two communities while adhering to the language and culture of each one. Some funds are forthcoming from Israel's government and charitable contributions, while those parents who are able to pay also contribute to the upkeep of the community.

The concept of a village inhabited by people with special needs provides a positive and radical solution to a variety of problems. One of these is enabling parents who are concerned about what lies ahead as they grow older to sleep more peacefully at night. Kishorit has created an environment that enables special-needs individuals to live in a safe and harmonious environment. The ability to provide peace of mind for the parents of these individuals is priceless.

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

#### 'HOLLOW DOG'

Sir – In recent months, I've been putting together a documentary project which may be of interest to your readers.

'Hollow Dog' is a documentary about the sculptor Maurice Blik. His work is significant for a number of reasons – aside from just being plain brilliant!

As a child, Maurice, born in Amsterdam, was a prisoner in Bergen-Belsen. Having been liberated, he came to Britain with Clara, his elder sister, and mother. He would later become the President of the Royal British Society of Sculptors. His many noteworthy commissions include 'The Memorial for Evacuee Children' and 'Renaissance' in London's East India Dock. Today, his work celebrates life.

'Hollow Dog' is at proposal stage. The film has the endorsement of Maurice himself, as well as other leading luminaries in the US and UK, including the entrepreneur Sir Peter Michael. So we're off to the perfect start. Please spread the

word and help me get this important project off the ground.

You can see the 'Hollow Dog' trailer on KickStarter, a global 'crowdfunding' platform based in the United States.

*Clive Martin, East Grinstead*

#### WHY THE MOVE?

Sir – I am sure many of your readers are upset about the proposed amalgamation of JW3 and the London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC).

The demography of the Jewish population in the London area has changed in the past years. Finchley Road, Swiss Cottage and St John's Wood have few Jews left: the newly-weds, for example, cannot afford, nor indeed would want, to live there. The Jewish population of South Hertfordshire, Bushey, Radlett and Elstree has increased dramatically.

JW3 has no parking facilities. We have no freedom pass for the Underground and often no Underground station near

where we live. This makes it a virtual non-starter for us, for example. Another problem is the high prices at the new venue. Ivy House had a nice atmosphere and parking was never a problem. I would dearly love to know what are the reasons for the move.

*Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts*

#### CLIMATE OF OPINION

Sir – For my birthday I was given an Amazon Kindle. So I'm entering the modern age. All very fine – so far. The system is very helpful in listing books under designated categories. The 'History' category has sub-divisions, one of which is 'Historical Study'. If one browses this category beyond just the first few titles, one finds that a disproportionate number of the books relate to Holocaust denial. This is just one more example of a climate of opinion in which anti-Semitism is becoming increasingly acceptable.

*Michael Levin, London SE23*

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