

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Otto Schiff: In defence

On 7 February 2014, the *Jewish Chronicle* published an article by Geoffrey Alderman which contained a gratuitous attack on Otto M. Schiff, who was, as the numerous heartfelt tributes to him that appeared over the years in *AJR Information* attest, one of the great champions of the Jewish refugees from Hitler. Schiff was in charge of the Jewish Refugees Committee (JRC, later German Jewish Aid Committee) that was responsible from 1933 for making the organisational arrangements to bring Jews out of Germany and Austria to Britain, for supporting them financially once here, and for helping them to find accommodation and employment. AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman wrote in the *Jewish Chronicle* a measured and dignified rebuttal of Alderman's polemic.

In honour of Schiff's achievements, the first old-age home built in London to house Jewish refugees, at 14 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead, was named Otto Schiff House. The home was jointly administered by the AJR and the Central British Fund (CBF, now World Jewish Relief), which had been founded as the Central British Fund for German Jewry in 1933 to raise the funds that financed the JRC's work on behalf of the endangered Jews of Germany. The Otto Schiff Housing Association, a charity formed in 1984, developed out of the CBF and used its funds to provide accommodation and welfare for elderly Jewish refugees. The AJR is currently considering having a plaque in Schiff's memory put up.

The great majority of the approximately 60,000 Jews from Germany and Austria who fled to Britain after 1933 received some form of assistance from the JRC, if only by registering with it at its seat in Woburn House and then, from early 1939, in Bloomsbury House. The JRC exercised oversight over the Jewish refugee committees set up in towns and cities across Britain. It was to the JRC that elderly refugees, unemployed and near-destitute, looked for assistance, as did young women on domestic permits seeking positions in British households, or refugee families with small children and little income. The existence of a co-ordinating committee

like the JRC was arguably essential to the entire process of the emigration of Jews from the Reich to Britain, given the reluctance of the British government to be drawn into the politically fraught areas of the immigration



Otto M. Schiff, 1875-1952

of Jews from Germany and the expenditure of public funds on their subsistence and maintenance.

Otto Schiff was born in 1875 in Frankfurt am Main, into a well-known banking family. He emigrated to Britain, where he became a partner in the merchant banking firm Bourke, Schiff & Co. Schiff had close links with both German and British Jewry, was well connected to the wealthy and influential elite that presided over Anglo-Jewish affairs, and had the credentials to gain the trust of the British establishment. He lived in some style in Mayfair, dying in 1952. Schiff had first become involved in work on behalf of Jewish refugees during the First World War, when the invasion of Belgium by Germany in 1914 caused large numbers of Belgians, including Jews, to flee to Britain. For this he was awarded the OBE. He became well known to the Home Office and other government departments, where his reputation was such that his recommendation alone weighed heavily in decisions relating to 'aliens'.

Since 1922, Schiff had been President of the Jews' Temporary Shelter (JTS), at

63 Mansell Street, in London's East End, with which his younger brother Ernst was also associated. The work of the JTS in assisting the Jewish refugees from Nazism was a natural extension of its earlier efforts to provide short-term accommodation for Jews arriving in the East End from Europe and for ensuring that Jews in transit through the United Kingdom complied with the government's immigration controls. Thanks to these contacts with the Home Office, Schiff was to emerge as the key player in the charitable endeavours on behalf of the Jewish refugees who began to arrive in Britain from Hitler's Germany in 1933. In March 1933, he was instrumental in the establishment of the JRC; that body was funded by the CBF, which was set up shortly afterwards and provided moneys for a range of activities on behalf of the refugees in the fields of relief, retraining, employment and re-emigration.

Schiff's committee made the arrangements that enabled many thousands of Jews to leave Germany and Austria and to emigrate to Britain in as orderly a manner as possible under the circumstances, and it underpinned much of the support infrastructure set up to maintain them in Britain. For this, he was awarded the CBE in 1939. He also earned the undying gratitude of the Jewish refugees from Nazism. The obituary by Werner Rosenstock that appeared in *AJR Information* of December 1952 stated: 'By the death of Mr. Otto M. Schiff, C.B.E., the Jews from Germany and Austria in this country lose one of their most devoted and faithful friends. The position he held in the field of work for refugees was unique.' Rosenstock emphasised that Schiff was personally involved in the rescue of numerous Jews from the Reich and that he took a direct interest in the provision of assistance to them in Britain: 'Enjoying the unreserved confidence of the responsible Government quarters, his intervention resulted in the admission of innumerable immigrants whose case he made his own. With the same devotion he worked for many years for their well-being after they had come to this country.'

Geoffrey Alderman's attack on Schiff

continued overleaf ➔

↖ Otto Schiff: In defence *continued*

formed part of a longer polemic directed against the Commission on the Holocaust announced by David Cameron in September 2013. The principal target of Alderman's wrath was the membership of the Commission, which he dismissed as 'a roll-call of establishment names' that omitted 'the wealth of expertise that Anglo-Jewry has to offer on Holocaust education'. (Which particular expert can he have had in mind, one wonders?) Mocking the very idea of a Holocaust memorial in Britain, Alderman derisively invoked the idea of erecting a memorial to those Jews who were denied entry to Britain and died at the hands of the Nazis. He then launched into an intemperate attack on Otto Schiff: 'We might perhaps erect a plaque denouncing the superhuman efforts of the banker Otto Schiff, who, as head of the German Jewish Aid Committee, saw to it that as few Jews as possible were given refuge in Great Britain, and that these few were chosen with a view to their readiness to assimilate easily into British society.'

As shown above, the contention that Schiff made 'superhuman efforts' to keep Jews from the Reich out of Britain is pure baloney. Between Hitler's accession to power in January 1933 and the outbreak of war in September 1939, Britain admitted over 60,000 refugees, mostly Jews, from territories under Nazi control. In relation to its size and absorptive capacity, that number compares favourably with the record of any other country, except for Palestine. Britain was alone in taking some 10,000 children on Kindertransports, as well as some 4,500 Jewish men released from concentration camps and admitted as 'transmigrants', and many thousands of women on domestic service permits. Undeniably, Britain could have taken more refugees: the parents of Kindertransport children who failed to secure entry visas before September 1939,

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

SPECIAL EVENT

The Last Train to Tomorrow

Sunday 9 November 2014, 3 pm
at The Roundhouse, London NW1

The world-famous composer and conductor Carl Davis will perform the London premiere of his tribute to the Kindertransport, *The Last Train to Tomorrow*, on Sunday 9 November at The Roundhouse, London NW1.

As the date marks the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the proceedings will include a commemoration of the Reichspogrom of 9-10 November 1938.

The event will also feature *The Marriage of Figaro Overture* by Mozart and Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* performed by the City of London Sinfonia and the Finchley Children's Music Group, together with an outstanding young violin soloist from the Yehudi Menuhin School.

As the event will take place on a Sunday afternoon, we particularly encourage members to bring along their children and grandchildren.

Details of how to purchase tickets will be announced in due course, but to register your interest in attending please email enquiries@ajr.org.uk

for example, or the Jewish children from Vichy France whose proposed admission in 1942 was delayed until it was too late. But to lay those shortcomings at Schiff's door is historically wholly unfounded.

Alderman's claim that Schiff was in a position to ensure that only 'assimilable' Jews were given refuge in Britain is likewise untenable. As the AJR's *Refugee Voices* collection of filmed interviews shows, the refugees from Nazism included a proportion of orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews who had no intention of abandoning their separate and distinct identity. It is true that many of the Jews who escaped to Britain were predisposed to integrate into British society; they often had relatives or contacts here, were familiar with Britain from earlier visits, or, like Sigmund Freud, chose to come here because they liked and admired the country. Schiff could not have dictated the choices of the many thousands of Jewish refugees who actively opted to come to Britain (though many others would have come to any country willing to take them). The lists of children to be rescued on Kindertransports were drawn up by the Jewish communal organisations in Berlin and Vienna, not by the JRC in London, while Schiff can have exercised little influence on the process whereby young Jewish women found positions as domestic servants in British households or as trainee nurses in British hospitals. To argue otherwise merely demonstrates ignorance.

British Jews, whose families were mostly

Child Survivors' Organisation commemorates its 20th anniversary

The Child Survivors' Association (CSAGB-AJR) is commemorating its 20th anniversary on 12 June 2014 with a lunchtime reception in the State Rooms of Speaker's House by kind permission of The Speaker, The Rt Hon John Bercow MP. The CSA, which limits its membership to those who as children lived and survived under Nazi occupation, was formed in 1994. Its members come from throughout occupied Europe – from the Netherlands, Belgium and France in the west, to Poland, Romania and Ukraine in the east. In 2007 it became a Special Interest Group within the AJR.

SCOTLAND & NEWCASTLE INTER-GENERATIONAL REGIONAL GET-TOGETHER

Wednesday 11 June 2014, 11 am
at

Edinburgh Synagogue Hall
4 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh EH16 5AB

Guest speaker
Jane Merkin
Executive Director, Suitcase 2014
'Suitcase Unpacked'

Musical entertainment by
Lynne Lewis – Soprano

£10.00 per person

For further information, please contact
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not directly affected by the Holocaust, may feel differently about semi-humorous tirades that exploit Holocaust-related issues for polemical purposes than do the survivors of Nazi persecution and their descendants. But caution – not to mention common courtesy – should surely be the watchword in this area. Otherwise, such exercises in point-scoring can all too easily be misconstrued as grandstanding on the graves of Hitler's victims.

Anthony Grenville

MEMORIES FROM CHILDHOOD

A German-Jewish refugee woman looks back on her life

Now 75 years of age, I often look back and wonder if the person I am today really is that poor child of years ago. I look at the life my children have had and wonder how they could possibly know how different their childhoods were from the one I had. Probably many elderly people feel the same, albeit for different personal reasons. I feel very privileged to know that my children have not experienced the break-up of family, the hardship and the poverty which were my earliest experiences. My children lived with their loving parents from the moment they were born. When they needed new shoes it was no problem to provide them; if they needed a new coat it was no big deal; they didn't grow up with hand-me-downs.

On the other hand, they were never spoiled. My husband and I tried to bring them up to understand the value of money and the importance of working for a living. I am happy to be able to say that our ambitions for them have been fulfilled. They work hard and earn their money; they are respectful and, in turn, they instill proper standards into their children. I look back over the years and feel proud that I have achieved this for my children. I have been lucky to have a wonderful husband, who shares my views and has supported me. After 51 years of happy married life, I can honestly say that I have been blessed and I am so grateful for that.

Like so many AJR members, I was forced to leave the country in which I was born because of Hitler and his Nazi regime. I was a baby of 11 months but my brother and two sisters were considerably older and came to England separately on the Kindertransport. Just in time, in July 1939, my mother managed to get to England with me, a babe in-arms. That was a miracle in itself, but quite another story. My father was allowed out of the Oranienburg concentration camp and managed to get a ticket and visa to Shanghai, where he survived the war, though in the harshest of conditions and without his family.

My mother came to Reading and had to part from me to take up domestic work. I was brought up in foster homes and children's homes, some clean and some dirty. One was a home for Jewish refugee girls in Tunbridge Wells. I was very happy there. Then one day, when I was nine, this man arrived in my life. I was told that this was my father; effectively, it was the first time I had set eyes on him. Frankly I was scared of him. When he gave me a simple silver bracelet from China I asked him if he was Father

Christmas. This didn't exactly please him.

Very soon afterwards my father decided that I should leave the hostel in Tunbridge Wells, where I had been so happy, and go to another Jewish children's home in Reading to be near my parents. I was devastated. My time in the Reading home was very unhappy and I cried constantly. Eventually, though they had very little room, I was allowed to live with my parents, sleeping at the foot of their bed. When the council gave us a two-bedroom council house, I at last lived properly with my parents. I was already 11 years old. They loved me but it was tough. I never lived with my siblings, all of whom were adult by this time; never slept under the same roof with them. The consequences were long-lasting for me and relationships with them were sometimes more complicated than they might have been in families brought up together in the same home.

Now, as I sit writing this on my iPhone (another whole new world!), I look back at the Rusthall Beacon Youth Hostel for Girls. I think of one of the staff, Mrs Hauser, who was so very kind to me, and I wonder what happened to her daughter, Susie Hauser. Where is she now, I wonder, and how nice it would be if she were reading this. I had to leave them at the age of nine and I lost touch. A few years ago I visited that home, now a hotel. I remembered the three lakes – or were they really just ponds? – with the dragonflies which frightened me, and the monkey puzzle tree in the garden. Perhaps that is still there.

I remember the day a light aircraft crashed in my primary-school playground. By a miracle no one was killed except the pilot. The home seemed so big to me with its dormitories and the thick walls. What did I know of the war that was killing so many people, what did I know of the women who were losing their husbands or sons? All I knew was that I was happy in Tunbridge Wells. My mother visited once a month and I thought that was normal. What did I understand about rationing? Now, as I sit looking out at my sun-filled garden, I think of the peace and security my children enjoy. Do they take it for granted or do they dwell on the horror of aircraft crashed into buildings full of innocent people they have seen? I thank God for every peaceful day and find that I can look back on the past when a doughnut was a wonderful luxury and smile.

In the end, life has treated me well. Many don't have the luxury of being able to say that. I am truly blessed.

Susie Barnett (née Frankenberg)

AJR AND SIX POINT FOUNDATION: AN EXEMPLARY PARTNERSHIP

Six Point Foundation was set up in 2011 with some of the proceeds from the disposal of assets owned by the Otto Schiff Housing Association (OSHA).

To date, the Foundation has awarded over £330,000 in over 300 grants to individual Holocaust survivors and refugees in financial need. Grants have been for one-off expenses to improve quality of life such as home adaptations, medical bills, travel costs and temporary care. As the Foundation does not take requests for funding directly, the AJR is one of five partner agencies which confidentially assess people who have asked for help and request grants on their behalf.

The remarkable co-operation between the AJR and Six Point Foundation is well illustrated by the following two case studies.

Mrs S wished to see, in Europe, a dying relative, the sole remaining family member from her former homeland. Following a call to AJR social workers, an application was made for assistance with the cost of travel for both Mrs S and her spouse, who has dementia and could not be left at home due to lack of family support. This was an unusual request.

The Trustees of Six Point Foundation were delighted to fund half the cost of the travel, with the AJR agreeing to fund the remainder.

An AJR social worker helped make the necessary travel arrangements and the couple set off two days later. They arrived just in time to say their farewells. The local rabbi supported Mrs S with the burial arrangements and her relative was given a most dignified ceremony. The satisfaction Mrs S obtained from this *mitzvah* was immeasurable – she described it as 'Tremendous!'

In the second case study, in April last year the AJR social work team was contacted by a member from Salford, Mrs W. Her father, originally from Horincovo, a village in the former Czechoslovakia, had settled in the UK in 1937.

Mrs W had sought for years to locate survivors from that area but to no avail: almost the entire Jewish community had been deported to Auschwitz or sent to the eastern front during the war. However, she saw in the New York Orthodox newspaper an article which told the inspirational story of Elijah Kaufman, an Auschwitz survivor. It transpired that this gentleman was directly related to her father and had lived very close to him in the same village.

Desperate to meet Mr Kaufman and 'close the circle', Mrs W asked the AJR whether it could assist her and her husband, also a refugee, to contact him.

Such requests normally fall outside the AJR's remit. However, in a few weeks and with the support of Six Point

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~ The war children ~

Within the AJR there cannot be many people who have not come across at least one of the *Kinder*, the 10,000 children who were rescued by the British government in the years immediately before the war. In 2013, 75 years after the arrival of the first *Kinder*, there were many celebrations. What is less known – except by the *niños de la guerra* (war children) themselves – is that in 1937, and throughout the Spanish Civil War, the British government became the rescuers of 4,000 children from Spain's Basque area and that these former *niños* celebrated the 75th anniversary of that event in 2012!

I must confess that I knew very little about these Spanish children other than that the bombing of Bilbao and other large towns in the north of Spain, combined with Franco's imposition of a food blockade, had culminated in the destruction of Guernica by aircraft of the Nazi Condor Legion in April 1937.

I was living in Prague at the time. Having fled Berlin in 1933 and with a father whose life was in politics, I knew that many anti-fascists, Czechs and Germans alike, had joined the international movement of solidarity and left for Spain. Very few of them came back to speak of the horrors they had witnessed. And once safely in England I never met one of the *niños* until about 20 years ago, when I joined a local group called Open Age - pensioners all - and became friends with two of the 1,700 children on board the transatlantic steamer *Habana*, which sailed from the port of Santurce, near Bilbao, on 21 May 1937, reaching Southampton two days later. The seven-year-old Feli may not have been aware of it but her husband, Cai, aged 14 at the time, certainly was. 'As the steamer approached Southampton on 23 May,' he says, 'the children were greeted by stirring music and a reception from the mayor, representatives from the government, journalists, and thousands of people lining the quayside. The children were excited and thought that the bunting that was up everywhere was to celebrate their arrival: later they learned it had been put up for the coronation of George VI, which had taken place ten days earlier!'

Before disembarking, the children had to undergo a strict medical examination. White tapes on their wrists indicated that they were clean and healthy; red tape indicated that they had lice and would have to be

disinfected; and blue tape was for those with contagious diseases – they were sent to the isolation hospital.

The children who were clear were sent to a huge camp comprising hundreds of white tents in three fields stretching into the distance. The camp was made available by a local farmer at North Stoneham in Eastleigh. There they



Madeline Campbell (1935)

stayed until suitable accommodation could be found for them in so-called 'colonies' throughout Britain.

What happened next? I suppose many parallels can be drawn between us, who had to flee from Hitler's clutches, and those who came to England because of that gruesome civil war: the trauma of being sent away, the plunge into the unknown, the worry of what was happening to our loved ones, and now the problems of learning a new language, living in hostels or 'colonies', adjusting to new customs, and possibly encountering hostility because we were strangers.

Here is the story of a group of Basque children who remember the kindness and love they received to this very day.

A family who owned an Elizabethan manor including barns, an oast house, fields and woods in Sussex agreed to take a group of about 25 Basque children, teach them, feed them, and provide clothes for them until the end of the war. They built a wooden hut in their forest and 77 years later it's still there: it was taken over by the YHA and now makes a splendid youth hostel.

But who would be prepared to give up their time to be with these children, to learn Spanish, to teach them English, and to cope with their day-to-day problems, their homesickness, and their worry about the parents they had left behind?

The task fell to one of the daughters of that family – Madeline Campbell. She was about to take her school certificate examination when her mother asked her if she would be willing to come home and devote all her time – days and nights – to this group of 10-12-year-olds. Madeline readily agreed. She stayed with the children until it became possible for those whose parents or close relatives had survived to return to Spain. By May 1938, half of the 4,000 *niños* had gone back to Spain; a year later, only 420 were left in Britain.

But Madeline was worried about the fate of her group of children once they had returned home. The outbreak of war prevented her from traveling abroad but in June 1945 she visited them all and made sure they had money and clothes and, most of all, good living conditions. The reunion was very moving

How do I know all this? Because Madeline's mother wanted her daughter to obtain that school certificate. At 20 Madeline was too old to return to her school and a solution had to be found. Making use of the facilities of a good library in a teachers' training college in Cambridge with access to willing tutors was the answer.

It was January 1940. The college principal agreed to let Madeline work in the library and use the college facilities. I remember that at this time people didn't plan ahead – maybe they thought we would all be dead in six months' time? And when Greta Burkill, the remarkable member of the Cambridge Refugees Committee, asked the principal whether she would allow a young refugee – barely 16, with hardly any English and certainly no school certificate – to join the 300 girls who had started on their two-year training course, she agreed. *I was that girl*. Madeline and I were the two outsiders who became friends for life. Thank you, *niños*!!!

Susanne Medas

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We Must Save the Children

Exhibition at Michaelhouse Centre, Cambridge, 17-27 June 2014

We Must Save the Children' is a project based in Cambridge which appropriately focuses on the work of the remarkable Children's Refugee Committee based in that city. In a recent talk, Lilian Levy, archivist at World Jewish Relief, described the Committee as one of the most active in the country and paid tribute to its leading light, Greta Burkill, the formidable wife of a distinguished professor at Peterhouse.

Our project has sought to unearth further material about the members of the Committee, the *Kinder* who came to the city mostly in the first half of 1939, and the families who looked after them. This last area of research has probably received the least attention in recent years: our project hopes to address that shortcoming to some extent.

'We Must Save the Children' will culminate in a public exhibition, a set of original teaching resources including a DVD.

The entire project was generously supported by Heritage Lottery Fund (East) and directed by my company, Keystage Arts and Heritage, based in Cambridge. We began by recruiting a body of volunteer researchers drawn from the city's Jewish community, including Lady Marilyn Fersht, Jackie Rogger, Valerie Berkson, Deborah Patterson Jones, Ruth Barnett and James Foreman; they worked together with a local church group led by the Rev Barry Linney. These doughty researchers have uncovered many hitherto unpublished facts, memoirs, and (very importantly) previously unseen photographs held by the families or *Kinder*.

Our work built on three existing sources: the papers of Greta Burkill, which her daughter-in-law, Jean Burkill, kindly gave me permission to explore; the book by Gertrude Dubrovsky, *Six from Leipzig*, which drew on the historian's interviews with Greta Burkill just before she died in 1984; and a research paper by Manpreet Sidhu – my attention to this was drawn by a piece in the *AJR Journal*, as was the response to a letter I placed in it a year ago asking for *Kinder* with a Cambridge connection to get in touch.

Thanks to that response, some serious research beavered online and an appeal to readers of the former *Cambridge Evening News* (now the *Cambridge News*), we have managed to gather stories from the following *Kinder*, local families and descendants of Committee members:

Kinder interviewed

Lore Robinson (née Michel), Doris Moritz (née Rath), Marianne Milkman (née Friedenthal), Ruth Oppenheimer (née Lindheimer), Susanne Medas (née Bernstein), Sig Sieber.

Kinder from secondary sources (books, reminiscences of friends)

Susi Peritz, Eva Mosbacher, Marion and Ingeborg Czarlinksi.

Local families

Sir Alan and Lady Drury (looked after Gretel Jordan), Mr and Mrs Chadwick (Suzi Spitzer), Mr and Mrs Laying (Michael Steinberg), Miss Maria Rickard (Doris and Erika Rath), Mr and Mrs Bennett (Edith Rothschild), Professor Lauterpacht (Ruth Lindheimer and Susi Bernstein).

Committee members

Mrs Greta Burkill, Mrs Sybil Hutton, Mrs Eva Hartree, Miss Margaret Braithwaite, Miss Kathleen Wood Legh, Mr J. Skimp, Dr J. Clapham, Dr Malli Meyer, Miss Hilda Sturge.

We interviewed the abovenamed *Kinder* and filmed Susanne Medas and Lore Robinson. Their fascinating reminiscences will form the basis of our educational resource, which will be launched this summer for use in Cambridge schools. The aim will be to encourage children to learn how the Kindertransport experience impacted on their home town. In a broader context, it will encourage them to think about the experience of refugees, asylum seekers, government responses and the altruism (or otherwise) of those prepared to offer a home to a stranger in desperate need. The Kindertransport experience, in Cambridge and elsewhere, provides such a rich source of discussion and learning.

The exhibition will contain 14 panels telling the story of individual *Kinder*, local foster families, and the schools that contributed places for the refugees (including Perse Boys and Girls, the Leys and Cambridge County High School). We hope to build a picture of the outstanding work done by the Committee in providing a home, welfare, education, training and even a social programme for the refugees. The exhibition will not avoid the tragedies and heartaches – children who missed and worried about their parents marooned in Nazi-occupied Europe, foster families who were cold or exploitative, anti-Semitism in England, or the manner in which many children were shunted from family to family or hostel.

Despite these problems, the



Recently 'discovered' image of Greta Burkill painted in 1941. The painter was a refugee (identity unknown). By kind permission of Mrs Jean Burkill

main message of the exhibition and resources will be to celebrate the remarkable work done by a group of mostly formidable ladies and well-connected academics whose sole motivation was to right the wrongs done to these innocent children. They were driven above all by the imperative emphasised in a memoir written by Greta Burkill: 'We Must Save the Children'.

The exhibition will be shown at the Michaelhouse Centre, Trinity Street, Cambridge, 17-27 June 2014. For further details, please contact Mike Levy at mike.levy82@gmail.com and see www.keystage-company.co.uk

Mike Levy

After last year's success ... It's back!

Are you thinking about buying a computer or interested in computer lessons?

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**Two sessions available:
9.30 to 12.30 or 1.30 to 3.30**

No previous computer experience required.

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Free event – includes refreshments, transportation available

To sign up or find out more, contact Jonathan on **020 8385 3070** or at jonathan@ajr.org.uk



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

SERIAL ASSIMILATOR

Sir – My initial reaction to the correspondence headed ‘A matter of bias’ in your May edition – ‘Netanyahu and Gove – a marriage made in heaven’ – was unfair and a bit brutal. But certainly both are unappetising on their different levels.

The regimented and punitive ‘patriotism’ admired by Janos Fisher and Peter Phillips has rather a dubious history: persecution of conscientious objectors, McCarthy, Vietnam (the last two deplored in retrospect by the Americans themselves). G. K. Chesterton thought ‘My country right or wrong’ was like ‘My mother drunk or sober’.

Michael Gove wants the First World War commemorated in the words of Rupert Brooke, not those of Sassoon or Owen. He likes knowledge chopped into unconnected goblets and rigorously memorised for exams which feed into league tables. He discourages the sort of extended studies which develop thought. He favours academies or ‘free schools’, which are often ideologically homogeneous and which (ideally) aim to exclude or brush under the carpet pupils unlikely to boost league table statistics. Come to think of it, Netanyahu wants to brush Palestinians under the carpet – so, alright, the affinity is there! Thank goodness for your correspondents Eric Sanders and Leslie Baruch Brent!

On the other hand, I am solidly with Peter Phillips against the otherwise excellent Victor Ross in that I feel thoroughly assimilated in England. I regard my wife as a friend rather than an acquaintance and don’t feel our relationship would be closer if she were an American. I have felt very comfortable and ‘at home’ visiting New York. I am drawn to Jewish American writers, both refugees like Bellow and natives like Heller (even gentiles like Sue Grafton and Flannery O’Connor), but also to Wodehouse and Vaughan Williams. I have never identified with any sport (except tennis). However, I have read C. L. R. James and could imagine myself in an alternative existence following cricket. But never baseball!

It occurs to me that, having been uprooted at an earlier age than Victor Ross, I am a rather facile serial assimilator. I had no difficulty in becoming an

enthusiastic Belgian, learning French and Flemish and being equally loyal to my Belgian comic and the ubiquitous portraits of the late Queen Astrid. After a brief spell of romanticising myself as a Belgian exile in London, I was gradually and uncomplainingly swept to North Wales, where I won a prize for learning Welsh. (Perhaps facility at learning languages encourages assimilation.) For the last 49 years I have been comfortably ensconced in Durham City.

I trust Mr Phillips has by now thoroughly regained his strength after his hospitalisation and I leave him with the reflection that my late friend and distant relative Fritz Goldenberg/Fred Gillard was severely reprimanded by his cousin, settled in Australia: ‘How can you live among the English after the way they treated the Irish!’

George Schlesinger, Durham

IN SUPPORT OF THE ISRAELI PEOPLE

Sir – Janos Fisher disapproves of my opinion on the basis that I am ‘sharply critical of the *Daily Telegraph*’. He must refer to my describing it as a far-right paper – which he does not dispute. He states that the *Telegraph* is pro-Israeli, ‘although not as pro-Israeli as in the days of Conrad Black and Max Hastings’, and ‘incomparably more on our side than the anti-Israeli and anti-American *Guardian*’. Generally, he may well be right on those points. But does he know that, prior to the last election, Max Hastings voted Labour and now writes regularly for the *Daily Mail* and contributes articles to the *Sunday Times* and the *Guardian*?

As for Conrad Black, I’d rather not have him for a friend. Through his Canadian company Hollinger Inc, he bought up newspapers such as the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Jerusalem Post* and the *Daily Telegraph*. A few years ago he was convicted of fraud and obstruction of justice and now is banned from entering the USA.

Obviously a right-wing newspaper and a right-wing politician, such as Mr Gove, will support an Israeli right-wing government. If I considered everyone who is critical of Israel’s policies and actions my

enemy, as Janos Fisher suggests, I would be my own enemy. Surely, supporting Israel must mean supporting the Israeli people and not every action by its current government.

Gerda Mayer refers to my criticism of the Education Secretary as invective. My comments were not personal but, I insist, very much to the point. She is surprised that my letter was published. Not a very tolerant attitude!

Peter Phillips’s statement ‘Obviously Mr Sanders does not believe that children should have the same opportunities of education that he and I enjoyed’ truly baffles me. Where was this? Four years of *Hauptschule* (secondary modern) and four miserable, anti-Semitic years of *Realschule* (grammar school) in Vienna until the day Hitler marched in – is that what he calls ‘the same opportunities of education’?

As against that, I spent 20 happy years teaching in two London comprehensive schools (not at the same time), in which children of all abilities and from greatly varying backgrounds really did have equal opportunities. Mr Gove’s education policies are not producing equal opportunities for children nor does he seem to understand the problems of teaching and learning. Last year the members of the National Association of Head Teachers condemned the climate of bullying, fear and intimidation created by Mr Gove and passed a vote of no confidence in his policies. So did the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the National Union of Teachers, and the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers.

Peter Phillips also writes about the Edward Snowden affair. This is a complex issue and really irrelevant, brought to the correspondence over the claim that the *Guardian* is anti-Semitic. When you start throwing stones irrationality takes over. In branding Edward Snowden as a traitor Peter Phillips compares him to a possible ‘whistleblower’ on Bletchley Park. That would have been during the war, when Bletchley Park was spying on our enemies. But Snowden has shown up friends spying on friends. Some of his revelations have been published by outlets such as the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde* and *The Guardian*.

Israel, albeit very small, is today an independent, powerful state. The 120 seats in the Knesset are shared by no less than 12 parties. Is every member of the Knesset who criticises the government’s policies anti-Israeli? Is every Israeli who does? Would you, out of blind loyalty to Israel, approve if Israel annexed the West Bank and deprived all its Arab residents of the right to vote? I would not.

Eric Sanders, London W12

Sir – I sincerely wish Peter Phillips a speedy and complete recovery from his recent serious operation, but I will not continue this correspondence on the subject of treason. When Peter equates Bletchley Park – a defence organisation targeting military objectives in times of war – with GCHQ and its capability and willingness in times of peace to invade the privacy of ordinary people, it is clear that we will not be able to reach agreement on what ‘treason’ means. But I am reassured that the British and American governments seem to have recognised the need to introduce some kind of control over what GCHQ and the National Security Agency may or may not do.

Marc Schatzberger, York

‘WHY DON’T YOU PEOPLE GO HOME!’

Sir – Further to Anthony Grenville’s article in your May issue on refugee immigrants outside the north-west London area, my parents and I arrived from Czechoslovakia late in 1939 and lived for one year near ‘Finchleystrasse’. We had no help or support from anyone other than initial advice on renting a room from a fellow refugee. At the end of 1940 we moved to the East Midlands (Leicester), where I grew up and have continued to live ever since. We had no assistance from any Jewish or non-Jewish body or organisation. Indeed, the opposite was true of the local Jewish community: not only did they refuse to allow us to join the Jewish community because we couldn’t afford the fees but a local member was heard to say ‘Why don’t you people go home!’

In contrast, there was a considerable number of refugees from Central Europe who formed a refugee ‘self-help’ club where members could meet and get to know each other on social terms and form friendships which often lasted for the rest of their lives. Some refugees who had emigrated earlier (1933-36) managed to establish themselves and contributed hugely to Leicester/Derby/Nottingham. Companies like John Bull Rubber with its Jewish MD contributed to the war effort, ultimately making a personal huge donation to the local university. A glass manufacturing company founded by Czech Jews contributed to war products, ultimately employing hundreds of people. Small and large textile companies founded before and after the war employed hundreds of people, exporting and bringing valuable currency into the country. How much more the refugee community could have contributed to industry, science and the professions had the ‘English Jews’ extended a helping hand of friendship to their co-religionists!

Bob Norton, Ruddington, Nottingham

Sir – I have just read Anthony Grenville’s article in the *Journal* about a book by Bill Williams mentioning a Mr Apfelbaum. I would like to tell you of the amazing coincidence regarding this gentleman and his family.

I came to the UK on the Kindertransport and, in order to make this possible, my foster parents, Mr and Mrs Needoff, the well-known Manchester bakers, attended a meeting with Mr Apfelbaum at which they said they would take me into their family.

I was very happy with the Needoffs and was treated like their own daughter. I have remained close friends with the Needoffs’ natural daughter, Fay Lipman, and their daughter-in-law, Mirrie Needoff, for the last 75 years!

Mirrie’s late daughter, Hilary, married a local photographer, Jack Henry, about 40 years ago. One day I was chatting to Jack and was stunned to learn that his father was Mr Apfelbaum - the same gentleman who was instrumental in my coming to the UK and staying with the Needoffs, his wife’s grandparents.

Ann Cohen, Manchester

Sir – I was interested in Anthony Grenville’s article on the out-of-London experiences of the émigré Jewish community and I appreciated his dealing with Professor Bill Williams’s latest book.

Many years ago Bill was much involved with the Birmingham Jewish Research Group and helped us with our investigations into the history of our local Jewish community, which also included the book by the late Zoe Josephs (to which Anthony also refers). As a longstanding friend of Zoe and whose late husband, Dr Harry Josephs, was my professional partner in our West Midlands medical practice for about 20 years, I was impressed with her zeal for accuracy and meticulous attention to detail. In that context, she might have been a little disconcerted to have become, according to Anthony Grenville, Zoe Joseph. Harry’s and my patients often did not understand that although our names were similar we were not related to each other – and certainly we were not father and son!

*(Dr) Anthony Joseph,
Smethwick, West Midlands*

‘THE ENGLISH WAY’

Sir – Having read the letters on ‘the English way’ of knitting, I can’t refrain any longer from adding my own little share to this interesting topic.

It was at the Royal Hotel – not very majestic, I dare say! – in Tring, where we were staying for three years during the Blitz, that we met a family of fellow refugees from Frankfurt whose teenage daughter, Doris, used to be seen knitting the Continental way, which, in this country, always attracts attention. Then one day, all of a sudden, she had switched over to the British way, which looks so much clumsier and more like crocheting.

Incidentally, I heard from my husband that his stepfather acquired a pipe soon after coming to these shores as he considered this more British than merely cigarettes. (Fortunately German continued to be spoken in their house rather than the heavily accented English so often heard in refugee circles which used to get terribly on my nerves.)

While in Tring, my mother often felt terribly bored having no household to look after so she asked me to get her some wool from my school to enable her to knit for the Forces. The wool was given out free together with a leaflet of instructions, the pattern (this didn’t exist on the Continent). My mother couldn’t make head or tail of it so she asked me to have it explained at school and to pass on the information to her. The teacher in question had, of course, no idea that the wool was intended for someone other than me but my mother felt so happy and got going producing scarves and then progressing to mittens, one pair after another.

I felt my heart missing a beat when at assembly one day the headmistress read out the names of all those pupils who had produced a record number of items for the Forces and were to be awarded a badge. My knees felt like jelly and my face flushed as I stepped up to the front of the hall to a chorus of cheers. I, one of the clumsiest people at any kind of needlework, the bane of most of my needlework teachers! I felt positively bad as I hadn’t deserved it.

‘Was tut eine Mutter nicht alles für ihr Kind’, as my aunt Paula used to say. In this instance, it was the other way round: ‘Was tut ein Kind nicht alles für seine Mutter.’

I’ve still got the badge – well, actually two as my grandmother had caught the bug as well – but she got her wool somewhere else!

Margarete Stern, London NW3

Sir – Further to the letter from Bronia Snow in your May issue, my mother did not want me to knit her ‘foreign way’ and asked an English friend to teach me to knit. Years later, my daughter, watching my mother and me knitting, asked her grandmother to teach her to knit as she realised the Continental method was much faster. Hence the granddaughter of a refugee whose mother was born in London knits the Continental way from choice!

Patricia Brody, Edgware, Middx

Sir – Bronia Snow admits that when knitting socks for the troops, she was unable to turn the heel unless guided by her friend Beate.

While briefly stationed at Aldershot, I was issued with a ‘spare’ pair of socks, clearly of donated origin, beautifully knitted but without any bend – just two straight tubes closed at one end. However, when strapped firmly into ‘boots black ammunition’, they did a grand job and lasted until my demob.

At least I know to whom I was so warmly indebted. Thank you, Bronia!

Hans L. Eirew, Manchester

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ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

My idea of a Viking is Richard Branson in a horned helmet! But neither he nor any self-respecting Viking ever wore one. That's clear from **Vikings: Life and Legend** at the **British Museum** until 22 June 2014 – even though the BBC reporter sported one at the press view. The only helmets Vikings wore back in the day were plain conical ones and the only horns were walrus tusks which (like jet, fur, dried fish, hunting falcons and slaves) were exchanged for precious metals, armour, glass and wine.



Roman Halter Couple

Between the 8th and 11th centuries, these Norsemen's escapades in their longboats reached Europe and beyond and, although their military adventures were as terrifying as anyone's, they were not always successful.

You can see the 37-metre-long stainless steel reconstructed skeleton of a royal warship, *Roskilde 6*, excavated from Denmark's Roskilde Fjord in 1997, the longest ever found. Some 20 per cent of its surviving timbers, still daubed in black and yellow, have been re-assembled. It was built around AD 1025, when England, Denmark, Norway and parts of Sweden were ruled by Cnut the Great. In Old Norse, *Vikingr* meant pirate or raider.

But the Vikings' cultural and artistic networks equally expanded as maritime adventures took these early Scandinavians from the Caspian Sea to the North Atlantic and from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean. They were violent

and barbarous, but also artistic. Their gold and silver jewellery, amulets and charms, elaborate Celtic style necklaces, and massive cloak pins would not disgrace the shoulder of some 18th-century aristocrat. The cull could be whalebone, walnut, ivory, silk, rock crystal, and precious stones from the east. But the key was the Viking flair for shipbuilding and sailing. Warrior identity was crucial. Face paint would scare off enemies and, whether trading or raiding, the Vikings changed and absorbed the places to which they travelled. The British Museum exhibition, supported by BP, is partnered by the national museums of Denmark and Berlin.

The work of 16th-century artist **Paulo Veronese** – on show at the exhibition **Veronese: Magnificence in Renaissance Venice** at the **National Gallery** until 15 June 2014 – is magisterial. His religious or allegorical compositions contain minor details – children and small animals – which attract without distracting. His subjects are natural rather than idealised. My personal favourite, *La Bella Nani*, indulges his loving attention to detail: her gentle hands, quiet face, the gleam of her pearls, her diaphanous muslin and velvet gown – are more eloquent than all the lavish majesty of virgins, martyrdoms and saints. Veronese moves shape and colour, using every element – earth, sky, light and darkness – and every texture – brocade, fur and silk – in luminous hues. A typical example of his use of density of space is *The Martyrdom of St George*, in which the saint's earthly torments are compensated by the angelic hosts above.

Artist and architect **Roman Halter's** stained glass windows are celebrated at the Ben Uri Gallery: **'Roman Halter: Life and Art through Stained Glass'** (until 8 June 2014). The late Holocaust survivor dedicated his work to helping young people understand past genocides and their dangerous potential. The exhibition features over 70 works whose designs capture colour and light. The London Jewish Cultural Centre held an accompanying discussion in early April on Halter's work with panellists Colin Wiggins, Head of Special Projects at the National Gallery, Fergal Keane, journalist and film-maker, and Roman's artist son Ardyn Halter. The discussion was chaired by the Ben Uri's David Glasser.

Annely Juda Fine Art

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

EXHIBITION

Justice as against jurisdiction
FRITZ BAUER – DER STAATSANWALT
(Fritz Bauer, the State Prosecutor)
Jewish Museum, Frankfurt am Main
to 7 September 2014

I have just returned home from a few days in Giessen/Frankfurt, where I had the opportunity to visit an exhibition devoted to Fritz Bauer, the former Hessian Attorney General and Prosecutor, at the Frankfurt Jewish



Fritz Bauer,
1903-68

Museum. What an inspiring exhibition of a truly great man, who stood up for justice no matter what the cost to himself! I found so many similarities between Bauer's experiences and those of my father, Robert Michaelis.

Both were born in the same year and both were sacked from their posts as judges – Bauer in Stuttgart and my father in Berlin – immediately the Nazis took power. Bauer fled with his family to Denmark and then to Sweden, whereas my father fled to Shanghai. Both were unable to get back to Germany until 1948-49, partly through rules made by the Allies. Both suffered massive resistance to reclaiming their former status in the legal system and upholding justice as compared to jurisdiction, which former Nazis still in post in the legal system tried to interpret under the old Nazi laws. Ursula Krechel described my father's fight for justice in her novel *Landgericht* (reviewed in the *AJR Journal* recently). This exhibition describes Bauer's battle with similar issues on an even larger scale, his secret passing of information about Eichmann's whereabouts to Israel in 1960 as he didn't trust the German legal system not to warn Eichmann, and the Auschwitz trials he brought to Frankfurt in 1963.

The full catalogue of this important exhibition is obtainable from Amazon but its narrative is in German only, whereas the narrative of the exhibition in Frankfurt is in English as well as German. I would recommend the exhibition highly to anyone with the opportunity to be in Frankfurt between now and 7 September, or, if that is not possible, to obtain the catalogue.

Fritz Bauer did more than anyone to bring Germany back to its first principle of justice: 'Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar' (Human dignity is inviolable) – which of course the Nazis completely violated to create their demented legal system, which made a mockery of human dignity. Bauer

stood for justice – inside and outside the courtroom – as against jurisdiction. My father did something somewhat similar one day in his courtroom – he quoted two of the principles of law about the independence (i.e. independent of state control) of judges, which shocked his peers, who knew very well that they were still using the laws made by the Nazis.

Personally, I think laws are often made and interpreted today to produce jurisdiction that is very far from justice – a theme I intend to take up in the book I am writing currently: *Love, Hate and Indifference: the Slide into Genocide*.

Ruth Barnett

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

11 June 2014

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

Edeltrud Desmond

'Reflections on My Work as a Social Attachée at the Austrian Embassy in London'

To book your place please phone Andrea Goodmaker on 020 8385 3070

Joanna Millan: Testimony of a survivor

AJR Trustee Joanna Millan has given the first of a series of lunchtime talks to AJR staff. Not all members of staff, especially the newly recruited ones, have had the privilege of hearing a Holocaust survivor or refugee speak of their personal experiences.

Joanna was born Bela Rosenthal in Berlin in 1942. In 1943 her father was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he perished. Bela and her mother were sent to Theresienstadt concentration camp near Prague. In 1944 her mother contracted tuberculosis due to the conditions there, leaving Bela orphaned and alone in the camp.

Following liberation in 1945, Bela, with five other surviving orphans, was flown to England in British bomber planes. She was eventually adopted by a Jewish couple in London. They decided it would be better to have a less German-sounding name and so her name was changed to Joanna. She was told not to mention that she was Jewish or that she was born in Germany. Joanna married a Jewish man and now has three children and eight grandchildren.

Future lunchtime talks will be given by Alex Maws, the Holocaust Educational Trust's Head of Education; Louise Heilbron, a Fellow of the Imperial War Museum, who will discuss teaching the Holocaust; and Carol Hart, the AJR's Head of Volunteer and Community Services.



YOM HASHOAH 2014 COMMEMORATION

Glasgow

Some 300 members of the Glasgow Jewish community and First-, Second- and Third-Generation AJR members attended the commemoration at Giffnock and Newlands Synagogue. Guests, including local MP Jim Murphy and MSPs Stewart Maxwell and Annabel Goldie as well as the Provosts of East Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire Councils, were welcomed by AJR Co-ordinator Agnes Isaacs, Chair of the Yom HaShoah Committee. The focal point of the evening was a powerful address by David Glasser of the Ben Uri Gallery on the theme 'Nazi Looted Art: Facts, Law and the Moral Imperative'.

Agnes Isaacs

Manchester

We commemorated Yom HaShoah with a most moving presentation to a full house at the Hilton Suite. The lead subject was 'Children of the Holocaust'. We heard about the experiences of young people who were spared the horrors of the camps but suffered much hardship, physical and emotional alike. The evening also lauded the heroic actions of some of the British heroes, among them Nicholas Winton and Frank Foley, who helped thousands of our people, young and old, to escape the Nazi tyranny.

Werner Lachs

Liverpool

Dr Peter Kurer spoke to a standing-room only audience at the King David Campus Community Centre Room. Nine members of his family were rescued from Austria by the Quakers. On arrival in England, the family was further supported by the Quakers. Peter has spent many years researching the role of the Quakers in rescuing refugees and estimates the total number of Jews they saved at 27,000. Thanks to his dedicated work, Yad Vashem several years ago added the Society of Friends to its archive.

Susanne Green

Newcastle

AJR Trustee Joanna Millan, special Guest at the Yom HaShoah commemoration service, spoke to AJR members about their experiences of the Second World War and their memories of starting new lives in England. She was also keen to know their thoughts on preserving the memory of the Shoah for future generations. Later, at a packed synagogue service, she spoke at length about her early childhood family memories, being sent to Theresienstadt, and her new life in England with adopted parents after the war. Finally, she described her current work educating young people about her experiences.

Ann Cahill

Kindertransport Reunion DVD

We are delighted to announce that a special commemorative DVD with footage of the Kindertransport Reunion at JFS and the reception with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales at St James's Palace is now available for purchase.

Filmed and produced by Alan Reich, the DVD will serve as a poignant memorial to the two historic gatherings of Kinder and their families that took place in June 2013 as part of the events the AJR organised to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport.

To receive your copy, please send a cheque for £5 made payable to the AJR to: AJR, Jubilee House, Merriion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

AJR AND SIX POINT FOUNDATION

continued from page 3

Foundation for funding the air travel costs, Mr and Mrs W were able to visit New York and establish contact with the relative from Horincovo. Mr and Mrs W were deeply appreciative of the help they received from Six Point Foundation and the AJR in facilitating this event.

Before it closes within the next three to four years, the Foundation aims to reach and help as many struggling Holocaust survivors and refugees as possible in modest but meaningful ways that would not come about if it did not exist.

Holocaust survivors and refugees must be of Jewish origin living in the UK with an income of less than £10,000 per year (excluding pensions or social security) and with assets less than £32,000 (excluding a primary residence and car). Please contact the AJR for further information.

OUTING TO REGENT'S PARK OPEN AIR THEATRE

THURSDAY 31 JULY 2014

2.15 pm (performance ends at 5.00 pm)

Gershwin's 'PORGY & BESS'
Tickets £20.00 per person

If the performance cannot be completed due to bad weather, tickets will be exchanged for an alternative performance. If you are unable to make the alternative date arranged by the AJR there is no time limit on exchanging your tickets. As long as you keep your original tickets, you can attend another performance at a date to suit. No refunds will be given.

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

From AUSTRIA to AUSTRALIA via INDIA

A little known route to escape Nazi persecution

This story, of which an earlier version appeared in the March 2014 issue of the Journal, was told to me by my aunt, Prem Lata (Ludhiana, India), who is now 94, and Lizzy Schafranek (Perth, Australia), who is now 89. Margit Franz, a researcher in Graz, Austria, was especially helpful in researching various records to confirm this story and fill in the blanks – Vinay Gupta.

It all started with haemorrhoids! In 1938 my grandfather, Kundan Lal, went to Vienna for medical treatment. In those days, going to Europe from India was a long and arduous trip so he hoped to use his time to look for business opportunities as well. He already had a thriving woodworking business in Ludhiana, India.

Kundan Lal lived an oversized life, succeeding in almost everything at which he tried his hand. While in college, he started two successful businesses. He was also active in India's struggle for independence from the British. He eventually donated a large part of his wealth to start a school, which now, 70 years later, has 5,000 students.

At that time, Austria was going through a particularly difficult stage in its history. Hitler was plotting the annexation of Austria, where pro-Nazi sentiment was running high. It was in this environment that my grandfather reached Vienna and checked himself into a local hospital. There he met Alfred Schafranek.

Alfred was the owner of a successful saw mill in the district of Krems-Land, Lower Austria. At that time, his wife, Margareta, and their two teenage children were living in an apartment in Vienna. Their children, Bruno and Lizzy, studied at a school in Vienna and spent their holidays with their father at their home in Krems-Land.

It was during one of these holidays in



Picture taken in my grandfather's compound: *Standing* (from left): Bruno Schafranek; Kundan Lal; Alfred Schafranek; Mrs Wachslar, who moved to Ludhiana with her husband Alfred and son Alex; Margareta Schafranek; Prem Lata, my aunt; Siegfried Schafranek; Lizzy Schafranek; Prem Narain, my uncle *Seated* (from left): Kamla Gupta, my aunt; Alex Wachslar; Vijya Gupta, my mother; Deva Lata, my aunt

1938 that the Nazis impounded all the Schafraneks' property under the the so-called 'Aryanisation of Jewish property' process. Alfred and Bruno were imprisoned. Alfred's wife immediately went to the Nazi authorities to plead for their release and ended up signing a document stating that the family had voluntarily given up ownership of all their property. In exchange, Alfred and Bruno were released. Alfred was allowed to remove two machines from his saw mill, which he shipped to Australia. Having a brother living in Australia, Alfred hoped to escape Nazi persecution by emigrating to that country. They immediately left Lower Austria for Vienna. But visas for Australia kept getting delayed.

It was in this difficult situation that Alfred met my grandfather. Thinking quickly and decisively, my grandfather offered him a job in India and helped to procure Indian visas for the family. Having a brother, Siegfried, who worked as an automotive engineer in Vienna, Alfred asked my grandfather to help facilitate a visa for Siegfried too, which my grandfather was happy to do. These Indian visas enabled both Schafranek families to escape Austria for Switzerland and then on to Italy. Siegfried's wife, Maria, was not Jewish and decided to remain with their daughter Hansi. India probably did not look like a comfortable place in those days.

From Italy they all flew to Karachi, now the largest city in Pakistan. From Karachi they took a train to Ludhiana. In the meantime, my grandfather had built two houses for them. In Ludhiana Alfred helped my grandfather to set up the first plywood manufacturing factory in India.

While in Ludhiana, Alfred sought Indian visas for the rest of his extended family that had been left behind in Austria. Communications were mostly by sea mail and everything took a long time in those days. He could not get them out in time and they all perished in the Holocaust.

As seen from Europe, Ludhiana was a huge culture shock. For instance, men and women did not socialise. Fortunately my grandfather had four daughters (my mother and my three aunts) about the same age as Bruno and Lizzy. This allowed the teenagers a certain social activity. Lizzy remembers playing badminton with my aunts.

But their travails were not over. The British, who ruled India at that time, considered anyone from Greater Germany an enemy. The war was raging and anyone from Germany was looked on with suspicion. With the British making no effort to distinguish Jews from pro-Nazi Germans, the

British administration in India put both Schafranek families in an internment camp in Poona, western India, in which they spent almost two years.

On release from the internment camp, both families made their way south to Bangalore, India. Siegfried's wife and daughter, finding the onset of the war in Europe increasingly hazardous, had joined them in India. In Bangalore, Alfred started another successful woodworking business. Siegfried and Maria's daughter Hansi met an Englishman in Bangalore, married, and eventually emigrated to the UK. In 1947 India obtained independence and went through a particularly bloody few months that saw the country divided into India and Pakistan.

Nine years after leaving Austria, Alfred and his family finally received visas for Australia. They boarded the *HMAS Manoora* from Bombay and reached Sydney in August 1947. In 1948 they adopted Australian citizenship. Both Bruno and Lizzy married and raised families in Australia, where Lizzy today leads an active life. Lizzy says she finds looking back painful and wants to focus on the future.

Vinay Gupta

Vinay Gupta was born in Ludhiana and spent many vacations at his grandfather's compound shown in the picture. He now lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

ARTS AND EVENTS
JUNE DIARY

Sun 8 Mudar Zahran: 'Can the Arab Spring Bring Peace? A Different Perspective from the Other Side' At Montagu Centre, 21 Maple Street, London W1, 7.00 pm. Spiro Ark. £10 (+ £1 booking fee). Tel 020 7289 6321

Wed 11 Adam Blitz: 'What's Left of Syria's Jewish Legacy?' Illustrated talk at Hampstead Garden Suburb Synagogue, Norrice Lea, London N2, 8.00 pm. Spiro Ark. £10 (+ £1 booking fee). Tel 020 7289 6321

Wed-Fri 11-13 'International Conference: The Jewish Experience of the First World War' At London Jewish Museum and Wiener Library, 9:00 am-6:00 pm. Centre for German-Jewish Studies in conjunction with London Jewish Museum and Wiener Library. Tel 01273 678 771 or visit www.sussex.ac.uk/cgjs

To Thurs 19 'The Eichmann Trial and Its Impact' Exhibition and associated events. At London Jewish Cultural Centre, tel 020 8457 5000

Tue 24 Prof Edward Timms: 'Culture and Catastrophe: Vienna on the Eve of the First World War' At Goethe Institute, London, 6.00 pm. Tel Austrian Cultural Forum on 020 7596 4000

Wed 2 July Jewish Music Institute's 30th Anniversary Celebration – Drawing Life Gala Performance & Supper: Terezin Commemoration Concert At JW3, 7.30 pm. Details at www.jmi.org.uk/event/jmi-30th-anniversary-celebration-drawing-life-gala-performance-supper

70th anniversary of the deportations from Hungary

Commemoration at Pinner Synagogue, Yom HaShoah, 27 April 2014

Early in 1944, the 800,000 Jews living in Hungary felt relatively safe. Miklos Horthy's fascist government had, after all, concluded an alliance with Nazi Germany and enjoyed popular support. Although anti-Semitic legislation had been passed and more than 100,000 Jewish men had been mobilised for forced labour, no ghettos had been established, Horthy had resisted Hitler's demands to hand over the Jews, and no deportations had taken place. In addition, Germany was clearly losing the war, the Red Army was advancing steadily towards Hungary, and the end was surely in sight. So there was no desperate rush on the part of the Jewish population to flee the country – just the matter of waiting out the few months until Germany was finally defeated. Or so they thought.

However, Germany invaded Hungary in March 1944 without meeting resistance. Adolf Eichmann and 300 Nazi colleagues were sent to Budapest to enact the 'Final Solution'. In just eight weeks from May 1944, some 437,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, mainly from the country areas outside the capital. Just as a German defeat in the war was looking increasingly inevitable, Jews were being herded into the gas chambers at an unprecedented rate. In October 1944, the Arrow Cross Party was installed in power. Huge numbers of Budapest Jews were now murdered by the banks of the Danube, sent to camps, and tens of thousands forcibly marched towards Austria. In all, some 565,000 Hungarian Jews died or were killed.

Subsequently, around 20,000 Hungarian Jews, many of them survivors, would flee during the November 1956 Revolution, fearing that a new regime would result in open expression of Hungarians' latent anti-Semitic sentiments that the Communist government had suppressed.

Resentment towards Jews and Roma has never disappeared. In the elections of 6 April 2014, the far-right Jobbik party polled over a million votes, securing 20.22 per cent of the overall vote and making it Hungary's third largest party in the National Assembly. Jews in Hungary are again anxious about their future.

The anniversary of the destruction of Hungarian Jewry 70 years ago was this year's theme of Pinner



Shoes on the Danube Bank memorial with the inscription 'In Memory of the Victims shot into the Danube by Arrow Cross Militiamen in 1944-1945, erected 10 March 2005'

Synagogue's annual Yom HaShoah commemoration. Hungarian and Slovak survivors Dr Gertrud Friedmann, Andrew Stuber, Rev Gershon Glausiusz, Dr Lilly Dubwitz, Professor Peter Vamos and Professor Gerta Vrbova each lit one of six memorial candles, while young members of the Third Generation Anna Lawson, Naomi Brookarsh, Benji Hyer, Yael Bergson, Toby Cohen and Tamzin Kraftman each recited readings relating to Hungarian victims, survivors and rescuers such as Elie Wiesel, Hannah Szenes and Raoul Wallenberg. Rabbi Bergson sang *El Molei Rachamim* and led the communal singing of Psalm 121 and the mourners' *Kaddish*.

Gaby Glassman, Chair of Pinner's Yom HaShoah Committee, welcomed the audience, which included many visitors and invited guests, among them ambassadors and chargés d'affaires from embassies of a number of European countries. Peter Szabadhegy, Ambassador of Hungary, the first of the main speakers, barely acknowledged the huge role the Hungarian people had in the deportations and killings of 1944-45; the occupying Germans simply could not have carried it out alone. It was also disappointing that Mr Szabadhegy barely addressed the recent alarming rise in popular support for the Jobbik party and concerns about anti-Semitic statements made by some of its members.

Professor Gerta Vrbova related how as a 15-year-old in 1942, under

threat of deportation from her native Slovakia, she had with her parents fled to presumed safety in Hungary, where they lived under false identities. Following the German occupation two years later, her father was arrested and she returned with her mother to Slovakia, assuming further false identities. She met her childhood school friend Walter Rosenberg (Rudolf Vrba), who, with Alfred Wetzler (Josef Lanik), had escaped from Auschwitz and walked back to Slovakia, keen to tell the world about the mass murders there. After her mother had been denounced and taken to the Gestapo in Slovakia, Gerta fled back to Hungary and survived the round-ups of Jews. Rudolph and Alfred had written what became known as the 'Vrba-Wetzler Report', warning the Jewish authorities in Budapest of what was in store for the Jews of Hungary – but in vain as the authorities failed to act in time to save the Jewish population. After the war, Gerta and Rudolf gained places at Prague University and married. In 1958 Gerta fled the Communist regime with her two daughters to make a new start in England.

Questions from the audience were directed mainly to the Hungarian Ambassador and to Professor Vrbova. Again, the widespread concern expressed about the rise of the Jobbik party was underplayed by Mr Szabadhegy, who stated that Jobbik's supporters were in the minority and were mainly from the poorer strata of society. Professor Vrbova speculated that perhaps it was the controversial deal made by Jewish community representative Rudolf Kasztner with Adolf Eichmann to spare at least a small number of Hungarian Jews that was a major factor in the failure of the Hungarian-Jewish authorities to act decisively.

Pinner Synagogue again leads the way with its exemplary commemoration of Yom HaShoah. It remains inexcusable that relatively so few other synagogues attempt any real major commemoration of this day, beyond perhaps a memorial prayer during the preceding Shabbat service. Even the United Synagogue's own website could list only two individual synagogues' commemorations in its weekly listing of events. Before long we will have no more first-hand witness to the tragic events.

David Wirth



Edinburgh CF Fulfilling Experiences

On the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, we discussed his enduring art and insights into human nature. We also shared how much we enjoy these meetings and how deeply fulfilling these experiences are for most of us – and not only because of the big-hearted treats provided by our hostess, Vivien Anderson!

Jonathan Kish

Café Imperial Story of a Merry Man's Escape from Berlin

One of our merry men told the story of his escape from Berlin, having been chased by the Gestapo. We await part 2 at our next meeting

Hazel Beiny

Ealing Impact of World Jewish Relief

Charlotte Sharp explained how WJR's work impacts on the lives of vulnerable people, particularly in Ukraine and Moldova.

Leslie Sommer

Ilford Dieting – Getting the Balance Right

Lucy Daniels gave an interesting talk on diets and getting the balance right. She provided lots of tips and there were many questions from the floor, indicating that members were eager to learn even more.

Meta Roseneil

Sheffield CF History of the Jewish Community of Bradford

Nigel Grizzard gave a most interesting talk on the growth of the Jewish community in Bradford, its influence on that city, and its increasing links with Israel.

Renee Martin

Pinner Who Killed the Rabbi?

Rabbi Pete Tobias recalled a 19th-century time of unrest in Ukraine and specifically the case of Rabbi Abraham Kohn, who encouraged reform in an orthodox community in Lemberg but met stiff resistance and an untimely death, probably by arsenic poisoning.

Walter Weg

Essex Duties of the Mayor of Southend

Southend's Mayoral Services Officer Stacy Marx spoke of, among many other things, the Mayor's varying engagements (400-600 a year), the role of the Mace Bearer, and the existence of Porters Civic House, where the Mayor entertains but doesn't live.

Susie Barnett

Kingston upon Thames CF All-England Boxing Champion Daniel Mendoza

David Barnett told us how 18th-century Jewish boxer Daniel Mendoza became a champion at a time when boxing was unregulated in terms of the stature of its participants. Many thanks to Irene Gould, who kindly offered her home, including delicious homemade food, for this meeting.

Jackie Cronheim

Oxford The Science behind Tea and Coffee

Not only did Professor Michael Spiro tell us about the origins of tea and coffee but we also learned many interesting scientific facts. A very enjoyable morning.

Kathryn Prevezer

Liverpool From Salonika to France

New Second-Generation member Francine Palant gave a fascinating account of her family's history from Salonika to France through Auschwitz and Buchenwald and, for her father, a safe return to Paris to campaign against racism and prejudice.

Guido Alis

Leeds CF Recollections of a Machal Volunteer

Guest speaker Louis Harris told us about his time in *Machal*, as a volunteer in Israel's War of Independence. There was much discussion afterwards while everyone enjoyed a sumptuous afternoon tea hosted by Barbara Cammerman.

Wendy Bott

St John's Wood Shops and Shopping in Regency London

A very informative talk by David Barnett on shops and shopping in Regency London. It was also very nice to welcome some new people to the group. Esther Rinkoff provided the essentials and we all had a pleasant time.

Avram Schaufeld

West Midlands (Birmingham) Showing of Nicky's Family

We had an excellent turn-out for a showing of *Nicky's Family*. John Fieldsend, one of the children saved by Sir Nicholas Winton and who features in the film, answered questions from the audience afterwards – we are most grateful to him.

Naomi Lesser and Rachel Robinson

Wembley A Long Home Office Career

Leslie Sommer told us about his long career in many departments of the Home Office. A very interesting and enjoyable meeting followed by a lively discussion.

Avram Schaufeld

Kent Visit to Picturesque Leeds Castle

It made a lovely change to visit picturesque Leeds Castle, home to six queens of England. It certainly brought back fond memories for Edith and Inge, once guides there themselves. After lunch we watched a falconry display and the more intrepid members braved the maze!

Janet Weston

North London Anecdotes on Leading Politicians

An address by Chris Moncrieff, former Parliamentary correspondent for the Press Association, proved extremely stimulating. His narrative of travelling with leading politicians was absolutely fascinating.

Herbert Haberberg

Glasgow CF A Good Night Out

There was much laughter at Eastwood Theatre's version of *Allo Allo*, with even the cast trying to keep a straight face. While our 14-strong AJR group had mixed reactions, everybody had a good night out.

Agnes Isaacs

Welwyn GC Bees, Stings and Honey

Not only did we learn from Camilla Goddard about the different types of bees, we were also given information about stings, swarms and pollination. In addition, we had the opportunity to sample a variety of types of honey – we were amazed by the assortment of flavours!

Diane O'Shea

Café Imperial Demob Stories

Peter Eden told us he sold his suit, hat and coat in the black market for £10 and went out on the razzle! Henry was demobbed in India, Bill in November 1947. Harold wasn't sure of the exact date but told of his lucky escape on the *Dunera* when 2 torpedos failed to explode.

Esther Rinkoff

North West London 'You're Only Old Once!'

Enjoying a delicious lunch provided by Hazel and Esther, we listened to Nightingale/Hamerson Chief Executive Andrew Leigh – 'You're only old once!' – who emphasised the importance of keeping mind and body active as we get older.

David Lang



**VIENNESE TEA
AT THE DELAUNAY**

Tuesday 22 July 2014

Be sure to book to join us for this very special afternoon tea with a Viennese twist: Sachertorte, Coffee Stroh Rum Slice, Linzer Torte, Poppy Seed Gugelhupf, a selection of savouries, scones, cream and tea

The Delaunay is a grand European Café Restaurant located on the Aldwych, Covent Garden, capturing a nostalgia and etiquette from a previous era

Coach travel will be provided
£25.00 pp

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

AJR OUTINGS PLANNED FOR 2014



Full details will appear in the Journal 2 calendar months before each outing

Sunday 15 June

Gilbert & Sullivan Opera and cream tea at Grim's Dyke Hotel, Harrow

Sunday 29 June

Judith Kerr OBE, a German-born British writer and illustrator, will be speaking exclusively to AJR at LJCC. Families welcome: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren

Thursday 10 July

Frogmore Paper Mill – lunch, guided tour and making your own paper

Thursday 17 July

Montefiore Synagogue in Ramsgate – with lunch beforehand by the seaside

Tuesday 22 July

Viennese tea at The Delaunay in Central London

Make a note in your diary not to miss these exciting events!

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JUNE GROUP EVENTS

Hull	1 June	Summer Cream Tea
Harrogate/York	3 June	Inge Little: Report on recent AJR activities
Café Imperial	4 June	Lunch at home of Vera and Henry Myer
HGS	9 June	Dr Toby Simpson, Wiener Library
Essex (Westcliff)	10 June	Essex Lunch (day trip)
Leeds CF	10 June	Visit to Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, Leeds University; lunch at Roundhay Park
Bradford	11 June	Lily and Albert Waxman: 'Our recent trip to Poland'
Edinburgh	11 June	Inter-generational Regional
St John's Wood	11 June	Prof Michael Spiro: 'The Story of Chocolate'
Bromley	12 June	Lunch at home of Lianne Segal
Pinner	12 June	Prof Mary Fulbrook, author <i>A Small Town Near Auschwitz: Ordinary Nazis and the Holocaust</i> Outing to Rhinefield House
Wessex	12 June	Jenny Manson: 'Public Sector on the Brink'
Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)	16 June	Social and Discussion at home of Nachman and Helen Herz
Cheshire	16 June	Laurence Brass, Board of Deputies: 'Not Bored at the Board'
Edgware	17 June	Colin Davey: 'From the West End to the City – a Lawyer's Life'
Oxford	17 June	Rob Lowe: Comedy and Music
Radlett	18 June	Mary-Ann Middelkoop: 'Art in the Weimar Republic'
Cambridge	19 June	Outing to <i>Yours, Annie</i>
Manchester	19 June	Layla Bloom: 'The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery'
Leeds HSFA	22 June	Lunch at Hendon Reform Synagogue – places must be booked in advance (details to follow)
North West London	23 June	Visit to Harewood House; Kosher Deli
Sheffield CF	23 June	Godfrey Gould: 'General Orde Wingate'
Kent	24 June	Andrew Leigh, Hammerson House: 'Care Considerations'
Welwyn GC	24 June	West End Afternoon
Glasgow CF	25 June	Summer Luncheon
Wembley	25 June	Garden Party
Leeds CF	26 June	Raymond Sturgess: 'The Alfred Dreyfus Case'
North London	26 June	Main Meeting
Manchester	29 June	Annual Lunch
Liverpool	30 June	

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Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld
020 8954 5298 h.obstfeld@talk21.com

Reflections on leaving the AJR

First, let me list places I've visited in the North since 2003. The main cities or towns are Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. I've also visited members, and attended meetings or training events in, 46 other locations, including Ambleside, Bangor, Chester, Dundee, Edinburgh, Frodsham, Gateshead, Hull, Kendal, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Tredegar, Wigan, the Wirral and York! Furthermore, I've attended Claims Conference seminars in Vienna and Frankfurt (for European and Israeli social workers). I've learned an enormous amount over 11½ years from hundreds of members – including their families – and from colleagues within and outside the AJR.

My post, covering Northern England and Wales, met the new Austrian Holocaust Survivors Emergency Assistance Programme requirements for qualified social workers to make assessments for grants (for the medical needs of those eligible). Having visited only Manchester and Leeds before 2001, my geographical and historical knowledge of 'my patch' thus grew exponentially. After four years Northern Groups Co-Ordinator Susanne Green and I were joined by Anthony Fagan and Eileen Brady, then by Jim Sutherland and Myrna Bernard, as well as Group Co-ordinator Wendy Bott and Volunteers Organiser Fran Horwich.

Social workers address members' social, financial and emotional issues. Many members, their partners and children are facing 'normal' issues of ageing, from emotional and family concerns to practical ones. They've needed home adaptations or to move, or to address effects of the 'life review process' – when we reflect on our lives – sometimes particularly challenging for AJR members.

As a social worker for 41 years, and daughter and niece of Kindertransportees (from Leipzig), I've valued working with all generations, sometimes simultaneously. In one rather special family, a grandchild is carer for a grandparent as the children live abroad. I so enjoyed the grandparent's birthday party, with all three generations present! Another high point was attending a member's 100th birthday party in Bradford.

The Intergenerational Question Time events in Leeds and Salford, organised by Susanne Green, were particularly rewarding. Opportunities are diminishing for the generations to discuss family history – sometimes a painful process. Israeli psychologist Dan Bar-On described a 'double wall' existing in some families between the generations. Both parents and children, if wishing

to communicate, must be ready to open the 'window' in their own wall – at the same time, or communication won't be possible.

Manchester Continental Friends group recently invited a Third and then a Second Generation person to address them. In April in Leeds, the AJR Northern Second Generation group (which I've facilitated for ten years) invited two First Generation people to discuss intergenerational communication. I hope more such opportunities arise, although I acknowledge such encounters can be challenging.

I've decided to work closer to my family and home in Greater Manchester and Derbyshire. I'll miss my AJR work but leave 'my patch' in the very capable hands of colleagues. I'm an AJR member so it's *au revoir* not goodbye: I'll see many members again, albeit in a different role. My warmest good wishes to you all!

Barbara Dresner



OPERATIC AFTERNOON AND CREAM TEA SUNDAY 15 JUNE 2014



Grim's Dyke Hotel, Mansion House,
Old Redding, Harrow, Middx HA3 6SH

We begin with a guided tour of the house and grounds, followed by a Full English Cream Tea, with sandwiches, homemade scones and tea fancies. Principal opera singers perform excerpts from their favourite operas.

Time 2.30 arrival, 3 pm start

Place Guests to meet in the Lobby and Library Bar. Tours of the house and grounds will begin at 3 pm. Opera begins at 4:45 pm.

Dress Code Smart

Price £29.00 per person - Includes Opera Performance and Full Cream Tea, preceded by tour of house and grounds

Transport will be available
at an additional cost

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

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VISIT TO FROGMORE PAPER MILL

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Thursday 10 July 2014



Although we tend not to give much thought to the paper we use every day, there is a wealth of fascination behind its history, science, industry and usage. At Frogmore Mill their aim is to tell this story in an entertaining way so visitors can see for themselves the contribution paper has made to the world as we know it today.

Our visit will begin with refreshments, a tour of the mill, and the opportunity to make your own paper. This will be followed by a fish and chip lunch in the café by the side of the River Gade and a boat trip.

Coach picks up with an arrival time of 10.30 am and a finish time of approximately 3 pm.

£25.00 pp

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



FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death

Elisabeth Wolfe, 1920-2014 Born in Vienna in 1920, she came to the UK in 1938, a month after the Anschluss. She was a highly respected AJR member in Manchester and will be sadly missed by her loving family and friends.



OUTING TO WESTCLIFF TUESDAY 10 JUNE 2014

Join us for our annual outing to Westcliff.

We will have the opportunity to socialise with members of the AJR Essex Group, with a buffet lunch at Westcliff Synagogue on arrival. We will then have a tour of Southend, a trip along the pier by train, tea at the Pier Café and, hopefully, the chance to sit and enjoy the weather.

£24 pp includes refreshments on arrival, buffet lunch, tour of Westcliff, pier train, tea at Pier Café, and return coach journey from London.

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

OBITUARIES

Alice Herz-Sommer, born Prague 26 November 1903, died London 23 February 2014

The pianist Alice Herz-Sommer (Gigi to her friends) has died at the age of 110. A long and fulfilling life, one would have thought, yet her departure stung those of us who were close to her. How could a death at 110 have such a tremendous impact? How can the inevitable be such a surprise? The answers lie in the extraordinary personality of this most remarkable woman.

Her life story is not so dissimilar to that of many other Jews of her generation and background. She was born in Prague in 1903 into a well-to-do family, where culture and music were part of the daily staple. Intertwined with the spirit of the times in Central Europe – her mother was a childhood friend of Mahler and, through her elder sister, she encountered one of the most enigmatic figures in modern literature, Franz Kafka – music became the essence of her being.

She married Leopold Sommer and, in 1938, their son, Raphael, was born. In 1943–45 she and her family were interned in Theresienstadt, where she was able to take advantage of the camp's special status and perform in front of inmates and guards alike. She came back without her mother or husband to face the subjugation of Prague before leaving it, with Raphael, to live in Israel in 1949. She taught at the Jerusalem Conservatory, where she raised generations of accomplished students before retiring and following her son to London, where he died an untimely death in 2001. To

An infinity of life



experience such a blow after a life of profound displacement, loss and survival might, understandably, have brought about a wish to die, to seek everlasting peace, but Gigi was made of stronger stuff. Though grieving, her passion for life was undimmed.

What made Gigi so special was the resilience of her humanity in the face of so many 'slings and arrows'. Yet she did not share Hamlet's famous dilemma: for her, the answer was never 'not to be'. This was not a stubborn insistence on staying in this world but a desire to drink from the fountain of life. In true Continental fashion, Gigi looked beyond surface appearances. She recognised that the gruesome realities she faced were only one manifestation of the essence of man. The beauty of the human mind – in music, science, literature and art – was the other.

She was eternally in awe at momentous human achievements and determined not to

allow the ugly face of humanity to undermine the wonders of creation. In true Spinozistic spirit, she saw God everywhere: that there is no good without evil, no greatness without debasement. Some mistook this for forgiveness and tolerance but Gigi was simply accepting reality, while her mind was engaged in seeking and celebrating wisdom and genius, on looking into the heart of greatness.

Gigi was a true Renaissance woman who, in her little flat in Jerusalem, revived the Mendelssohnian salon, wherein participants fought passionately over ideas, eventually to be soothed by the most powerful of human expressions – music. She always wanted to know more, from the neurology of the mind to its most refined expressions in Shakespeare's sonnets. Every person she met was a messenger from nature. Everyone had to be discovered, interrogated, admired and loved. Everyone was part of an infinitely pieced puzzle.

She never complained about the here and now. Neither food nor physical comfort mattered. Even a bad piano was no obstacle to the communication of the spirit of the Universe through the power of music. She could sit for hours in the darkness and tap out music with her fingers as her imagination led her into the bright light of a timeless meadow. In her last hours, unable to speak, her fingers were playing again – almost certainly Bach or Beethoven.

Amos Witztum

Risa Elizabeth Novak (née Maurer), born Vienna 8 May 1923, died Newcastle 19 January 2014

Elizabeth Novak, known to her friends and family as Eli (or Babi to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren), was born in Vienna, the only child of Dr Emil and Fanny Maurer. Her father was a prominent lawyer and Social Democrat politician.

Eli had a conventional childhood but after 1938 her life changed. She had to leave her school and entered the Chayes Gymnasium. Her father was interned in Dachau and Buchenwald. In May 1939 her mother managed to put her on a Kindertransport and in June that year was successful in securing her husband's release. With the help of the British trade union movement, Eli's parents too managed to get to England in the summer of 1939. (They returned to Vienna after the war and Dr Maurer became the first postwar president of the Viennese Jewish community.)

Following a short time as a trainee nurse, Eli went to school in Walsall and in 1941 obtained a place at University College Nottingham, where she studied modern languages for a London University external degree. In 1942 she met Czech-Jewish refugee Pavel Novak, whom she married in 1943. In 1944 she graduated with first class

honours in English, German and French. Having worked as an assistant librarian in August 1945, she joined her husband, who in June returned to Prague, where they settled. Their children, Zuzana and Michal, were born in 1948 and 1950 respectively.

Eli learned Czech and worked teaching English and as a translator and, after obtaining a Diploma in Education, she became a lecturer in English, teaching postgraduate students at the Charles University. The couple enthusiastically embraced the 'Prague spring'; all the more bitter was their disappointment after the Soviet invasion of 1968 and the family left Prague. Following a brief stay with friends in Austria, they arrived in England – the second time for Pavel and Eli as refugees in their lives.

They settled in Newcastle upon Tyne, where Pavel obtained a position at the University. Eli taught German and English as a Second Language at various institutions, eventually teaching German conversation at the prestigious Central High School.



Following the 1989 'Velvet Revolution' in Czechoslovakia, she again contacted the Prague publisher Aventinum, for whom she then translated several books from Czech into English. Notably, one of these books was based on the journal produced by the teenagers in Terezin under the title *Vedem* (In the Lead) and published as *We Are Children Just the Same* with a preface by Václav Havel. The book won the 1995 National Jewish Book Award in the field of Holocaust publications.

Following retirement, Eli continued her busy social life. She loved dancing, books, bridge and scrabble and travelled widely with her husband. In December 2012 she suffered a serious accident (burns), which left her bedridden. In August 2013 she and her husband still celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary but she died in January 2014.

Eli is terribly missed by her husband, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. May her memory be a blessing.

Pavel Novak



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

An illustrious heritage

A ceremony held recently at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's National Library marked the launch of an elegant volume entitled *Vienna Stories: Viennese Jews Remember the 20th Century in Words and Pictures*. The book, which contains photographs and first-person accounts by Holocaust survivors originally from that city, was published by Centropa (Central Europe Centre for Research and Documentation), an organisation dedicated to preserving the memory of individuals whose lives were affected by the Holocaust.

In true Viennese tradition (and possibly also because the Vienna State Parliament and City Council were involved), the event began with delicious light refreshments, including strudel and plenty of *Kaffee und Kuchen*. After the approximately 100 guests had eaten their fill, we were invited to take our seats as the presentation began.

Edward Serotta, who hails originally from America, was instrumental in establishing Centropa in Vienna in 2000 and still runs it from there. He started the evening's proceedings by screening a short film about one family from Austria, the Brodmanns, based on family photographs and a sound track in which the surviving member of the family, Kurt, describes his family's history and what happened to its various members. By this time, the Austrian Ambassador, Franz Josef Kuglitsch, had joined us after being delayed by traffic and his driver's lack of familiarity with the geography of the Hebrew University's Givat Ram campus. He gave a brief address on behalf of the Austrian authorities.

The film is one of several on similar topics which have been made by Centropa and are being shown in various languages throughout Europe, the USA and Israel. To date, the organisation has conducted and recorded 1,200 interviews, digitised 22,000 photos, made 40 multimedia films, and is involved with 600 partner schools in 16 countries. In other words, the message about the Holocaust and its consequences is being preserved and transmitted to teachers and pupils all over the world. One indication

of its success, Mr Serotta noted, is the fact that today Kristallnacht (Pogromnacht) is marked by numerous ceremonies throughout Austria, whereas only 30 years ago it was scarcely commemorated at all. Moreover, young people all over the country are evincing a growing interest in the subject of the Holocaust.

Taking as its motto 'Stories are universal and stories connect us all', Centropa regards it as its mission to record the stories of Holocaust survivors, and the book it has produced briefly recounts those of more than 60 of them. Survivors were interviewed also in other European countries, principally those of Eastern Europe, ranging from the Balkans to the Baltic, and it is hoped that additional books will follow.

Vienna Stories is divided into several sections, each one lavishly illustrated with photos of the individuals concerned. The Introduction is followed by sections entitled 'The World We Lost', 'Our World Destroyed', and 'A World Rebuilt'. In a revealing epilogue,

Edward Serotta describes the process of establishing Centropa in 2000 in a corner of his living room in Vienna, since when it has expanded to the point that it now has offices in several European cities and a wide and distinguished list of donors. A copy of the book may be purchased from office@centropa.org

Inspired by the event, I proceeded to read Stefan Zweig's beautifully written (and translated) autobiography *The World of Yesterday* and came away with what I hope is a clearer understanding of the events and *Zeitgeist* of the period.

Because, when all is said and done, *fin-de-siècle* Austria, and Vienna in particular, saw the spectacular blossoming of the Jewish contribution to intellectual, artistic and musical life. Among its most prominent figures were Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg, Arthur Schnitzler, Sigmund Freud and Stefan Zweig. This illustrious heritage is worthy of commemoration and we were informed that Vienna's newly inaugurated Jewish Museum, supported by official municipal and national bodies, is spearheading efforts to ensure that it is not forgotten.

EVENTS AT JW3

Continental Britons Film and Discussion

Thursday 19 June 2014

4-5.30 pm

Dr Bea Lewkowicz

Director of Sephardi Voices and
Co-Director of AJR Refugee Voices Archive

Entry: £8

Based on her film *Continental Britons*, Dr Lewkowicz presents some of the journeys of the German and Austrian refugees who arrived in the UK in the late 1930s.

Among those included in her film are Andrew Sachs, Judith Kerr, Wolfgang Suschitzky and Norbert Brainin.

Music as Memory

Thursday 26 June

4.30-5.30 pm

Dr Malcolm Miller

Research Associate at the Institute of
Musical Research and Associate Lecturer
at the Open University, Goldsmiths College
and City Lit

Entry: £8

Dr Miller traces the careers of notable émigré composers such as Hans Gal, Egon Wellesz, Vilem Tausky, Berthold Goldschmidt and Joseph Horowitz.

Please book tickets through JW3 on

020 7433 8988 or at www.jw3.org.uk

VISIT TO MONTEFIORE SYNAGOGUE



RAMSGATE, KENT
THURSDAY 17 JULY 2014

In 1831 Moses Montefiore bought a mansion with 24 acres of land on the East Cliff of the then fashionable seaside town of Ramsgate. Soon after, he bought an adjacent plot of land and commissioned his cousin, David Mocatta, to design his own synagogue, which was opened with a grand public ceremony in 1833.

Transport will be from Finchley Road and Stanmore. We will be leaving at 9 am. On arrival there will be a fish and chip lunch at the Custom House overlooking the harbour followed by a tour of the Synagogue. We will then have tea at the Italianate Gardens and expect to be back in London by 6 pm.

Please note that a fair amount of walking is involved in this outing.

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

Published by The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), a company limited by guarantee.

Registered office: Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Registered in England and Wales with charity number: 1149882 and company number: 8220991

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Printed by FBprinters LLP, 26 St Albans Lane, London NW11 7QB Tel: 020 8458 3220 Email: info@fbprinters.com