

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Britain and the Holocaust

The Wiener Library launched its exhibition 'Dilemmas, Choices, Responses: Britain and the Holocaust' on 18 April 2016. The exhibition, co-curated with the Holocaust Educational Trust, used material from the Library's rich archives to reassess the responses of the British government and the British public to the Holocaust and – of particular interest to many of our readers – to the arrival of thousands of Jewish refugees on these shores. It is both fascinating and chilling to read the correspondence between Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the Air Ministry in which the latter set out its reasons for not bombing the installations at Auschwitz. The contribution made by the Holocaust Educational Trust's (HET) regional ambassadors, young people who work with survivors of Nazi persecution, was a special feature of the launch. After speeches of welcome from Anthony Spiro, Chair of the Library's Board of Trustees, and Karen Pollock, Chief Executive of the HET, there was a heartfelt account by one of the young ambassadors of what the experience had meant to him, and a graceful speech in response by one of the survivors.

This thought-provoking and expertly produced exhibition raised the familiar and much disputed issue of the nature of the reception accorded to the Jewish refugees who fled to Britain after 1933 to escape the Nazis. Down the decades, there have been, very broadly speaking, two rival schools of thought: those who have seen the British government's response to the plight of the Jews under Nazi rule as inadequate and ungenerous, its immigration policy after 1933 as restrictive, and its treatment of the refugees once admitted as unnecessarily harsh, most obviously in the mass internment of 'enemy aliens' in summer 1940; and, on the other side, those refugees who felt gratitude to Britain for taking them in, for resisting Hitler when the nation 'stood alone' in 1940-41, and for making it possible for them to build new and fulfilled lives as British citizens after the war.

The potential for disagreement in this area emerged clearly in the responses to my front-page article (April 2016 issue) on the UK Holocaust Memorial, which contained

what was intended to be a studiously neutral account of the arrival of the Jews from Europe between 1933 and 1948. In a letter to the editor published in May 2016, one reader took issue with the 'one-sided information' that



Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia detained by police at Croydon Airport, March 1939

I had provided on the British government's role in these matters, pointing out some of its failings, with the implication that I had adopted an attitude too favourable to the government by glossing them over. But another reader remarked, quite to the contrary, on my 'timely, if gentle, reminder that Britain has not always been a safe haven for those fleeing persecution'. It is surprising how quickly one-sidedness can turn into two-sidedness when one is dealing with an area as problematic as this.

It is instructive to consider the three points raised by the first of these letters. Firstly, few would dispute the writer's contention that

'many survivors and refugees had an extremely difficult time after arriving in the UK', though one cannot hold the British government solely responsible for the misery caused by their forced emigration and their separation from home and family, let alone for their treatment in Nazi camps. Secondly, few would dispute that certain groups of refugees, like domestic servants, met with a particularly poor reception. Many of the young women who came to Britain on domestic service visas encountered appalling conditions, as accounts like Edith Argy's *The Childhood and Teens of a Jewish Girl in Inter-war Austria and Subsequent Adventures* make graphically clear; but British and Irish girls were treated no better in British households, nor were German and Austrian girls in households, including Jewish ones, in Berlin or Vienna. Most of these refugees remained in domestic service only for a short time, as almost all of them found

other jobs once war broke out and they were needed in offices and factories, contributing to the war effort and restoring their pride and self-esteem; not infrequently, they went on to lead happier lives.

In the case of refugee medical practitioners, the restrictions that prevented them from practising were demanded not by the government but by professional bodies like the British Medical Association, seldom restrained by human sympathies from defending its members' interests. The dispute involving junior doctors and Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt demonstrates the risks governments run in taking on the representative bodies of the medical profession. Thirdly, few people would claim that the British government was generous in its policy of admitting Jews from Europe after the end of the war (see my article 'The Miliband Controversy in Historical Perspective' in our December 2013 issue). But how long did those admitted suffer under the conditions of entrance imposed on them? I note that the writer, complaining that the British government had admitted her 'only on a temporary basis', is writing from Swiss Cottage some 70 years later. How temporary, one might ask, is 'temporary'? Pre-war refugees granted temporary residence,

RELOCATION OF AJR HEAD OFFICE

The AJR's Head Office has moved to
Winston House
2 Dollis Park
London N3 1HF

The new address is close to Finchley Central Tube Station, Northern Line, and is on a number of bus routes.

The AJR's telephone number remains **020 8385 3070**.

Britain and the Holocaust *continued*

like the men from Nazi concentration camps admitted on transit visas and accommodated at Kitchener Camp in Kent, were allowed to stay permanently, while none of the Jewish children admitted to Britain after the war were ever deported abroad.

This is, in truth, a grey area not suited to black-and-white judgments. It can be argued with justice that Britain was lukewarm (and sometimes not even that) in its policy towards the admission of Jews fleeing Nazism and in the reception that it extended to them. Britain took in some 60,000 Jews before the war, but six million perished. Plainly, it would have been possible for the country to have taken more and to have treated those that it did take more hospitably – always bearing in mind that the government could not ignore public opinion, sections of which, then as now, were sharply hostile to the admission of immigrants, especially Jews from Germany. But it is also true that in proportion to its population and absorptive capacity, Britain took in more Jewish refugees in the years before the Second World War than any other country except Palestine. Britain alone took in some 10 per cent of the Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia who escaped from Nazi rule before September 1939; of the 120,000 Austrian Jews who survived the Holocaust, about a quarter, just over 30,000, did so because their first country of refuge was Britain.

This is not to claim that it was ever easy for Jews to gain entrance to Britain during the 1930s and 1940s. Between 1933 and 1938, Jews fleeing Nazism knew that if they sought entrance to Britain, they could be refused admission by the immigration officer at their port of arrival. The principal criterion for their admission was their ability to support themselves; those few who were wealthy, famous or likely to create jobs for British workers were welcome; those who could prove that they had skills that qualified them for particular forms of employment were admitted, but most of the rest could at best hope for admission as tourists. In 1938, following the exodus of Jews provoked by Hitler's annexation of Austria, the

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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.

NORTHERN REGIONAL MANCHESTER

Tuesday 19 July 2016

Please join us at our annual Northern Regional Get-together
Our keynote speaker will be **Mike Levy**,
playwright, journalist and educator for the Holocaust Education Trust,
whose subject will be 'From Hitler to Hi-de-Hi'

This is the story of the Warner's Camp which was used as a transit camp for the first wave of Kindertransportees in December 1938 and later became the location for the BBC TV series 'Hi-de-Hi'.

The day will include refreshments and lunch, discussion groups and musical entertainment. We will also have a demonstration of SPF Connect, a new project funded by Six Point Foundation to help older people get online by providing a free, easy-to-use touch-screen computer and training. It's an excellent opportunity to meet and socialise with friends old and new.

For full details and an application form, please contact
Wendy Bott on 07908 156 365 or at wendy@ajr.org.uk



AJR CARD AND GAMES CLUB

Please join us at our new Card and Games Club
on Monday 11 July at 1.00 pm

at North Western Reform Synagogue,
Alyth Gardens, Temple Fortune, London NW11 7EN

Card games including Bridge, Backgammon, Scrabble – you decide.
Games are dependent on numbers being sufficient.

A sandwich lunch with tea, coffee and Danish pastries will be served on arrival.

£7.00 per person

Booking is essential – when you book please let us know your choice of game.

Please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or email susan@ajr.org.uk



British government introduced a visa system. This allowed the government to regulate the entry of refugees more systematically. Certain groups of refugees, like those willing to work as domestic servants, were granted visas, as were those who could find someone resident in Britain willing to sponsor them, at a cost of £50. Ten thousand children were admitted on Kindertransports without visas – and without their parents.

The picture that accompanied the exhibition at the Wiener Library was captioned 'Members of a group of refugees from German-occupied Czechoslovakia being marched away by police at Croydon airport on 31 March 1939'. But does this picture, striking as it is, accurately reflect the historical reality of British immigration policy in the last 18 months before the war? These refugees had indeed fled from Czechoslovakia, which had been occupied by Nazi Germany earlier in March 1939, and had arrived in Britain on a plane from Poland. They were detained by the police because they had arrived without visas. The humanitarian argument would, of course, have been to admit them.

But to admit refugees who arrived without visas would have undermined the very visa system that permitted some 50,000 Jewish refugees to enter Britain in 1938-39 – a very substantial increase on the 10,000 or so who had been admitted during the previous five years, from January 1933. Jews arriving in



AJR FILM CLUB

Please join us at

**Sha'arei Tsedek North London
Reform Synagogue,**

120 Oakleigh Road North, Whetstone, N20 9EZ
on Monday 4 July 2016 at 12.30 pm

A lunch of smoked salmon bagels, Danish pastries and tea or coffee will be served first.

'The Comedy Harmonisters'

This fascinating film tells the story of the famous German sextet the Comedian Harmonists, three of them Jewish, from the day they first met in 1927 to the day in 1934 when they were banned.

£7.00 per person

Booking is essential

**Please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070
or email susan@ajr.org.uk**

Britain without visas were routinely refused entry: the actress Hannah Norbert, who later married the famous comic actor Martin Miller, was sent back to France when she first tried to enter Britain but was admitted without any difficulty once her family had secured a visa for her. It is worth noting that, unlike countries like Switzerland, the British authorities did not send refugees back to Germany. In any case, the great majority of refugees arriving in Britain were in possession of entry visas; their lives were saved.

Anthony Grenville

Two World Wars - on different sides

1 July 2016 is the centenary of one of the bloodiest battles in human history. The Battle of the Somme began on that day and lasted until 18 November that year. During this battle more than one million soldiers on both sides were killed or wounded.

Last year I visited the Somme battlefield with my wife. It was very hard to imagine that in this now peaceful agricultural area of northern France, so many people died 100 years ago. However, when you visit the many war graves and memorials in the area you start to comprehend the horror. There are the rows of memorial stones, of soldiers who were all killed on the same date, or memorials with the names of soldiers who died during the battles and whose bodies were never found.

I became interested in the First World War not only because of centenary commemorations but also because when looking through family papers in 2014, I found the complete First World War army record of my grandfather, Karl Gumpel. Karl died in July 1946, 70 years ago (before I was born!). In 1914 he was a very proud German, from Dortmund, who was in the German army, mostly the artillery divisions, throughout the First World War. For his war service he was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class by the Kaiser.

As a German war hero, after 1918 Karl was able to build a successful life for himself, with a beautiful family and promotion to senior jobs. He became the advertising director of the Edeka chain of stores. He was one of the highest-ranking Jewish members of staff in the organisation.

When Hitler came to power Karl requested from the German War Office a certificate confirming his full First World War record. He received the certificate with the government stamp and civil servant's signature dated 13 April 1933. I would guess that he expected that this certificate would aid him in his future career. Alas, just as with other German Jews, this was not to be the case. The Nazis wanted to strike from the records that there had been Jews fighting for their country two decades earlier.

On memorial stones for fallen soldiers,



Allied or German, where they are of the Jewish faith the memorial stones' inscriptions include a Star of David. In the First World War Jews fought on both sides. During our visit to a First World War German cemetery our guide told us that during the Nazi period they removed all names and memorials of all Jewish soldiers in the cemetery. Thankfully after the Second World War this was rectified and

the names restored on the German grave markers.

With his war record certificate among his papers, Karl Gumpel first escaped to Czechoslovakia and then, in May 1939, to England. While he was proud of his war record for the other side, he wanted to show the British government that he had now changed sides. While interned on the Isle of Man in 1940, he wrote to the British government advising them how they could defeat the Nazis and win the war. As a former director of advertising, he tells the British War Office, he understands the mind of German people and, given the opportunity, he could foment a revolution in Germany and prevent much bloodshed. He received a condescending response from the government. He kept this correspondence and even arranged at great expense to make photographic copies of it.

Sadly, for a man in his sixties the 'deaf ear' response to his correspondence and the horrors of the Second World War took their toll. He was released from internment and lived in lodgings in London supported by the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia for the remainder of the war. At the end of the war he discovered that his wife, trapped in Prague in 1939, had been one of the victims of the Holocaust. His health deteriorated and, just over a year after the end of Second World War, he died in London.

Interestingly, my grandfather must have made friends with a number of British Jewish First World War veterans as during the Second World War he was made an honorary member of the Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women.

David Selo

Our Chairman

In July 1996, *AJR Information* announced the election of Andrew Kaufman as Chairman of the Association of Jewish Refugees. On this anniversary of his election, we offer him our congratulations and our thanks for the time, effort and hard work that he has devoted to his position at the AJR.



Freddie Knoller BEM

The AJR is delighted to congratulate Freddie Knoller, who has been awarded the British Empire Medal for telling the story of his survival to schoolchildren all over the UK. Since 2000 he has told his story to over 500 schools.



HITCHEN LAVENDER FARM

a fragrant day out

Thursday 21 July 2016

Following a tour of the farm and a stroll around part of the lavender field, we will hear about the history of lavender in the area, its benefits and uses, and how to grow and maintain it. We will be shown a selection of the 65 varieties that grow on the farm and discuss the wildlife it attracts. Picking a bag of fresh lavender is included in the tour.

Lunch in the Farm café and travel by coach are provided.

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

PROPOSED TRIP TO BETH SHALOM FROM NEWCASTLE & SURROUNDING AREAS

Sunday 10 July 2016

We are arranging a trip to Beth Shalom, The National Holocaust Centre, in Newark near Nottingham.

The AJR will arrange a return coach and lunch at Beth Shalom, including entrance, at a cost of £13.00 per person.

If you are interested please contact Agnes Isaacs at agnes@ajr.org.uk or on 07908 156 361



Back row from left: Anne Martin, Chris Tweddell (Northern Social Worker), Wendy Bott (Northern Groups Co-Ordinator), Ian LeBoutillier; front row from left: Dena LeBoutillier, Ralph Black, Rose Abrahamson, Veronika Keczkas, Olive Rosner

HULL CF Lavish Lunch, Talk on Hull's Jewish History, Tea in the Garden

Papa's Fish and Chips Restaurant was the venue, with Veronika most generously treating us all to a lavish lunch. Afterwards, we were invited back to her home, where she gave a short talk on Hull's Jewish history, followed by afternoon tea and cakes in her beautiful garden.

Wendy Bott

• Remembering the journey of the SS Bodegraven •

Seventy-six years ago, on 19 May, a Dutch ship arrived in Liverpool. It was not expected by the port authorities and its cargo was 262 refugees from Holland including 75 children, among them 15-year-old Heinz Hirschberg, who was to become Rabbi Harry Jacobi.

The arrival of the *SS Bodegraven* was remembered on 22 May this year in a ceremony at the Maritime Museum in Liverpool. Harry Jacobi, with his children Margaret and Richard, and Carrie Sherman, who arrived on the *Bodegraven* just before her first birthday, travelled by train on a journey organised by Peter Hedderly to be met by members of the Liverpool Jewish community. The local press and radio were there to cover the event. We read moving testimonies from other passengers who had been on the ship. Prayers followed in memory of those children and adults who had not been able to reach safety and also in memory of the remarkable woman who had saved the children, Geertruida Wijmsmuller-Meijer.

Tante Truus, as Geertruida was known, was later recognised as a 'Righteous Gentile' at Yad Vashem for the work she had done in rescuing Jews. As Nazi troops entered Amsterdam she gathered the Jewish orphans from the Burgerweeshuis and persuaded Captain Huibrecht Regoort to take them and any



Harry Jacobi and Carrie Sherman at the Liverpool ceremony with Lynne and Tony Zeffert, married by Rabbi Jacobi almost 40 years ago

adult Jews who could be fitted on the ship and to sail for Britain. As the ship left, its passengers heard shells being fired and saw smoke rising from the Shell refineries the Dutch had set on fire. The ship was immediately attacked by the Luftwaffe but, amazingly, there were no injuries.

What should have been a short voyage turned out to be five days of anxious waiting. At first the boat was diverted to Belfast by a British patrol but it made an emergency stop at Falmouth. Initially, they were refused permission to disembark, but finally, they were allowed to sail for Liverpool and to disembark there.

At Liverpool, those over 16 were detained and sent to the Isle of Man. By happy contrast, several of the children recall the wonderful welcome they were given in Wigan, where they were

taken to the cinema and cared for. The children then moved to Manchester, where the younger ones went to school and the older children, like Harry Jacobi, learnt a trade. Like so many refugees, they went on to make a great contribution to British society.

Coming only a week after the Calais refugee camp (see page 11), we could not but be struck by the way history was repeating itself. The commemoration was a moving reminder that the journey of the *Bodegraven* continues to have resonance for our time.

Harry, Margaret and Richard Jacobi

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High-spirited and careless: Louis (Büdi) Hagen

In his article 'Arnhem 1944' (May 2016), Anthony Grenville gave prominence to the exploits of Louis Hagen, whom I knew as a frequent visitor to the Hampstead home of Sir Peter and Lady Medawar. Louis, who was known by the nickname Büdi, was a close friend



of the Medawar family and AJR Journal readers may be interested in the following passage from Lady Medawar's *A Very Decided Preference: Life with Peter Medawar* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

I have the permission of Charles and Caroline Medawar to give you this excerpt from Lady Medawar's book. I worked with Sir Peter for 13 years, first as a PhD student and then as a research colleague. He was awarded the 1960 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology for studies carried out in collaboration with another colleague, R. E. Billingham, and myself. Both he and Lady Medawar are long since dead.

Leslie Baruch Brent (Emeritus Professor)

In the spring of 1937 we were invited to Potsdam for a short holiday by the German Jewish parents of a young man whom we had met the year before. Louis Hagen, nicknamed Büdi, was the second son of the head of one of the last private banks in Germany. Büdi was high-spirited and careless. One day, away from home in Potsdam, aged about seventeen, he wrote a postcard to his sister and rashly allowed himself to add a rude remark about Hitler. A housemaid, under notice for stealing his mother's jewellery, found and read it. If she was dismissed, she told Frau Hagen, she would report Büdi to the police. Büdi's parents bravely told her to leave, she informed, and Büdi was arrested.

The prison he was taken to had been adapted from an old fortified castle. The prisoners were made to run round the courtyard until the older ones fell down, exhausted. The guards amused themselves by kicking those they particularly disliked into a shallow pond within the castle walls;

as each tried to crawl out, they were knocked back, until they died in the mud. All this Büdi saw, out of his barred window overlooking the courtyard. He was often singled out in the middle of the night for the brutal amusement of the young guards, delighted to have an opportunity of beating up a contemporary whose life had been more privileged than theirs, and who was a Jew, one of those whom they had been taught to hate. The prisoners had to clean the latrines with their bare hands. The metal handles of the full buckets they then had to carry away took the skin off their hands and the palms became infected.

One day a big Mercedes drove under the gate of the castle. Inside was a well-known judge, the father of one of Büdi's school friends. He demanded to see Louis Hagen – he had a permit to release him. The Commandant marched Büdi to the guard house. If he told anyone how the prisoners were treated, he said, "We will get you, wherever you are, and bring you back, and you

continued on page 5 ➔

Remembrance day in Rimbach

Over the last few years I have come to know, and make a friend of, Eva-Gesine Wegner, a sculptor from Rimbach in the Odenwald, Hessen, the area in which I was brought up (though in a different village).

Eva had learned that I had left Germany for Britain on the Kindertransport, of which she hadn't previously heard: she was born after the war and, as in most cases, her predecessors had told their children little about the persecution and murder of their Jewish contemporaries. Eva was intrigued and wanted to know more. Eventually she told my story to a class in each of the two local secondary schools in which she teaches art (mainly pottery): the Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Schule and the Martin-Luther-Schule. I had also spoken to those children in annual readings I'd been giving in Hessen schools for 17 years.

Eva wanted to mark the rescue of Jewish children from the area by creating small towers of bricks – especially including bricks for some of the refugees who had made it to freedom. To enable the children to do this, she asked me to provide her with the names and details of a number of children who had fled Germany and Austria. In this respect I was fortunate. I had lived in a refugee hostel in the north of England for seven very long years. We hadn't found our parents alive at the end of the war and the committee in Newcastle that had looked after us so generously had continued to do so until we were old enough to work and live on our own or find a home with surviving relatives.

High-spirited and careless *continued*

will never get out again". Finally Büdi was driven away in the car with the judge. The two SS men sitting in front with the driver were separated from them by a glass panel. In spite of being overheard or observed, Büdi showed his hands and described what went on in the castle. The judge, then a member of the Nazi party, was appalled. He subsequently resigned his position and was banished to a small town in East Prussia. Büdi's parents had influence enough to get him out and over to England, where he was found a lowly job in the Pressed Steel works in Oxford. After we got to know him, we made him an honorary member of our family and the godfather of our first child, Caroline, born in July 1938. He is now a grandfather, but is still ebullient, resourceful and kind.



Beate Wilhelm, Principal of Rimbach's Martin-Luther-Schule, gives a welcoming address. Ruth David and Eva-Gesine Wegner are in the front row, third and fourth from left

We had slowly scattered to other parts of England, to the USA, Palestine (pre-State Israel), Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Two of us had left for South Africa but continued on to Australia. We'd got to know each so well we were like sisters. I remembered not only all their names and birthdays and which cities they'd lived in in Germany: I knew who were their siblings, not all of whom had survived, and almost all our parents had been murdered. Unfortunately it was a girls' hostel only and I had little, if any, knowledge of boy refugees.

I wrote all these details down and the schoolchildren chose one girl each whom they wanted to honour. They then wrote letters to these girls informing them why they'd been chosen. Some of the addressees replied, on the whole with interest. The pupils were delighted and went ahead with the work Eva-Gesine was organising. They were each to make a brick – largish but with exact given dimensions – that was to be incorporated with others into the small towers which can be seen on the picture. All the names are there with their individual descriptions, moulded or incised into the clay. It worked out very well. There are steles in between the towers on which some of the letters the children had written have been transcribed.

At one stage, Eva asked the children to write down their thoughts while they worked. This produced some very moving reactions. They seemed to fully understand the fear the Kindertransport children had felt as they had left home; one or two even said they didn't think they could have parted from their own families. It is very clear to me that much has been learnt and understood.

It was finally on 6 June last year that the work was unveiled by Kreis Bergstrasse Landrat (District Administrator) Matthias Wilkes. He spoke movingly about the location. Other worthies came; the choir sang; musicians played suitable pieces; and the Martin-Luther-Schule Principal, Beate Wilhelm, gave a moving address. There were many proud parents present and the children who had been so much a part of the event behaved beautifully and were happy to have been involved. It can only have done good.

Why did the event take place on 6 June? Eva had once asked me on what date I had left Germany (forever as I had thought). I had told her 6 June 1939. She remembered and gave this date a name: *Tag der Achtung* (Day of Remembrance). She asked both schools to mark this date in the future as one of respect and remembrance. The little town of Rimbach, once a Nazi stronghold, has seen another episode in its history.

Ruth David



Eva-Gesine Wegner and Matthias Wilkes watch final unveiling of the bricks



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

SECOND GENERATION MEMORIES

Sir – Your front-page article ‘Second generation memories’ (June) struck a chord with me. I too am of the second generation. My father did not, however, arrive in this country as a refugee: he came here in 1957 to marry my mother. During the war he lived in hiding in occupied France. He was one of four siblings. The oldest, Erich (after whom I was named), was the only one to be captured by the Nazis and deported from Drancy to Auschwitz. He died in 1945 ‘of natural causes’ in Gross-Rosen. It was thanks to Erich that his parents, brothers and sister survived the Shoah as he arranged for them to be hidden through his contacts in the French Resistance.

I have tried very hard to piece together the family history. My father, like so many who survived, never spoke about the years in hiding. He passed away in 1991 having suffered from motor neurone disease and I learned more about his life in the Shoah from his sister during the *shiva* week than I ever did from him. I learned then that the family was split up and was hiding in separate places. I remember him screaming in the night and being told he had dreamed about Allied bombers coming overhead and that that was what had scared him. One can only imagine what it must have been like for him, a child, living with a constant fear of detection. He was just 13 when the war ended.

I do know that after the war he ran away from his family to Palestine/Israel, fought in the War of Independence in 1947-48, and returned to his family in France in 1953. I would love to know where he was hiding and who had kept him safe. In the meantime, I am considering putting together the story for posterity.

Eric Rendel, Edgware, Middx

Sir – Tony Grenville’s article about how his parents ‘hid’ the horrors of the Holocaust from him fascinated me.

I was born in Vienna and came to England aged only three, yet I knew bits and pieces about what was going on throughout the war by just listening. My parents did not stop talking about

how we had fled from Vienna and how my father was nearly taken to Dachau. I remember watching with them on TV Richard Dimbleby’s film of the liberation of Belsen. I was told that my cousin, her husband and child had been killed in Belsen. I later found out that my aunt and uncle were murdered in Auschwitz. By the time I was 14, I had accompanied my parents back to Vienna for a visit and learned even more. I knew what the Nazis had done. I knew the names of the war criminals at Nuremberg.

Were Tony’s parents right in keeping him in the dark? Were my parents right in giving me all the gory details? Perhaps your readers have a view on this.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

Sir – Further to Anthony Grenville’s article, referring to the beautiful refugee film star Hedy Lamarr, your readers may not be aware that she was more than just a pretty face.

Hedy was interested in the newly developed technology of radio transmission and she suggested the stratagem called ‘channel hopping’ to keep messages safe from unlawful eavesdropping. She appears to be the uncontested inventor of this idea, which is used in mobile phones to this day.

I discovered the above from a film on the Discovery Channel (<https://vimeo.com/170454007>), which incidentally features my partner Frank Beck as well. His touch button developments are also used in mobile phones! Frank, like me, is an active AJR member.

Mary (Putzi) Huttner, London N3

YORKSHIRE TRIP – HOW DO THEY DO IT?

Sir – With Susan Harrod at the helm and Wendy Bott ably assisting, especially in the head-counting department – a requirement of the trip more necessary than one would have imagined – they, together with their cheerful and friendly helpers and social workers, and the coach driver too – he was superb – they did it.

This, coupled with the work that surely went into the planning of the trip for it to

succeed as it certainly did, as confirmed by the verbal tributes already made. For me, not even the cold wet weather that prevailed during our visit to the beautiful Harlow Carr Gardens in Harrogate could spoil its enchantment.

Now home, it’s time to take out those dreaded diet sheets and relax once more after having been so well fed and entertained on a relentless scale, starting with the charming and warm welcome at the Ziff Centre – where the volume of chatter never diminished throughout – to our last meal together at the Thackray Medical Museum. The new friendships forged an added testament to the success of the Yorkshire trip. Thank you AJR.

June Wertheim, Esher, Surrey

IS YOM HASHOAH REALLY A TIME TO SMILE?

Sir – A well-known weekly Orthodox Jewish publication recently suggested a surprising response to Yom HaShoah – that one could smile at the commemoration of this day.

The author describes a week-long group visit to sites of former Jewish communities in pre-war Poland, culminating in a ‘March of the Living’ from Auschwitz to Birkenau on Yom HaShoah itself. He states that originally this walk was to be undertaken in ‘sombre silence, reflecting the mood of the day’. Yet on that day in those bleak surroundings, he witnessed large numbers of Jews present taking ‘selfies’, swapping badges and wrist bands, and creating a ‘carnival atmosphere’.

He writes that initially he was shocked at what he was witnessing but he subsequently reconsidered this reaction. He now smiles when he recalls how the ‘thousands of Jews, confident in their faith, converge on one of the cruellest places on earth, to declare that despite all the efforts to destroy us ... the people of Israel lives on ... we flourish, and we remain committed to our national project of promoting God’s Torah, ethics and loving kindness in the world.’

Whereas a positive message about Jewish identity is generally to be applauded, surely it is misplaced in the context of Yom HaShoah. Positive messages relating to the Holocaust can be left for other days in the year. One does not smile when one attends a funeral or stone-setting or marks a *Yahrzeit*, whatever positive mark or influence the departed one has left behind. Like these, Yom HaShoah marks loss. It must remain a day for solemn remembrance of the lost six million.

David Wirth, London SE21

WHERE HAS ALL THE MONEY GONE?

Sir – The recent Channel 4 programme ‘Unreported World’ on ‘The Forgotten Holocaust Survivors’, showing the disgraceful poverty and neglect of the Holocaust survivors in Israel, was a shocking reminder of their suffering in the evening

of their lives. The young volunteers working with the Foundation for the Benefit of the Holocaust Victims in Israel, chaired by Avi Dichter, a former minister in the Israeli cabinet and the son of Holocaust survivors, are doing sterling work.

The millions Germany paid in *Wiedergutmachung* to all sorts of bodies – the Claims Conference, slave labour payments, etc – should have alleviated their having to live in such misery. Where has all the money gone?

Helga and George Lazarus, London N3

'HOSTILE TO ZIONISM'

Sir – In the light of Jenny Manson's recent criticisms of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and of David Hirsch's resignation from the organisation Jews for Justice for Palestinians on the grounds that it 'is more part of this problem than it is part of the solution' (of left-wing anti-Semitism) and that it is 'wholly hostile to "Zionists"', one may be forgiven for asking whether Mrs Manson is still a member of that organisation.

Lionel Blumenthal, London NW11

JEWISH REFUGEES FROM HOLLAND

Sir – I would like to contact Jewish refugees brought over to England from Holland by a youth councillor called Ellen Sophie Meijer. She was my aunt and, on her return to Holland, she was deported to Sobibor, where she was murdered. She left behind an 18-month-old baby boy and a two-year-old girl. The baby boy never knew his mother and it would mean the world to him to know about someone she saved. He now lives in Israel and is wheelchair-bound after having contracted polio in Westerbork transit camp.

*Elisabeth Moller, Raanana, Israel,
mollers.e@gmail.com*

JEWISH RELIEF UNITS

Sir – I would like to ask your readers if they know where I can find more information about the Jewish Relief Units founded by the British Jewish community after the Second World War. The response to my last question in your journal was terrific and it even resulted in my making contact with distant family here in Israel.

*Henry Tobias, Maale Adumim, Israel,
henrytobias2646@gmail.com*

UNTIMELY DEATH

Sir – It was with great sadness that I heard of the untimely death in Vienna of Elisabeth (Liesl) Ben David-Hindler.

Elisabeth worked tirelessly on the *Stolpersteine* project in Vienna so that people like myself could experience closure from the atrocities that befell our relatives during the Second World War. She will be remembered and sorely missed by so many people worldwide.

In May 2010 she organised our ceremony for the Gelber family (my late grandmother, aunt and uncle), which was held in a very dignified manner on

the pavement outside my grandmother's apartment on Neubaugasse in the 7th District. Elisabeth's professionalism and attention to detail were so admirable. For my brother Paul's family as well as my own it has become a lasting memory, one we will never forget.

Elisabeth worked tirelessly for a cause in which she believed passionately. Her databases are prolific and she shared them with us all. Her legacy will live on and will be continued by her daughter Daliah.

*Judith Gordon (Second Generation),
Handforth, Cheshire*

'CEDAR NIGHT'

Not long ago we had a special celebration called 'Passover', which we do for tradition because some of my family and I are Jewish. We wear a *yarmulke*, which is basically a kind of a hat. There is a plate with special foods that we use for Passover.

I went to London to do it with Granny Jenny and Grandpa Michael (we call him Rara!). Other people came too. We did songs and prayers. There were sad songs, happy songs, funny songs, exciting songs and calm songs. We had prayer books called *Haggadah*. It was great fun.

Another tradition: Grandma Jenny always moans about the prayers but she makes a good 'Cedar Night' supper! She made chicken with baked potato and beans – it was very tasty! I stayed up very, very, very LATE!!!

I think Passover brings people together in harmony.

*Amelia Sweeney, aged 8
(granddaughter of Jenny and
Michael Manson), Weybridge*

'A MALICIOUS DISTORTION OF FACTS'

Sir – Well aware that I once decided not to comment on any of Peter Phillips's diatribes in future, I simply cannot resist the urge this time.

Such incoherent rubbish defies all description! I am referring, of course, to his letter in your May issue.

To claim, for example, that 'Rabbi Yitzchak Schochet of Mill Hill has suggested that examination times be changed for Jewish students at Shavuot simply because some imams had suggested a change for Muslim students at Ramadan' is utter drivel. The reason Rabbi Schochet mentioned the Muslims was merely to point out that there are others besides us for whom concessions have to be made for religious reasons from time to time – but definitely not 'because' of them! Peter Phillips's version is a pure and malicious distortion of facts, either deliberate or out of ignorance.

As for Orthodox Jews not 'letting' their wives sit next to them in synagogue, who told him that their wives *do* want to sit next to them? Those Jewish couples who object to this Halachic ruling will obviously not even contemplate attending Orthodox services.

As for the Belz Chassidim and some of their weird customs, all I can say is that it's *their* business.

I think I will leave it at that for the time being. Let Peter Phillips put it in his pipe and smoke it!

Margarete Stern, London NW3

ERROR IN LORD WEIDENFELD OBITUARY

Sir – There is one minor inaccuracy in your obituary of Lord Weidenfeld (March) – the statement that he studied at the Diplomatic College at Vienna University. There has never been such a college there. Weidenfeld (Arthur had not yet become George and was known as Turli to his fellow students) read law at the university and I believe had help with his *Skripten* from his fellow student Kurt Waldheim. At the same time, he attended the Konsularakademie, which, under its admirable director, Generalkonsul von Hlavac, was controlled by the Foreign Office rather than the Ministry of Education and thus got away with not expelling its Jewish students. It was its tutor in English, Bassett Parry Jones, who facilitated young Weidenfeld's British visa and thus his subsequent career.

My own late brother, who was in his final year at the Academy, was able to take his diploma examination later that year even though the *Pruefungskommission* now included a representative of the Foreign Office in Berlin. Like the rest of the Austrian foreign service which had disappeared after the Anschluss, the ancient Konsularakademie was revived after the war under the name Diplomatische Akademie (DA) and, when my brother attended a party at the Austrian embassy in London some 60 years later, he found himself wearing the same DA tie as at least one of his hosts.

There is a somewhat irrelevant but pleasant coda to all this. Some ten years ago, years after my brother's death, his widow received a letter addressed to him from the then director of the DA apologising for the hurt and injury to those Nazi victims who had been unable to complete their studies at the Academy and inviting him to a diploma ceremony for the survivors. I replied on her behalf, thanking the Ambassador for his kind thoughts, mentioning that he had in fact obtained his diploma (with honours I think) but regretting the reasons for his inevitable absence. In the end, the diploma was sent to London and presented to my sister-in-law in the presence of some of her children and grandchildren at a small ceremony by Ambassador Christiani.

Francis Steiner, Deddington, Oxfordshire

ARNHEM 1944 – ON THE OTHER SIDE

Sir – Further to the letter from Peter Block (June), I have a lively memory of Sunday 17 September 1944. I was almost four-and-a-half years old. We – my foster

continued on page 16 ➔

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

The exhibition at **Tate Modern, You Can't Please All** (until 6 November 2016), by Gujarati raconteur, playwright and painter **Bhupen Khakhar**, is a tapestry of Bhakti spiritual traditions, Sanskrit, satire and blatant homosexuality. The works have been culled from international collections to provide this first international retrospective of the Indian painter.

Born in Bombay in 1934, Khakhar visited Britain in 1979, teaching at the Bath Academy of Arts as a guest of the painter Howard Hodgkin. His colourful, slightly naive early paintings depict men at work



Bhupen Khakhar *You Can't Please All* 1981
© the estate of Bhupen Khakhar

whose mindlessness is conveyed through brooding and vacant eyes and accentuated by the tiny tableaux without which no composition is complete. *Man in the Pub* derives from his English experience and here the smartly dressed pale man holding a glass and a pair of gloves is defined against dainty blue wallpaper and little life tableaux. These works are vivid, literal and narrative; a rare glimpse of abstraction comes later.

Khakhar believed an artist must be vulnerable and reflect this weakness in his work. The eponymous painting *You Can't Please All* is based on an Aesop Fable in which a donkey dies because his owners take too much advice. The main image of a naked man is visible only to us because he is

hidden by a towel over a rail from which he stares down at a blue waterscape containing a boat, houses, gardens and the dead donkey.

Khakhar brings the veracity of Ghandhi and European artists like Henri Rousseau and Pieter Breugel the Elder to his works, which become bleaker, looser, yet more sensory as he ages. Cataracts cause him to paint in a dull blur, making his sexual images less defined, but one of the very few works depicting a woman shows a man staring at himself in a mirror.

On recovering his eyesight, Khakhar also regained precision in his luminous watercolours. He produced a series of woodcuts to illustrate two stories by Salman Rushdie. But when cancer took hold he projected the condition onto the canvas with savage, physical realism. There is violence in his portrayal of his treatment. Demons are tearing him apart in one of his last works, *Idiot*, a semi-abstract which shows him surrounded by blurred images and a seated, malicious laughing figure. Now the vibrant colours have disappeared into a small mono-beige canvas, rendering the pain all the more powerful.

The searing compassion aroused by this painting, created in his dying year, 2003, signals violence between Hindu and Muslim communities in 2001 and referenced in Bollywood cinema imagery in which the actor plays both the good guy and the bad guy... blood and gore everywhere.

Many will flinch from explicit images – like colonic irrigation – and Khakhar treated his homosexuality just as palpably, almost redolent of Francis Bacon's tormented portrayal of the death of his lover, George Dyer, although Khakhar lacks Bacon's anguished,

physical intensity.

One beautiful painting is based on a Sanskrit myth in which a dying man begs his son to give him his youth. The surrendering youth is seen as a golden angel making love to him.

REVIEWS

A film masterpiece

SON OF SAUL

directed by László Nemes

starring Géza Röhrig, Levente Molnár, Urs Rechn



Son of Saul, a film about the atrocities committed at Auschwitz, has been released in the UK, having received immense critical acclaim. The film won the Grand Prix at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival and the award for Best Foreign Film at the 88th Academy Awards. Directed by László Nemes, it has even made Claude Lanzmann, the great French film-maker who believed that to present the Holocaust in fiction was a transgression, admit that it is possible to make a good feature film about the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust. Whether or not to see it posed a problem for me (Gerta Vrbova): having lost so many friends and family in Auschwitz and having barely survived the Holocaust myself, I wasn't sure I would be able to watch a film depicting in visual images the details of how the Auschwitz killing factory worked.

My late husband Rudi Vrba was one of the few who succeeded in escaping from Auschwitz in April 1944 so as to warn the Hungarian Jews about what to expect. He described to me in the summer of 1944 how the death factory in Auschwitz functioned and his description haunts me to this day. I was therefore not sure whether I would be able to watch the visual images of the annihilation of my people. I discussed it with two of my grandsons aged 17 and 19 and they volunteered to come with me and give me moral support. I am grateful to them for the film is a masterpiece, the filming innovative, and the impact of the images unforgettable. One of my grandsons, Danny Hilton, helped me with writing the review.

The plot takes place in Auschwitz in October 1944 at the height of the most frenzied killing of Hungarian Jews. It describes a day and a half in the life of Saul Ausländer (played by Géza Röhrig), a Hungarian Jew and member of the *Sonderkommando*, prisoners forced to help in the gas chambers and crematoria in the killing and burning of their fellow prisoners. Ausländer is first seen emerging

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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

from leafy woodlands chaperoning new arrivals into the gas chambers, where they will be poisoned and their bodies burned in the ovens of the crematoria. His expression reflects the horrors he is seeing. It is at this stage that the audience hears sounds of screams, barks, orders, cries and whispers in a mixture of languages which evokes the vision of unbound evil and reminded me of the title of the book by Alfred Wetzler – another escapee from Auschwitz – *What Dante Did Not See*.

This beginning of the film is simultaneously harrowing and perplexing, with an out-of-focus image of the leafy woodlands turning into the clear expression of a mortified and humiliated man. The transformation from shallow-focus to in-focus very much reflects the purpose of the director, with the contrast from confusion with the out-of-focus to the clarity of the countenance of Saul's face exposing the shock for an ordinary audience member being introduced to cinematically untouched subject matter. The camera follows Saul's movements intimately as he administers the torture of his own people. His blank but restrained facial expression reflects his humiliation at the barbarity of his actions, with the camera closely following his focused action of removing the coats from the pegs and emptying out the possessions of the gassed Jews. His clinical approach to doing this gives the impression that he can no longer become emotionally traumatised by his actions.

On one occasion, a young boy is found somehow still breathing in the gas chamber after all others have been killed. Having seen a Nazi physician suffocate the boy to ensure his death, Saul believes this child to be his own son, whom he feels compelled to bury with dignity. He sets out to find a rabbi to recite the mourner's *Kaddish* over the body of the child. His plight is desperate and his actions threaten to compromise the planned uprising of members of the *Sonderkommando*, but it appears to be his last attempt to salvage his dignity.

In *Son of Saul*, Nemes provides us with suffocating insight into the realities of a concentration camp in an extraordinarily vivid way. His decision to use a 4:3 aspect ratio entraps us, with the claustrophobic nature of the frame constructing the notion that the unfolding events are inescapable. The 4:3 frame acts almost as a portal for a contemporary viewer, allowing the audience two hours to gaze into the darkest hours of human existence. Nemes displays the atrocities of this death camp in the least melodramatic fashion, simply depicting the portrait of a guilt-ridden man. No soundtrack is employed here – rather the ominous howls, cries, gunshots of the suffering, evoking an apocalyptic landscape of death. On several occasions throughout the film, we are invited to see only Saul's face, with the peripheral suffering around him remaining almost

perpetually in shallow focus. In many ways, this highlights the extent of Saul's suffering, with the torture occurring around him: he is compelled not only to be complicit in, but also a contributor to, something to which he becomes desensitised, much in the same way as a man or woman would be today.

Saul manages to conceal the boy's body while searching for a rabbi. During his search we experience the atmosphere of the camp, with attempts to degrade everything that is human in us beyond recognition by showing the bartering for the smallest favours through the exchange of stolen goods and other demeaning activities.

Among the new arrivals from Hungary who are being exterminated and burned in ditches since the furnaces can't cope with the large number of corpses, Saul finds someone who pretends to be a rabbi. At great risk to himself he rescues this man only to discover that he is an imposter.

Saul's desperate search for a rabbi to give the child a dignified funeral represents a deeply human act, showing that even amid the stench of death and all the attempts by the Nazis to degrade their prisoners, there is a deep voice within us that helps us remain human.

Nemes has said that he wanted to 'immerse' the audience in his film. He has succeeded for the audience ends up feeling the evil and horror of the place and is forced to confront the question as to how to deal with evil on such an enormous scale.

Son of Saul is an important contribution to understanding the Holocaust. It is a particularly timely film that may help to compensate for the information provided by the dwindling numbers of Holocaust survivors who can transmit their personal experiences of the evil of concentration camps.

For those who may be worried about the traumatic effect that viewing such a harrowing film may have I would like to quote a comment Vasily Grossman made in his report 'The Hell of Treblinka' published in 1944: 'It is infinitely painful to read this. The reader [viewer] must believe me when I say it is equally hard to write it. "Why write about it then?" someone may well ask. "Why recall such things?" It is the writer's duty to tell the terrible truth and it is the reader's civic duty to learn this truth. To turn away, to close one's eyes is to insult the memory of those who have perished.'

Gerta Vrbova and Danny Hilton

A memoir not to be missed

FAULT LINES

by David Pryce-Jones

New York: Criterion Books, 2015,

364 pp. paperback

In the last few years there has been a sudden abundance of memoirs by Jewish refugees and survivors of

three-quarters of a century ago. Why so late? Some are only now, with enough passage of time, able to talk about what happened. They know that time is of the essence: it is now that they must tell their families. And they must bear witness. Their descendants too are stepping up to tell their stories, perhaps emboldened by the runaway success of *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, Edmund de Waal's memoir of his wealthy Viennese family (to whom the present author is distantly related).

This memoir too is about an immensely wealthy Viennese family, the Springers (and Foulds), most of whom survived through a mixture of good connections and the requisite good luck, though not without losing a good deal of their property. But it is just as much the story of the Pryce-Joneses, a family as well connected in England as the Springers were in Europe.

Thérèse ('Poppy') Fould married Alan Pryce-Jones, an Eton and Oxford-educated author, *bon vivant* and homosexual, thereby uniting not only two people but two families that could hardly have been less alike. Poppy and Alan's only child David has written a fascinating portrait of the extended family, eccentricities and all, as well as an account of his own very interesting life and career. Fortunately a family tree is provided, essential for such an extensive cast of characters. Revealing vignettes of famous friends and acquaintances abound, among them characters as disparate as Isaiah Berlin, Greta Garbo and several of the Mitford sisters.

The author's research is impeccable, resulting in a wealth of detail – perhaps an overabundance of it (mentioning a house his parents visited briefly in 1940, he informs us that 'This house belonged to Mary Loder, a relation of Alan's because her mother, Lady Wakehurst, otherwise Cousin Cuckoo, was born Grey'). He quotes extensively from letters and diaries (those by his father Alan are mostly literary gems), but sometimes there is too much from them too: he cites patriotic statements of the 'England the great shall win the war' type from at least nine letters by his nanny Jessie. That the book doesn't groan under the weight of such detail is due to the author's stylish and beautiful writing, a subtle yet pungent sense of humour, and a perfectly judged sense of discretion and tone.

This is a finely written and fascinating portrait not only of two very interesting families but of the times in which they found themselves. Not to be missed.

Tanya Tintner



David Pryce-Jones

Yom Hashoah 2016: 'From Poland to Windermere'

Over 200 people, including all sections of the Scottish Jewish community and dignitaries from all the political parties, attended this year's Yom HaShoah event at Glasgow's Giffnock Synagogue.

Children from Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary School, Giffnock Guides and members of the Ethiopian Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning Programme lit the candles with special guest speaker Ben Helfgott MBE. On display was an art project by children from the school inspired by the 45 Aid Society's Memory Quilt, based on Ben's story as well as that of other survivors.

First and second generation members had the opportunity to meet Ben before the event and some were able to speak with him in his native Polish.

The Glasgow Jewish Singers under the direction of Eddie Binnie sang most movingly. *Kaddish* was recited by Ian Leifer. Professor Lev Atlas accompanied the Memorial Roll of names on the violin.

Following the showing of excerpts from a documentary film on 'The Boys' Ben shared his incredible story of suffering, survival and tremendous achievements. Having survived the camps, at the age of 15 he was brought to Windermere



Ben Helfgott MBE

in the UK with 732 orphaned Jewish boys and a number of girls who became collectively known as 'The Boys'. He went on to become a champion weightlifter, winning a bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games and representing the UK in the Olympic Games. He also became a champion of Holocaust Remembrance, a founder member and President of the 45 Aid Society, and a leading figure on a number of Holocaust-related organisations.

Asked how the Holocaust experience had affected him, Ben said 'I despaired but I did not let cruelty and injustice break my spirit. I refused to poison my life with revenge and hatred for hatred is corrosive. Instead, I was left with a dream to live in a world of understanding, compassion, fraternity and love for my fellow man.' An important message for future generations.

Agnes Isaacs

'Wir waren Nachbarn' (We Were Neighbours)

This unusual exhibition at Schöneberg Town Hall in Berlin is well worth a visit. Originally only opened for three months, it is now intended to be a permanent exhibition.

The exhibition consists of 136 folders, each in respect of one individual – many of them children – who had lived in Schöneberg but had been forced to leave. Each folder contains photographs, letters and other documents describing the individual's local background and his or her personal history.

Among those for whom there is a folder are Albert Einstein, Billy Wilder, Emanuel Lasker and Wilhelm Reich.

What is remarkable about the exhibition is the reaction of schoolchildren, who are fascinated to learn that the Jews who prior to

1933 lived in the same area as they now live were just like them, with the same interests and experiences.

It is impossible to read all the 136 folders on one visit. The exhibition is even more identified with Schöneberg since the walls of the room in which it is mounted are lined with 6,000 record cards, lovingly transcribed by a local official from records found in the Town Hall archives. The cards are arranged by street and show the address of each Jew forced out by the Nazis.

It was from a balcony on Schöneberg Town Hall that on 26 June 1963 President Kennedy made his famous speech ending with the words 'Ich bin ein Berliner', so it is no surprise that the square in front of the Town Hall is now named John-F.-Kennedy-Platz.

David Rothenberg

Capacity audience for Pinner Synagogue's 27th Yom HaShoah Evening

AJR member Eva Mendelsson, born in Offenburg, Germany, the youngest of three sisters, spoke animatedly to a capacity audience at Pinner Synagogue's 27th Yom HaShoah Evening of Remembrance. Many civic and diplomatic dignitaries attended, the Polish Ambassador HE Witold Sobków and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Romanian Embassy, Cosmin Onisii, among them.

The event began with a moving candle-lighting ceremony by six survivors, including Eva, who as children had endured years of hiding in France, together with third generation youth members of the Synagogue.

Teenagers read heart-rending poems written by Eva's mother, Sylvia Cohn, and a diary entry by Esther, her oldest sister, both of whom, aged only 38 and 18 respectively, were murdered at Auschwitz.

Pictures of the awful conditions at Gurs and Rivesaltes camps in south-west France were displayed as Eva spoke of the rescue of her sister Myriam and herself by the OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants), of their hiding with other Jewish children at Château du Masgelier in central France, and



Eva Mendelsson lights remembrance candle with Jack Frohlich, a third generation member of Pinner Synagogue

their perilous journey to safety in Switzerland, again assisted by the OSE. After two years in orphanages, Myriam and Eva were reunited with their father in England in 1945; they had last seen him in 1938. Following his arrest on Kristallnacht and six-week detention in Dachau, he had been forced to leave Germany immediately. The seven-year separation and

wartime after-effects took their toll but Eva enjoyed a happy marriage, brought up three children, and managed a career as a textile artist in north-west London.

Eva speaks frequently to German schoolchildren about her experiences. Last October she attended at Gurs the 75th anniversary of the unique deportation 'west' of 'Baden' Jews, the so-called Wagner-Burckel Aktion. She recently celebrated her 85th birthday with her children and grandchildren, a testimony to her survival.

Councillor Macleod-Cullinane summed up: 'We must not forget the monstrous evil that was perpetrated, we must cherish those who survived, and we must all strive together to prevent any repetition of those terrible acts befalling any peoples anywhere in our world.'

Sharon Mire

Clemens N. Nathan PhD Scholarship Programme

AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman announced a ground-breaking PhD scholarship programme at a memorial seminar held in honour of AJR member Clemens N. Nathan. The event took place in May 2016 at London's Athenaeum Club.

The full scholarship, which will be run by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, has been endowed in memory of Clemens N. Nathan, founding member and Honorary Life-President of the Centre's London Support Group, who died last year.

The scholarship will support the study of the complex spectrum of the German-Jewish experience, including topics such as history and memory with special emphasis on the second and third generations, Jewish relief organisations, and the German-Jewish refugee.

After the memorial seminar, the Board of Directors of the AJR decided to make a significant contribution towards the creation of the PhD, which, together with generous funding from the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Nathan family, will enable the scholarship to get underway in September 2016.

The Centre for German-Jewish



Clemens Nathan

Studies is seeking further financial support to enable other students to access the scholarship funding in 2017 and beyond. This is a particularly good time to contribute as matched funding has been made available from the University of Sussex.

In his address, Michael Newman quoted part of the tribute to Clemens Nathan written by the President of the Claims Conference, Julius Berman: '[H]is beginnings, as a German-Jewish refugee, clearly influenced the person Clemens became, including genuine interest in, and indefatigable efforts in support of, the well-being of others. He was driven to become involved in a wide range of Jewish-related and human rights-related causes. He always found a way. And he did it with a touch of British charm and a ready smile. He was, by any measure I know, a *mentsch*, an inspiration.'

If you are interested in making a financial contribution to the scholarship, or would like further details on the scholarship programme, please contact Diana Franklin or Dr Gideon Reuveni at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex (www.sussex.ac.uk/cgjs).

VISIT TO THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE'

The gratitude that Lord Alfred Dubs felt for his sanctuary in the UK in 1939 was the driving force behind his recent successful initiative to persuade parliament to admit unaccompanied children who are now fleeing from oppression and war zones. He said that the example of the late Sir Nicholas Winton had inspired him. However, the provisions of the Dublin III Treaty that governs EU asylum applications are being thwarted by bureaucracy and governmental legal action in both the UK and France.

Lord Dubs and fellow Kindertransportee Rabbi Harry Jacobi MBE felt they could no longer be

bystanders and led a small delegation to see for themselves something of the daily life of today's refugees in the Calais 'Jungle' camp. I was privileged to be part of that group and felt deeply moved because the children's plight resonated with me personally as my father had been detained in French internment camps in 1942.

Our aim was to raise awareness and so speed up the asylum application process for the 157 unaccompanied children from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan and Syria who had family in the UK and therefore an undisputed entitlement to live here.

The visit was planned with help from NGOs Citizens UK, Help Refugees and Safe Passage UK, all active in the 'Jungle'. It received extensive coverage by the BBC.

The two *Kinder* told their stories to several of the Afghan children who were now about the same age as they had been when they arrived in the UK. They promised to do all within their power to speed the settlement process.

The physical conditions were appalling. The vast

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR SIR NICHOLAS WINTON HELD IN LONDON'S GUILDHALL



A memorial service for Sir Nicholas Winton, who rescued almost 700 children, most of them Jewish, from Czechoslovakia in the months before the war, was held in London's Guildhall. Sir Nicholas died last year aged 106.

Some 28 of those Sir Nicholas saved as children were among 400 people who attended the event along with Czech, Slovak and UK government representatives.

The service was opened by Lord Dubs, a Labour peer and himself a Kindertransport child rescued by Sir Nicholas, and was addressed by Sir Nicholas's daughter Barbara Winton. Dame Esther Rantzen, whose BBC TV programme *That's Life* in 1988 revealed Sir Nicholas's story, and Michael Zantovsky, former Czech ambassador to Britain, also paid tribute.

stretch of the South Camp had been laid waste by the French authorities this spring when they demolished the area, leaving only canisters of tear gas and the 'school', the 'library' known as 'Jungle Books', an Ethiopian 'church', and a shack that serves as a youth centre. The refugees had been moved to the North Camp, further away from the Eurostar station but no less exposed to exploitation and worse.

Food, meagre and lacking in nutrition, such as we ate in Sammy's Restaurant, had been supplied by charity kitchens: there was no help from the state. There were some shops, a hairdresser and phone-charging booths, arranged along a 'high street'. A children's centre was housed in a double-decker bus bought on eBay. There were also two mosques and first aid was provided in caravans.

As we left, some of the children tried to join us in our minibus. At the deserted Eurostar station, armed guards and sniffer dogs were on duty.

Later, I learned that the boys we had met had escaped to the UK in the back of a lorry. Perhaps the kindness, compassion and humanity we had tried to convey had been an inspiration to them. The boys' spirit and hope inspired us.

Gaby Glassman



(from left) Rabbi Harry Jacobi MBE, Lord Dubs, BBC reporter ©UNICEF UK/2016/Greg Jones



BRIGHTON AND HOVE SARID Miracle Baby

We were held spellbound by Eva Clarke – the daughter born to Anka Bergman just days before they were liberated from Auschwitz. Eva, this miracle baby whose story appears in Wendy Holden's book *Born Survivors*, related her amazing story of bravery and love so beautifully.

Shirley Huberman

EALING Computer Training

The AJR's Computer Co-ordinator Claude Vecht-Wolf described the work of his team of volunteers and referred to a new, simple touch-screen computer which was being provided to members who might need it. Claude also talked about his background as a trainee rabbi and IT teacher. A most enjoyable afternoon

Leslie Sommer

LIVERPOOL 'A Leisurely Stroll around My Legal Career'

David Harris QC gave a fascinating talk entitled 'A Leisurely Stroll around My Legal Career ... the Case of the Conjoined Twins, the Rochdale Ritual Abuse Case, etc'. No other sound could be heard in the room as we listened to David talking us through the finer details of some of the cases he has worked on.

Wendy Bott

AJR CARD AND GAMES CLUB Enjoying the Fun Plus the Hospitality of AJR Staff

After a light lunch, including delicious Rinkoff cakes, we adjourned to do battle at Bridge, Scrabble and Backgammon. We would like to see more members at our next meeting so they can enjoy the fun and the usual great hospitality of the AJR staff.

Anita Grant

ILFORD Quality If Not Quantity

Popular London Guide Elaine Wein gave us an extremely interesting armchair tour of the highlights of the City of London. It was a talk sadly missed by many of our members, who failed to turn up. We had quality if not quantity on this occasion.

Meta Roseneil

CARDIFF Churchill's Secret Army

We had another pleasant lunch followed by a screening of *Churchill's Secret Army*, which depicts the eventual acceptance of German and Austrian Jewish refugees who wished to serve in the British Army

after having been classified as 'enemy aliens'. They served their country with great courage.

Michael Millodot

HGS A Well Behaved Discussion

Eva facilitated an animated and well behaved discussion on the EU referendum. Hortense brought photos of her life from toddler to cook/maid, marriage, training as a nurse and 'nurse of the year'. Details of forthcoming days out and other attractive events were circulated. Thank you, Eva.

Elfi Colman

LEEDS CF Visit by Sikh Community Members

We had a wonderful opportunity to meet two members of the local Sikh community. They gave a most interesting talk about their religion together with an open invite to visit their temple and sample their hospitality.

Wendy Bott

ESSEX (WESTCLIFF) Christian Friend of Israel

Moira Dare-Edwards, who taught English in the 1970s in Germany, joined the Christian Friends of Israel soon after her return to the UK. She ended her very interesting talk about her personal life by showing a DVD about the Israeli coastal town of Atlit and received a very warm ovation from the Westcliff members.

Larry Lisner

SHEFFIELD A Special Afternoon

Guest speaker Michael Lewis gave an account of his mother Helen's book *A Time to Speak*. It proved a most emotive and special afternoon.

Wendy Bott

KINGSTON AND SURREY Tea and Planning

Members met at the beautiful home of Susan Zisman, who put on a fabulous tea. We discussed plans for the rest of the year with a September date now in the diary. A huge thank you to Susan for being a great hostess.

Kathryn Prevezer

PINNER Trip to Ethiopia

Our members Henri and Dorothy Obstfeld gave us a fascinating illustrated talk about their Jewish Renaissance trip to Ethiopia. We were surprised to learn that there were still some 9,000 Jews remaining in the country after so many had made it to Israel.

Robert Gellman

BRADFORD CF Celebrating Rudi's 90th

We met for a 'Springtime' lunch at Salts Mill, Saltaire. We were greeted by Mill owner Robin Silver and we also celebrated Rudi Leavor's forthcoming 90th birthday with a fabulous lemon curd cake!

Wendy Bott

RADLETT A Man of Controversial Opinions

Tim Pike's previous talks have been intensely interesting but very controversial.

This talk, on the EU referendum, was no exception. One of Tim's conclusions: Donald Trump is a kind man and skilled politician who will make a good American president and has been much maligned by the media. Not surprisingly, this and similar opinions led to a good deal of discussion, which could have gone on all day!

Fritz Starer

EDINBURGH 'My Favourite Famous Jewish Person'

'My Favourite Famous Jewish Person' was the theme of our get-together, generously hosted by Francoise. It was a split between the 'usual suspects' from the world of art and showbiz on the one hand and far-sighted activists and charismatic specialists on the other. A delightful afternoon.

Jonathan Kish

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

Guest Speaker:
Dame Esther Rantzen

A full house welcomed Dame Esther Rantzen as guest speaker. Having declared how incredibly lucky we all were to be in this country, she spoke about her family, who were featured on the *Who Do You Think You Are?* TV programme, and explained how she set up *ChildLine* and, later, *The Silver Line*.

One of the highlights of her long career was reuniting a number of Sir Nicholas Winton's 'children' on TV. We were very happy to have a few of Nicky Winton's 'children' with us on this occasion and they were delighted to meet Dame Esther once again. This historic lunch meeting ended with a Q&A session and a presentation to our guest.

David Lang

EDGWARE 43 Years at the Home Office

Leslie Sommer entertained us with a fascinating history of his 43 years at the Home Office. He served in a variety of departments ranging from Prisons and Parole to Fires Service, Passport Office, Immigration, Coroners, and many more. A thoroughly enjoyable talk much appreciated by the large audience.

Susan Jacobs

NORTH LONDON Time-consuming Work of a Sofer

We were enthralled by a talk by Tony Jacobs, a *sofer* who repairs and restores Torah scrolls. Tony explained how his work is very time-consuming – to create a new Torah scroll can take 18 months.

David Lang

BOOK CLUB A Good Holiday Read

We discussed Joël Dicker's *The Truth about the Harry Quebert Affair*, a long book considered a good holiday read and translated from the French even though the events it depicts took place in Maine, USA.

Irene Goodman

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Henri Obstfeld
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JULY GROUP EVENTS

Sheffield	3 July	Summertime Lunch at Dore Moor Café
Ealing	5 July	Dr Susan Cohen: 'The Life of Eleanor Rathbone'
Oxford	5 July	Annual Garden Party
Bromley	6 July	Social Get-together at home of Lianne Segal; speaker: David Barnett: 'Lady Judith Montefiore'
Didsbury	6 July	Social Get-together
Glasgow	6 July	Outing to Dumfries House
Ilford	6 July	David Tomback: 'From Sukkahs to Skyscrapers – Jews and Their Buildings'
Pinner	7 July	Bob Redman: 'Elstree – British Hollywood'
Newcastle	10 July	Outing to Beth Shalom
Essex (Westcliff)	12 July	Otto Deutsch: 'My Birthday Memories'
Nottingham	13 July	Lunch at home of Ruth and Jurgen Schwiening
Bradford	14 July	Social Get-together
Glasgow Book Club	14 July	Social
Brighton	18 July	Marion Freund: 'Desert Island Discs'
Bristol	18 July	Artists Richard White and Lorna Brunstein: 'Forced Walks: Honouring Esther'
Edgware	19 July	Carole Angier: 'The Life of Primo Levi'
Kensington	20 July	Garden Party
Radlett	20 July	Lesley Urbach: 'The Life of Isaac Shoenberg'
North West London	26 July	Diane Barnett: 'Aristides de Sousa Mendes'
Harrogate/York	27 July	Summer meal out
Wembley	27 July	David Barnett: 'The Most Famous Jewish Business in Victorian London – E. Moses & Son'
North London	28 July	Paul Lang: 'My Photographic Career'
Ealing	2 Aug	Nick Dobson: 'An Underground Guide – a Virtual Tour of the London Tube'
Norfolk	2 Aug	Peter Beschoner: 'The Music Survives – the Story of My Father Hans'
Book Club	3 Aug	Social
Ilford	3 Aug	Film Morning: <i>The Sturgeon Queen</i>
Pinner	4 Aug	Annual Garden Party

DIDSBURY CF How to Relax in the Dentist's Chair

Members enjoyed lunch followed by listening to pieces of music they had brought along, including German harmonies, a viola soloist and a German choir rendition. We listened intently as each member explained the reason for their choice of music – one member said it helped her relax in the dentist's chair!

Wendy Bott

WEMBLEY Connect Programme Easy-to-Use

Michelle Mendall told members about how Six Point Foundation came into being and explained the Connect programme, showing members how simple and easy-to-use it is.

Kathryn Prevezer

IMPERIAL CAFÉ Inspiring Meetings

We met probably for the last time in the format of monthly meetings, with the proposal to meet again at the end of the year. On this occasion, we discussed 'Brexit', with most of us still confused! These meetings have been inspiring over the years and I feel honoured to have heard all the different stories of wartime heroism recounted.

Esther Rinkoff

GLASGOW BOOK CLUB A Super Afternoon

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* was the novel up for lively discussion at our meeting, held in Agnes's house. Given the delicious afternoon tea that followed, and taking into consideration the beautiful sunny afternoon, everyone agreed it was a super afternoon.

Anthea Berg

A truly memorable five days: AJR trip to Yorkshire

DAY 1

Meeting at King's Cross Station, we were all happy to see colleagues from last year's trip to Glasgow and some new faces too. At Leeds Station we were met by Joy, our Blue Badge Guide, who pointed out the sights of Leeds en route to Harrogate. We were delighted to mingle with local AJR members at the Ziff Centre, providing the opportunity to chat with our compatriots and learn about their origins. We were given a superb dinner and tapped our toes to Phil Cammerman's Klezmer Band.

Once in Harrogate, we were off for a short tour of the town and a leisurely wander around the town centre.

DAY 2

Off to York accompanied by Joy, who talked us through the history of the city and the stunning countryside on the way. We visited Clifford's Tower, where in 1190 some 150 Jews, having sought protection from the mob in what was then the royal castle, chose to die at each other's hands rather than renounce their faith. We also saw historic York, the Minster – the

largest medieval construction in the UK – and enjoyed York's Chocolate Story, a guided tour of Rowntree's chocolate manufacturers, which was founded in 1862 and developed a strong association with Quaker philanthropy.



At Clifford's Tower, York, scene of an 1190 pogrom (from left) Leslie Kleinman, Eva Stellman, Agnes Isaacs, Leslie Brent, Miriam Kleinman

DAY 3

Although the whole of the Yorkshire tour was thoroughly enjoyable the trip to Howarth, the home of the Bronte family, and the

continued on page 14 ➔

A truly memorable five days continued from page 13

journey to Bolton Abbey were for me (Leslie Brent) the 'jewel in the crown'. The journey took us through Otley, Shipley and Saltaire Mills (many of the local wool mills had apparently been owned by a Jewish refugee family called Salt!). The parsonage in which the family had lived was near the end of a steep and cobbled street, as was the very well laid-out Museum, containing all the rooms of the family with their furniture and belongings.

Later we were taken by steam train to Bolton Abbey, a noble ruin with a large intact arch. A truly memorable day.

DAY 4

We set off for Harewood House, an impressive 18th-century stately home between Harrogate and Leeds filled with Chippendale furniture, highly decorated ceilings and some glorious Sèvres porcelain in a small side room. Among the notable pictures were portraits by, among others, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence, paintings by El Greco, Veronese and Tintoretto, and amazing ceiling panels by Angelica Kauffman. For those who had the energy there was a Bird Garden and a Himalayan Garden. We drove on to RHS Garden Harlow Carr, where acres of woodland scented gardens, wildflower meadows and a kitchen garden were waiting to be explored.

DAY 5

In Leeds, on our way back, we visited the Thackray Medical Museum, admired today for its imposing architecture and grand entrance hall. It first opened in 1861 as the purpose-built Leeds Union Workhouse for poor and homeless people. Gradually new buildings were added, including a separate infirmary. In 1925 it was renamed St James's Hospital and in 1948 it became part of the NHS. By the 1990s the building was considered unsafe for modern medicine and in 1997 the Thackray Medical Museum opened.

This well organised, fun trip to Yorkshire wouldn't have been possible without our dear co-ordinators and leaders: Susan Harrod, Kathryn Prevezer, Eva Stelman, Wendy Bott, Agnes Isaacs and Esther Rinkoff. A truly memorable five days!

Leslie Brent, Veronika Keczkas,
Francoise Robertson, Meta
Roseneil, Shirley Rothman

GUIDED TOUR OF HOOP LANE JEWISH CEMETERY

by Rachel Kosky, Blue Badge Guide
Monday 8 August 2016

This tour highlights the history of the Hoop Lane cemeteries in Golders Green. Opened in 1897 for both the Reform and Sephardi Jewish communities, they contain an array of fascinating personalities for whom this is their final resting place.

They include those of religious leaders such as Hugo Gryn and Albert Friedlander, actor Sydney Tafler, philanthropist and youth leader Sir Basil Henriques, writer Jack Rosenthal, the parents of Maurice and Charles Saatchi, and 'agony aunt' Marjorie Proops.

Following the tour we will have lunch at a local restaurant in Golders Green and the opportunity to speak with Rachel.

Transport between the Cemetery and the restaurant will be provided.

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

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OBITUARIES

Hana Liese Hornung (née Mautner), born Karlovy Vary 12 July 1925, died Edinburgh 19 September 2015

My mother was born in Karlovy Vary, the family home on her maternal side. She and her twin sister Trudy were born while their mother Anna (née Hirsch) was visiting for the summer from Prague. Karlovy Vary was then in Sudetenland, where a large number of German-speaking Jews lived. Her mother's first language was German. Her father Arnost, a Czech Jew originally from southern Bohemia but living in Prague, was a general practitioner.

Hana's early years spent in Prague influenced her outlook on life. Although the family were respected and affluent middle class, they lived in a rented apartment in a working class neighbourhood, with the medical practice taking up a part of the home. Arnost Mautner was a kind and generous man, totally committed to his work and treating people according to their need rather than their ability to pay.

While the family's Jewish heritage was part of their life they were completely assimilated into the Czech non-Jewish community. Signs of antisemitism started to creep in while Hana was still at primary school. Then Germany occupied Sudetenland and summer holidays there ceased. The aunt and uncle fled to Prague. The situation was deteriorating and Anna, aged 13, was sent to the English Ladies college to study English and French, her

parents wanting to send the children to England on the Kindertransport. A year later school was closed to all Jews. When Hana was 15 the family was transported to Terezin.

The next phase of Hana's life was very tough but she was young and lucky and she survived. She lived in cramped conditions, under threat of starvation, learning to cope. A part of the forced labour that worked in agriculture, she risked smuggling out vegetables and exchanging them for bread. She witnessed the regular transportation of people to Auschwitz and miraculously avoided being in the 'wrong' line.

After liberation by the Soviet army, Hana returned to Prague, married Bert, whom she had met in Terezin, and settled in Prague. Having so little formal education, she found work in publishing, information science and translating, giving Bert a chance to continue with his studies. The ensuing Communist regime once again forced a change on the family and they moved to Slovakia so that Bert could continue working as an architect/town planner. They returned only at the time of the 'Prague spring' and that, as it turned out, was also short-lived. The 1968 Soviet invasion forced the family to



move once again, this time as refugees to London and, finally, to Edinburgh, where they settled and Bert was able to continue his career.

In Edinburgh, which became their home, Hana for the first time in her life had a chance to better herself and she studied for

an Open University degree in Social Sciences and then a Librarianship degree. At last she could work in her own right. She was always striving to improve her knowledge. She worked hard on her languages. She enjoyed discussions with people on current affairs, politics or anything else that interested them, always wanting to understand and appreciate them. She visited new places and kept pace with art and culture everywhere she visited.

Hana had a great zest for life with a sense of fun that was at times mischievous. She had a strong belief in people from all walks of life and was always interested to learn from them. She respected her friends and colleagues. She was a dignified person; her standards of behaviour were high.

Hana died on 19 September 2015 having suffered a severe brain haemorrhage. She is survived by her two daughters, Vera and Lucie, and six grandchildren.

Lucie Green

Fred (Manfred) Naftalie, born Berlin 21 November 1923, died Hallandale, Florida, 23 February 2016

My father was born in Berlin, the youngest of three children. In 1938 he was sent to England with the Kindertransport. After spending a short time with an uncle, he went to boarding school at Beaconsfield College in Hove, Sussex. In 1940, having returned to London, he was apprenticed to a furrier, where he would learn his future trade.

In 1944 Fred joined the British Army, eventually serving in the Palestine Regiment of the Jewish Brigade. He saw action in Italy and was a translator



for German POWs. After the war he was involved with the Bricha, helping to bring illegal immigrants who had survived the war to Palestine.

In 1948 he left England for New York on the *SS Batory*. While on board, he met my mother, Rosa Gunsberg from Leipzig, who was travelling to the USA with her mother.

They married in 1949 and set up house in Detroit, where my father owned a business as a furrier and my mother was a dressmaker and homemaker.

They spent their retirement years between

Detroit and Hallandale, Florida, where they settled permanently in 1993.

Throughout his life my father was active in B'nai B'rith and Magen David, was a Shriner, and volunteered at the Holocaust Memorial in Miami. He marched in numerous parades and always tried to get back to London for the AJAX ceremony, where he would proudly display the Israeli flag.

Fred was a self-made man and a good father and had 54 years together with my mother. Despite early hardships he had a good and rewarding life.

He is survived by one daughter, Evelyn Tamary, of Hod Hasharon, Israel, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

May his memory be blessed.

Evelyn Tamary



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson



Radio exhibition in Sarona

To mark 80 years of broadcasting in Israel (and in Palestine under the British Mandate), the Voice of Israel (*Kol Yisrael*) held an exhibition in the Sarona area of Tel Aviv. The locale was originally settled by German Templers, who established agricultural settlements in various parts of the Holy Land, building private homes interspersed with individual gardens and public parks. The remnants of settlements such as these may be found in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Galilee, though the original German occupants are long gone.

The first radio broadcasts were initiated by the British High Commissioner for Palestine, and programmes consisting of lectures and music, in English as well as Hebrew and Arabic, were transmitted over the airwaves. The exhibition consisted primarily of photographs but also had a few examples of the actual old-style radios and broadcasting equipment in all their original chunkiness on display.

The many dramatic events that have attended Israel's birth and subsequent history were reported by intrepid newsmen who, accompanied by technicians *schlepping* heavy recording equipment, made their way to the front lines of battles, or the venues where events of national importance were

taking place, sending eye-witness accounts from there.

All the inhabitants of pre-State Israel were glued to their radios in 1947 to hear the result of the vote on the Partition Plan at the United Nations and, when the result turned out to be in favour of the establishment of a Jewish state alongside an Arab one, everyone swarmed out into the streets and spontaneous dancing erupted. Only the prescient Ben-Gurion realised what this meant in terms of the antagonism of the Arab countries and did not join in the general rejoicing. His announcement declaring the establishment of the State of Israel was broadcast live on the radio on 14 May 1948, marking another milestone in the life of the country.

Thus it was – and I remember this well – that during the Six Day War, when television had not yet been introduced in Israel, the radio reports played a crucial role in bringing the unfolding sequence of events to the listening public. I was living in Jerusalem at the time and, like the rest of the population, was required to remain inside my home for several days as the city was being bombed. The radio was my only source of contact with the outside world and, although my grasp of Hebrew was somewhat limited, I did my best to decipher the news reports and rejoiced to hear the

soothing words and insightful analysis of military developments broadcast by the late Chaim Herzog, who had retired from the IDF not long before with the rank of major-general.

But apart from broadcasting momentous events, the radio is also a constant presence in the lives of many people. I personally am always accompanied by classical music in every room of my house and in my car. This was not always the case as initially the radio was a mixture of verbal and music programmes broadcast on only one frequency. This gradually branched out into several channels aimed at different tastes and segments of the population.

In the years immediately following the Second World War, although Hebrew was the prevailing language, there were programmes in Yiddish, French, German, English and various other languages aimed at different groups of Israel's polyglot population, programmes listing the names of relatives seeking family members, exercise programmes in the early morning, quizzes, children's programmes and music request programmes. I've been told that among the most popular musical requests in pre-State Israel was Smetana's *Vltava* because the melody bears a strong resemblance to the national anthem, *Hatikva*. In my own case, the various programmes on the radio helped me to learn Hebrew.

Today the radio plays a less important role in the life of the nation, having been superseded by television. Nonetheless, its importance in forging national unity and culture will always redound to its credit.

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

parents, their daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter aged two – were having lunch. My foster parents and I were living with their daughter on the western outskirts of Arnhem because civilians had been advised by the authorities to get out of the centre of town, where we lived. The reason was that the Germans expected an attack by the Allied forces on the bridge across the River Rhine. The bridge was situated in the centre of the city.

The adults got very excited when they saw gliders approaching from the south. I got very excited when I saw puppets dropping out of the gliders and an 'umbrella' opening above each puppet!

Later the shooting started and went

on for several days, during which we didn't leave the flat. By now there was no electricity – I don't remember whether there was gas but water was still 'on tap'.

Because the flat was situated round the corner from a large hospital we saw from time to time a horse and cart, with a red cross on a white flag, pass by. On these carts were the injured, or the dying, being driven to the hospital.

On the third evening of the battle, my foster parents and I were driven by a doctor friend who had a car (!) through the battle zone. I remember clearly that in the woods a large hotel-restaurant called *De leren doedel* (The Leather Bagpipe), situated along the main road west out

of Arnhem, was on fire. Very spooky while shooting was going on around us! Surprisingly our car didn't get hit. Eventually we reached our destination – the house of the headmaster of the village school of Harskamp. We stayed in that village for seven months, until the end of the war, when we were liberated by Canadian troops.

During my early professional work in London I came across three Britons who recognised my accent. They told me they had fought at Arnhem. It gave me the opportunity to explain that I had been there too and to thank them for their efforts to liberate us.

Henri Obstfeld, Stanmore, Middx

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

Registered office: Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, Finchley, London N3 1HF

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

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