



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

This month marks the 80th anniversary of the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria by Hitler, which is seen as a seminal moment in the advance to World War II. In this issue of the AJR Journal we bring you three different perspectives of the Anschluss, including a contribution from our outgoing Consultant Editor Anthony Grenville and a piece by our new Contributing Editor David Herman.



This memorial is located in Oberschützen, Austria and was erected in 1939 as a memorial to the Anschluss. In 1997 a plaque was placed on the memorial which reads: *Let this place be a warning to us today and in the future against dictatorship, against violence, against racism – for democracy, peace and respect for human rights.*

Over the past 80 years, historians, politicians and the public in Austria and abroad have debated the same questions: Was the Anschluss voluntary or forced? Were the Austrians victims or collaborators?

What is indisputable is that on 10 April 1938, 99.7 percent of eligible Austrian voters gave their support to the annexation with Germany. It's important to note that Austrian patriotism had been little developed after the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire in 1918, which is perhaps why large parts of the Austrian population

desired some type of stronger allegiance. The overwhelming result was undoubtedly also influenced by a combination of Nazi manipulation, propaganda, and terror. Almost all observers agreed that if the vote had been held in freer circumstances, the percentage would not have been so high but that the verdict nevertheless reflected Austrian opinion.

There is also no shadow of doubt that the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany marked the beginning of seven years of persecution, exile or murder for Jewish and minority groups by the Nazi regime. The world has a historic and moral responsibility to never forget and to draw lessons for present times and future generations.

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80 years after the Anschluss

Over the past thirty years there has been a revolution in the way we think about 20th century European history. A new generation of historians has started to turn its attention towards the east. The turning point came with the fall of Communism. New archives opened in the former Soviet bloc and eastern Europe suddenly emerged from the deep freeze of the Cold War.

Norman Davies and Jan T Gross wrote powerful books on Poland. Davies' acclaimed *Europe: A History* looked at Europe from the perspective of the east. Mark Mazower produced a number of books on 20th century Greece and the Balkans and his book, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1998), looked at European history from Europe's neglected margins. New histories of Nazism by Adam Tooze, Mazower and Timothy Snyder began to focus more on Germany's imperial ambitions in the East. Above all, Snyder's *Bloodlands* (2010), looked at the previously neglected history of those areas caught between Hitler and Stalin: Poland, the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belarus.

Even the Holocaust took an eastward turn. Instead of Hitler and the Nazi state, there was more attention on the fate of Soviet prisoners of war, the peoples of south-east and east Europe and "the Shoah by bullets" in the east.

This was long overdue and has transformed the way we think about Nazism and the war. Now, eighty years after the Anschluss, it is worth asking where this leaves our understanding of Austria.

Something very peculiar happened to the way we think about the place of Austria in the history of Nazism. For forty years Austria, the birthplace of Hitler, Stangl and Eichmann, was thought of as the first victim of Nazism. In 1938 over 100,000 refugees fled from Austria, including famous names like Arnold Schönberg and Billy Wilder, Gombrich, Popper and Sigmund Freud. By May 1938 more than half of Austrian Jewry had fled, many to Britain.

Perhaps the most famous example of this image of Austria as victim was the hugely popular musical, *The Sound of Music*, where Nazism barely featured until the end of the film and even then, a small group of Nazis are outnumbered by the loyal Austrian patriots who sing "Edelweiss" with Captain von Trapp at the Salzburg Festival. Needless to say, there are hardly any references to Jews in the film.

This idea of the good Austria was reinforced by post-war politics. Austria was neutral, neither part of Nato or the Warsaw Pact. It was a small social democratic country led by Socialists and Social Democrats, most famously, Bruno Kreisky. Kreisky was Chancellor from 1970-83, a Jewish Socialist who spent the war as a refugee in Sweden.

All this started to change in the 1980s with the Waldheim controversy. In 1986 Kurt Waldheim was elected President of Austria (1986-92). Allegations began to emerge that he had lied about his wartime service and committed atrocities against partisans. The Waldheim affair opened up larger questions about Austria's recent past: its refusal to address its role in the Holocaust, to pay compensation to Nazi victims or return stolen works of art, or to investigate Austrian citizens who were leading Nazis.

Thirty years after Waldheim, the picture has darkened further. There is growing concern about the dramatic rise of the Far Right in Austria. In the first round of the 2016 presidential elections, Norbert Hofer of the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), received the most votes though he was defeated in the later run-off. In last October's legislative elections the FPÖ came third with 51 seats and in December they joined the ruling coalition government, with its leader, Heinz-Christian Strache as the new vice chancellor. Austria is now the only western European country with a far-right party in government.

"It is sad and distressing that such a platform should receive more than a quarter of the vote and become the country's second party," said Ronald S. Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress. "It is still full of xenophobes and racists and is, mildly put, very ambiguous toward Austria's Nazi past."

Eighty years after the Anschluss, it is time to look anew both at the legacy of Nazism in Austria and the disturbing rise of the Far Right.

David Herman



Hitler surrounded by Austrian devotees, 1939

The Anschluss – a personal view

"Would you ever visit Germany?"
was always the wrong question.
They ask it because they know
that my parents were camp
survivors. I reply "Yes" and they
are puzzled.

As a child I was involved in the planning of the family's summer holiday. Spain maybe? Italy? Greek islands? I studied the photos in the brochure and suggested Austria. My father looked at me. *"Here's a pretty town: Seefeld,"* I added. My father stared. We never did go to Austria.

He later talked about camp survivors shot or dying from exhaustion and starvation near Seefeld while being transported from a concentration camp. And he mentioned the word 'Anschluss'. I looked it up. Apparently, it means "connection", as used by plumbers and electricians. Not helpful. I needed to find out more.

Bismarck's (1871) unification of Germany had not included German-speaking Austria, and the Treaty of Versailles (1919) forbade a union. Presumably pro-union Austrians would want to wait until the Nazi era was over. Especially as Austrian Nazis had killed some 800 of their compatriots in terrorist attacks.

The eventual invasion was not a result of Germany's love for Austria. Göring wanted to provide Germany with vital raw materials. Hitler stated that Germany was falling behind in its arms race with France and Britain and would therefore launch invasions of Czechoslovakia and Austria to plunder their economies.

Churchill declared that Britain would *"fight on the beaches"* and *"never surrender"*. The Dutch resisted, paying a terrible price. Russia lost over 20 million defending its territory. Poles fought for 26 days before surrendering, Belgium for 18 days before conceding defeat. Czech

resistance to German invasion continued throughout the war and 50,000+ French soldiers died trying to defend their country against invasion. Yet in Austria the German Army's arrival on 12 March 1938 was greeted enthusiastically. The Anschluss was a reality.

Around 200,000 turned out to cheer Hitler in Vienna. Where had all the Swastika flags suddenly appeared from? The ease of invasion and occupation emboldened Hitler to move into the Sudetenland, Poland and beyond.

The Nuremberg regulations regarding Jews were fully enforced after just two months. Many people associate Kristallnacht with Germany. But it occurred simultaneously in Austria, resulting in the destruction of almost all synagogues in Vienna and the arrest of 8,000 Jews, most transported to Dachau. Of the 26,000 helpers recognised by Yad Vashem as 'Righteous Gentiles', only 109 are Austrian. The Austrian victim allied itself with the German bully. There was no organised resistance as in other countries. The words 'Austrian' and 'Resistance' do not sit well together.

Yet after the war, many Austrians clung to the view that they were the first victims of German Nazis, claiming that they only accepted the Anschluss at gunpoint. For decades there was no major attempt to engage in discussion about the events around the Anschluss. While Germany went through its painful 'de-Nazification' after 1945, it was only in the 1980s with the Waldheim affair that Austria started to consider its past.

Jörg Haider's Freedom Party (FPÖ) gained 26% of the votes in the 1999 election. Haider had campaigned with the phrase *"Austria for Austrians"* and had called members of the Waffen SS "men of honour". In 2016 the FPÖ's Norbert Hofer achieved 46% in the final run-off for the Presidency. In the October 2017 election the FPÖ again gained 26% of the votes, and was invited to coalition talks. Two months

later the coalition agreement was concluded.

Yet in Germany before the election of September 2017, all the major Parties had stated they would rule out coalition talks with the anti-migrant AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) Party. This remained the case, even after the AfD gained 12.6% of the votes. When Angela Merkel's coalition negotiations with the FDP and the Greens broke down three months later, that path remained a no-go area.

Germany had paid a heavy price for its terrible crimes: occupation, cities devastated, split into two, shamed. The Nuremberg and Eichmann trials brought the truth home, and the many emptied camps spoke volumes. A responsible and democratic country emerged. German chancellors visited the former camps and expressed their country's shame. Holocaust denial is a crime and Nazi insignia is banned. The massive Berlin 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' was deliberately sited next to the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag. Germany recently opened its borders to refugees. *"In the Post-War decades, West German politicians' role was to be contrite, generous, obedient and patient."* (Times, 29 December 2017).

Yet only in 1991 did the Austrian government acknowledge its own guilt. Small steps followed: the reconstruction of a synagogue in Innsbruck and the Jewish Library in Vienna. *"Attacks on refugee accommodation have doubled in Austria, seeing homes firebombed, vandals spray Nazi graffiti on walls and a man threatens to 'get a gun and shoot the dogs'."* (Independent, 1 April 2017)

The word 'Holocaust' conveys something of the awfulness and scale of what it refers to. The word 'Anschluss' conveys nothing at all. It is time to find an alternative word. The smaller accomplice had quietly slunk off when its ringleader was caught, punished and eventually rehabilitated, and so did not undergo the same rigorous self-examination.

The question should be: *"Would you ever visit Austria?"* My father had been right in his assessment. My personal answer is *"no"*.

David Wirth

The Anschluss – a family commemorated

In October 2017, I was invited to speak at a conference at the University of Vienna. As the conference was held at the University's campus on the Alserstraße, my wife and I stayed at a hotel on the Schottenring nearby.

As we walked down the Hörlgasse, I noticed that three new plaques had been affixed to the facade of the building where my maternal grandparents' flat had been located. When we got closer, I saw to my astonishment that two of the plaques were dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, Heinrich and Alice Strassberg. This was quite a shock, though I was also gratified to see that a Viennese organisation had undertaken to commemorate the lives, and also the deaths, of Jews like my grandparents. I discovered through the Jewish communal organisation in Vienna, the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, that the organisation responsible for the plaques was called Steine der Erinnerung (Stones of Remembrance). I checked that organisation's website and found the projects that they had undertaken, listed by Bezirk; when I clicked on the 9th Bezirk, up came a series of photos taken at a ceremony held in September 2017 to mark the unveiling of the three plaques in the Hörlgasse.

The ceremony had been well attended; the local Bezirksvorsteherin (district council leader) had given a powerful speech, and teachers and students from a nearby school, the Bundesrealgymnasium 9, had participated actively in what was clearly seen as a significant local event. I was very disappointed to have missed the ceremony, but pleased to see the effort that had gone into the act of commemoration. I contacted Dalia Hindler of Steine der Erinnerung, to thank her for the plaques for my grandparents and to express my appreciation of the devotion with which her organisation was carrying out its work. I learnt that the affixing of plaques at Hörlgasse 3 had been initiated by the family of the third Jewish person deported

from that building, a lady called Flora Rosanes, whose descendants now live in Scotland. While researching her, Steine der Erinnerung had come across my grandparents and had created plaques for them as well. But they were unaware of my existence, as they only knew my mother's maiden name, not her married name (Grünfeld); they could hardly have traced her after our family name was changed in England to Grenville.

My grandfather, Heinrich Strassberg, was born in Vienna in 1882. He was a successful lawyer and an accomplished player of the viola; I have a photo of him playing chamber music with Albert Einstein. He was deported to Theresienstadt in October 1942 and died there in February 1943. His wife, Alice Strassberg, née Pollak, was born in Nitra, Slovakia, in 1882; from Theresienstadt, she was deported to Auschwitz in May 1944. After the Anschluss, my parents had been able to leave for Britain, but my grandparents remained behind, partly because they did not wish to leave my grandfather's father alone in Vienna. It means a great deal to me that people in Vienna are now researching and rediscovering the history of the former Jewish communities in the city, largely suppressed and ignored in the post-war decades. In a sense, the memory of my grandparents now lives on after the extinction of Vienna's Jews in the wake of the Anschluss.

Anthony Grenville



Stolpersteine for Strassberg family

New Faces



David Herman has joined the AJR Journal as Contributing Editor.

David, who was awarded a Double First in History and English Literature at Cambridge, has written on Holocaust literature for the Guardian, the Independent and the Jewish Chronicle, and has produced TV programmes on related subjects for BBC2 and Channel 4. He is a trustee of *The Jewish Quarterly* and former trustee of the Ben Uri Museum.

David is the son of Polish artist Josef Herman, who arrived in the UK in 1940. David's first front page article, which will appear in our April issue, will focus on his recent visit to Warsaw for the opening of an exhibition of his father's paintings.



Another new face at the AJR is **Karen Diamond** who has joined our Outreach team as Southern Outreach Co-ordinator.

Karen grew up in Montreal, Canada and lived in California for several years before moving to London to complete a Master of Science in Management degree. As a student before the digital age, Karen travelled throughout Europe, visiting various Eastern European cities to see what remained of the post-WW2 Jewish communities, followed by working for several months on a kibbutz in Israel. Karen has extensive experience in organising events, travel and logistics and has arranged numerous student trips to Auschwitz-Birkenau in recent years.

20 QUESTIONS to... Suzanne Ripton



*Welcome to our new feature, which turns the spotlight on different AJR members around the country. This month Wendy Bott, our Northern Outreach Co-ordinator, spends time with AJR member Suzanne Ripton from Leeds, who was a 'hidden child' in Paris. Her book *Suzanne's Story* and accompanying video testimony has inspired children from as far afield as Argentina.*

- 1 **Favourite artist or composer?**
'Once upon a time in Paris' Erik Satie. 'Adagietto' Gustav Mahler. 'The Lark Ascending' Vaughan Williams.
- 2 **What is the last film you saw?**
'Dances with Wolves'
- 3 **Are you an optimist or a pessimist?**
Optimist
- 4 **Who is your hero or heroine?**
Madame Colombé...who hid me on the day my parents were arrested.
- 5 **Your most embarrassing moment?**
Rushing to work one morning and after glancing in the mirror, realising that I had put dark red lip pencil on my eyebrows instead of eyebrow pencil!
- 6 **Of which achievement are you proudest?**
My sons Paul and Jeremy!
- 7 **Best place you have ever visited?**
I 're-visited' the interior of the apartment in Paris I had lived in with my parents from which we were all forced out in 1942...never to return.
- 8 **Have you read any good books lately?**
Marcel Proust 'La Recherche du Temps Perdu' and 'How Proust can change your Life' by Alain de Botton.
- 9 **Do you have any unfulfilled wishes?**
I wish I could swim.
- 10 **Who would act you in a film?**
The younger me, French actress Emmanuelle Béart, and the me now, Dame Judi Dench.
- 11 **What is your favourite TV show?**
I love documentaries in particular those by David Attenborough... actually anything that will educate me...that is why I turn on the TV!
- 12 **What is your best feature?**
Patience...I am very patient.
- 13 **What is your worst feature?**
I can be too trusting.
- 14 **What do you do for relaxation?**
I meditate.
- 15 **What is your favourite food?**
I love Madeleine cakes...if you don't know what they are read Proust's 'Eulogy to Madeleine'.
- 16 **When/where were you happiest?**
In Paris as a tiny girl.
- 17 **Who in history would you like to meet?**
Pearl S. Buck who wrote 'The Green Pagoda'.
- 18 **How would you like to be remembered?**
Kindly
- 19 **Guests at your 'perfect dinner party'?**
My parents Millie and Joseph Rappaport, my sons Paul and Jeremy, Stephen Fry, Oscar Wilde, Esther Rantzen and Jackie Mason.
- 20 **What do you enjoy most about being a member of the AJR?**
I found my family.

DEBATE OF THE MONTH

Poland has been one of the 31 member countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) since 1999, when it first signed the Stockholm Declaration. That declaration asserts IHRA's core principles including: "Together we must uphold the terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it. We must strengthen the moral commitment of our peoples, and the political commitment of our governments, to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences." In light of the new Polish

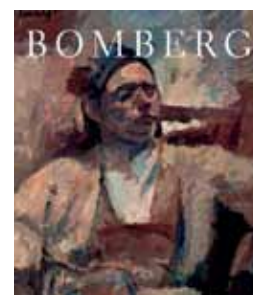


law which criminalises any mention of Polish complicity in the Holocaust, what must Poland now do to continue to meet its commitment as an IHRA member?

Email editorial@ajr.org.uk with your thoughts.



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Letters to the Editor

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

ACTION AND REACTION

It seems the new government in Austria has taken an unwelcome step to the right while the far right party in the coalition has taken a small step away from the right in respect of antisemitism.

I still suggest the European Union is a step forward despite the current reactionary dip in the historical and political changes of action and reaction. Whatever governments and politicians do, ordinary people benefit from increasing freedom of communication and travel.

Eric Sanders, London, SW16

NOT VICTIMS

I receive the Anglo-Austrian newsletter and was astounded to read that the Austrian President, Van der Bellen, said in a New Year's address "let us remember that we were victims of the Anschluss".

Victims! They were the worst perpetrators of the lot. They obviously haven't learned anything from history. Many Austrians still believe they were invaded. The advance of the extreme right doesn't bode well.

Freddy Berdach, Northwood

A VERY REASSURING REPLY?

A serving Hungarian minister was recently asked by a reporter why only 18 Syrian refugees were admitted to Hungary despite repeated requests from the EU that they should take Arab or African immigrants.

The minister replied that as these are all Muslims 'we are trying to safeguard the Jewish community in Hungary'. If I had been the reporter in question I would have asked him whether they would take Jewish refugees now...

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath

MORE BRUSSELS SPOUTS!

In his January response to my original letter 'Brussels Spouts' (November) Francis Deutsch seems to misunderstand that the differences in socio-economic conditions that I referred to in my original letter

related to those between the early 20th century and now, not the last 7 – 8 years.

I said that many – not all – of today's refugees were economic migrants.

I contrasted the policies of the Conservatives with those of the socialists because they constitute the two main parties likely to be able to form a Government. Of course other parties exist.

The only point where there is some accord is when Mr Deutsch calls me superficial. I am sure my children would agree.

Philip Goldsmith, London

INCLUSIVITY

I had to smile when I read Dr. Hans Eirew's letter in the January edition of the AJR Journal. Having grown up 20 miles north of Hampstead, I feel a certain empathy with the sentiments expressed.

However, whilst still outside north London, albeit to the south, I feel the AJR is now much more encompassing of all. Your approach has made it possible to attend many lovely events that would have been impossible in the past. Hopefully an ever growing coverage will be achieved.

June Wertheim, Esher

A NEW FRIEND

It all started when I responded to a letter written by Peter Block. I commented on his contribution concerning doctors coming to the UK in pre-war years. He continued our discussion by letter and then invited me to tea.

Peter, who is 96 years old, came to this country when he was 12 and lived with his relatives in Edinburgh. He is still very active, sociable and bright, and we discussed everything from my country of origin to medical employment in the UK. I wish him all the best in the coming years.

Dr Elena Rowland, London

THE POWER OF WORDS

I cannot emulate Manfred Goldberg's

speaking nine times during Holocaust Memorial Week but I sang El Male Rachamim six times in Bradford, Leeds, Calderdale (Halifax), Kirklees (Huddersfield) & Wakefield and, as a last minute additional request from the Bishop, at Bradford Cathedral. Never routine, it churns me up every time I recite it.

Rudi Leavor, BEM, Bradford

My mother, Mindu Hornick, age 87, the last Holocaust survivor living in Birmingham, spoke at nine events (200 to 300 people) across the Midlands in ten days, including in Worcester, Walsall, Birmingham, Solihull and Sandwell. Many members of the Muslim communities contributed greatly to the events and she was very moved by the organisation and effort that went into them.

Nicola Foster, Birmingham

The world said NEVER AGAIN but looking at the world today it seems our words have not been powerful enough. We must never stop standing up to hatred and intolerance and engaging in meaningful discussion. Unfortunately hate is like a weed growing underground. By the time it gets to the surface it is hard to eradicate as the haters have had time to organise.

Gisela Feldman, Manchester

DEBATES OF THE MONTH Oskar Groening (January)

There are many ways of looking at the trial of Oskar Groening, including why it took so long. For me, the most important issue is Justice with a capital J. Cover-up and denial have thwarted justice not only regarding the Holocaust and other crimes of genocide and against humanity, but on how we approach serious issues.

Words are powerful indeed, both when used positively for the good of others and when used negatively to promote demoralisation and express hatred. But words that are NOT expressed are also potent. We have succumbed to so much denial that it is built into the prevailing




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culture and many people are not aware of it because it feels like the norm.

Many people are no longer able to distinguish between misinformation, disinformation (Fake news) and real information. We must re-instate a higher standard of justice. In the case of Oskar Groening, what will give us access to the truth? Punishment is not justice and is seldom useful. Even the most heinous criminals should be given a chance to own their crimes and do something reparative.

So the answer for me is the question, "What decisions now will be likely to give humanity the most possible truth and Groening a chance to face his crimes?"
Ruth Barnett, London NW6

Should British Jews be applying for German passports? (February)

I applied for German citizenship a year ago. I am a second generation German (entirely secular Jew) born in the UK. My father and family emigrated in 1938 and after WW2 we had close associations with Germany, spending many holidays there. Over the last 30 years I have maintained a constant professional relationship with Germany and other

countries in Continental Europe. The UK has no right to cast judgement on other countries: its colonial record was morally appalling and its policy in the 1930s towards Nazi Germany was, at best, equivocal. Antisemitism in the UK is very much on the rise. So what is happening in Germany is happening in many other countries of Europe and indeed the US. I believe the Brexit referendum brought out the underlying insularity of the UK populace. I am glad therefore to have the opportunity to leave this behind for a country which I feel has a more enlightened attitude to the vision of the EU and is more aware than any other country of what nationalism and populism can lead to.

Andrew Nelson, Leeds

Our attitudes to the question vary, depending on a number of individual circumstances. Those of us who were directly attacked by Nazi word or deed, would differ from those who were not. Even two of us with similar experiences might make different decisions.

Going to Vienna and skiing in Austria every year was my highlight. The only anti-Semitic incident ever affecting me was in Kitzbühel, when I was asked by

an Englishman if I was Jewish, because all Jews have a lot of money to come here!

The future is bleak, as the United Kingdom is about to break up. The country is split four ways and there is no one in my view to lead it. Trade with the continent is preferable to selling this country to China! German and Austrian laws will protect us, whilst there is no similar English law.

Living abroad among the grandchildren of the perpetrators of the greatest evils, may be preferable. Our choices are limited! Antisemitism is advancing in leaps and bounds all over the world and we are faced with choosing the Devil or the deep blue sea.

Fred Stern, London

My late father was born in Berlin and had a German passport. He went to Palestine in good time, became a Chutzpah and later an Israeli Ambassador in many countries. If I take out a German passport, which I'm entitled to, it will only be so I can wave it over his grave in Jerusalem and tell him that I got back what he lost. I'm proud to be a Sabra and hold both Israeli and British Passports.

Ruth Kraus

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

In very few of his portraits does Charles 1 actually smile. You could argue that, had he known his fate, he would have had nothing to smile about. He was the first and last English king to die on the scaffold. In Van Dyck's famous triple portrait of him, some see the look of a divinely elected king – inherited from the belief of his father James 1 in the Divine Right of Kings.

But to me his look is wan and serious, etiolated, bearing the troubles of history on his face. I could see nothing of the narcissism credited to him, just a rather tired and anxious monarch, who ruled neither wisely nor too well.

But during his lifetime Charles 1 assembled one of Europe's most extraordinary art collections, containing some 2000 paintings and sculptures. Now the **Royal Academy**, partnered with the Royal Collection Trust, has gathered together some of these masterpieces from the 15th to the 17th Centuries including such artists as **Van Dyck**, **Rubens**, **Holbein**, **Titian**, **Caravaggio** and **Mantegna**.

Charles grew up in the court of James 1, in the shadow of his talented older brother Henry, (who died at the age of 18, forcing Charles' succession); it was a deeply cultural

background which gave him a taste for artistic excellence, later nurtured by his Catholic wife Queen Henrietta Maria. She brought from the French court her own more subtle yet vivid art choices, and together their court was admired throughout Europe. Charles began to cultivate Dutch masters and the leaders of the Italian Baroque and Renaissance. He commissioned some of the most prominent artists of his day and betrayed a penchant for mythological works such as Rubens' *Minerva Protects Cupid* and Van Dyck's *Cupid and Psyche*. It was tragic that this vast array of art was scattered throughout Europe on his death, some being sold off for as little as six shillings! You could hardly imagine the ascetic Roundheads of the Civil War basking in the glory of a Caravaggio a Rubens or a Titian, or the subtle exactitude of a Van Dyck, although it is claimed Oliver Cromwell did share a sense of their value.



The Finding of Moses, by Orazio Gentileschi

The Triumphs of Caesar by Andrea Montegna have a dedicated room, and underscore that divine right again, but the battle scenes are overblown with detail, compared with Van Dyck's tender family portraits. I admired Titian's *The Supper at Emmaus* as well as some of the intimate portraits by **Dürer** and the famous miniaturist **Hilliard**, which the king kept in his private quarters at Whitehall Palace. Also included are the Mortlake tapestries of **Raphael's Acts of the Apostles**. But for me the most telling are the Queen's personal paintings, some by **Guido Reni** and the great Italian baroque painter **Orazio Gentileschi**, whose breath-taking narrative paintings of the discovery of Moses in the bulrushes, or Joseph's retreat from Potiphar's wife, betray a taste and sensitivity perhaps less prominent elsewhere. The artistic preferences of Queen Henrietta Maria, a Royalist activist and likely proto-feminist herself, who would never recover from her husband's execution, portray women of strength and power. It is exemplified in her somewhat unfortunate choice of *Judith with the head of Holofernes*, by **Cristofano Allori**, given the unforeseen events to come.

Until 15th April.



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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

If I ever come back

In 2010 a collection of wartime letters and photographs was discovered in an old cupboard at a high school in Paris. Forgotten for years, the letters were written by a former pupil, Louise Pikovsky, to her beloved school teacher during World War Two.

The last note was written on the day Louise and her family were arrested at their home. Father, mother and all four children were imprisoned in the Drancy internment camp near Paris before being deported to Auschwitz. The Pikovskys never came back.

When France 24 journalist Stephanie Trouillard found out about the letters, she decided to help Khalida Hatchy, a teacher and librarian at the school, to explore Louise's story. Starting with the young pupil's writings and photographs, they were able to track down witnesses, cousins and former classmates from her time at the Lycée Jean de La Fontaine in the 16th arrondissement of Paris. Through months of research, they pieced together fragments of her life, and shed light on the circumstances of the family's disappearance.

A web documentary recounts their historical investigation, which eventually led the two researchers to Jerusalem, where they met Danièle and

her younger sister, Françoise (née Kohn). The two sisters could finally learn about their long-lost cousin. Françoise explains "We only have one photo of that part of the family" and she points to a picture yellowed with age. "There you have the Pikovsky children: Louise, Annette, Lucie and Jean. They were all deported when we were in Lyon," says the elderly Frenchwoman, who has been living in Israel for the past decade.

In the living room of the Jerusalem apartment, Khalida Hatchy struggles to contain her emotion. It is thanks to her that the letters have found their way to the Kohn sisters. The school librarian has come from France with the letters. "A piece of their family's history has been returned to them," she says.

That slice of family history could easily have vanished forever. Khalida came across the letters by chance in February 2016. Six years earlier, a Maths teacher had found them, along with yearbooks, a class photo and a Bible, in a forgotten cupboard.

Louise had addressed all the letters to Miss Malingrey, her Latin and Greek teacher, with whom she had a very close bond, and Miss Malingrey kept her memory alive by holding on to her letters. In 1988, as the Lycée Jean de La Fontaine celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, more than four decades after last seeing Louise Miss Malingrey decided to leave the letters with the school. She wrote a paragraph about Louise, her pupil between 1941 and 1943, in



A school photo of Louise Pikovsky

a special anniversary brochure: "She was blonde, with big blue eyes that shone like the stars Louise was a very good pupil, particularly in Maths. She helped classmates less gifted than herself. We wrote to each other often during the holidays in 1942. I sent her supply packages from my zone, which was less disadvantaged than the occupied zone".

Miss Malingrey died in 2004 aged 98. Not long before she passed away, she gave a photo of Louise to the Shoah Memorial in Paris. She visited the Memorial to make the donation with a group of former pupils. Colette Montavon-Schirmann was one of them. "Miss Malingrey was an old and special friend. There was a group of five of us. We kept in touch until her very last days. We loved her," she said. "I actually became a Latin and Greek teacher thanks to her. She gave me the passion and the desire to share my knowledge with others."

More than seventy years after Louise's untimely death, the documentary finally gives a voice to a talented young girl who was unable to fulfil the bright future she deserved.

The website, which is in English, can be viewed at: <http://webdoc.france24.com/holocaust-france-letters-louise-pikovsky/>.

Kathy Cohen



Some of the many letters written by Louise Pikovsky

AT YOUR SERVICE: Support for Memory Loss

The AJR has a special team of volunteers dedicated to helping members learn to live with memory loss. The team is co-ordinated by Jennifer Aizenberg, who has a background in counselling, volunteer management and social work, especially with older people.

According to Jennifer, every single one of us experiences memory loss from time to time, and this gets worse as we get older or when we are very stressed. But if forgetfulness becomes more severe and persistent, it can become a major problem and significantly impede one's quality of life.

Loss of memory is also often one of

the earliest signs of dementia. As time goes on it may be accompanied by other changes in the person's thinking and feeling which make it more difficult for them to cope with the normal activities of daily living.

Jennifer currently has 22 volunteers in her team, who between them visit 22 different AJR members in the south of England on a regular basis. She provides ongoing supervision, adapted to each person's needs, and also arranges formal training programmes for all the volunteers. A similar service for AJR clients in the north is co-ordinated by Naomi Kaye.

The majority of referrals are made via word of mouth or AJR social workers. Jennifer & Naomi contact the member (or their family) and arrange to visit. They then assess whether the referral is appropriate or whether another service is more suitable.

Approximately a quarter of the service's clients are currently in residential care, but most of them are still living at home.

Establishing a connection between the client and the volunteer is critical, and Jennifer, Naomi and their teams use a variety of methods. For example, some members may respond to a particular photograph or piece of music which links them with their past. Also critical is 'matching' members with volunteers, which is carefully based on mutual interests.

One example of a successful 'match' is a young Chinese volunteer who Jennifer introduced to a client who used to be a language teacher. The client was delighted to have a visitor who spoke a different tongue and they spent many sessions mutually teaching each other. It was a very rewarding relationship on both sides.

A welcome visitor

David has been volunteering for the AJR for four years, and currently visits a 95 year old lady in London once a week.

David enjoys these visits even though his client rarely remembers him and he sometimes struggles to make a connection with her. A former deputy head teacher, he prides himself on his non-verbal communication skills and his ability to smile and nod, even when nothing is being said.

His current client is the third AJR member he has regularly visited. She lives in a care home where the staff are "great", according to David, but rarely have time for quality one-to-one communication.

One of the many skills that David and his fellow volunteers have learned from their co-ordinator, Jennifer, is to understand their clients' worlds. This means not contradicting them if they say something that is patently incorrect, for example in hoping that a deceased relative will come to visit. As David explains, it is kinder to go along with it

than point out the relative is no longer with us, and risk upsetting the client all over again.

"I enjoy the challenge of making some type of connection with a client and hopefully brightening up his or her day, if only for the time that I'm there," says David.



Vali Rácz

One evening in 1946 my father and I were at the home of relatives with whom he played cards every evening, together with ladies of a certain age. The stakes were low, the excitement high. The bell rang and in swept the very glamorous Vali Rácz, tall, blonde, in a beautiful fur coat. She had in tow our relative, Peter Halasz, a young, good-looking, successful Jewish writer. The family was duly impressed, but disapproving of this addition to the family from a completely alien milieu. How wrong they were we only found out much later.

Vali Rácz was born a religious Catholic in 1911 in the Hungarian village of Gölle. She attended the Ferenc Liszt Music Academy in Budapest. After graduating, she sang in variety theatres and in a nightspot owned by the Jewish Ronay family. (The son, Egon Ronay, later founded the Ronay restaurant guide in England). In her career she was surrounded by Jewish composers and writers and even her famously glamorous dresses were designed by a Jew.

When the fate of Jews in Hungary became obvious, a friend asked her to take in a Jewish couple and hide them. She did not hesitate. On the first floor of her villa was an enormous wardrobe which they could pull forward, leaving a large space behind. The back of the wardrobe acted as a partition. Some time later she took in another Jewish couple and a young single woman, so now she was hiding five people.

To organise food for so many people without arousing suspicion became very difficult.

In October 1944 the situation became even worse. She still appeared every night in a show. One evening before the theatre she entertained two German officers, to allay the neighbours' suspicions. However, not long after, two policemen came to see her. They searched the villa but found nothing. In spite of that, they took Vali away, so now the fugitives no longer felt safe, and one by one they left. Vali was taken to the infamous Hotel Majestic where she saw obvious signs that some of the detainees had been tortured. Through the efforts of her Christian playwright lover she was released and the next day the bloodbath of Budapest's Jews started. Many were stripped and shot into the Danube.

After Vali's experience in the Hotel Majestic the Germans stationed 50 soldiers in her villa. She was respected because they knew she was an artist. Not long after the Germans left, Russian soldiers began to appear. She welcomed them into her villa and once again made them understand that she was to be respected as an artist.

The Russian colonel was good looking and young and by the evening a passionate affair started. Sasha, as he was called, then offered protection and organised food (which was very scarce by now). The Russians made enquiries about Vali's past, but nothing suspicious was found. Sasha was ordered to join the Romanian front but promised to come and say goodbye before returning to Russia.



The young Vali Rácz

Battle raged around the villa, which by now gave shelter to a number of neighbours whose houses were badly damaged.

After the liberation three men searched her villa and found a notebook in which the telephone number of a Nazi officer appeared. She was taken away, accused of being a Nazi collaborator and sentenced to death. For a day she was released to go home before her execution. The local priest gave her the last rites. Just at this point Sasha reappeared. Immediately he went to confront the committee which had sentenced Vali and, with some difficulty, managed to get her released.

In 1946 she was introduced to my relative, the much younger Jewish-born writer, Peter Halász. The attraction was mutual and they married within six months. In 1956, after the revolution was put down, they left for America with \$70 dollars. In 1970 they moved again, this time to West Germany, and her husband became the mainstay of the Hungarian section of Radio Free Europe. In 1988 she returned to Hungary and in 1997 she passed away.

Vali Rácz has been named a Righteous among the Nations, with her name in Yad Vashem. So this glamorous stranger from my past, whom I remember well, whose badly produced CD I listen to and whose heroism the five hidden Jews and their children will long remember, is recognised as an artist and an exceptionally courageous human being.



The older Vali Rácz at Yad Vashem

Janos Fisher

REVIEWS

A CHERRY DRESS

by Peter Bild/Irene Messinger
Vienna University Press
ISBN 978-3847-107972

When she was five Anita Lelewer's mother mended her favourite dark blue dress by embroidering it with red cherries, symbolising her loving, stable background and the virtue of finding some good in adversity.

Anita had a happy middle-class childhood in pre-war cosmopolitan Vienna where she spent her first 23 years until the Anschluss in March 1938. Blonde and beautiful, by then she was already a successful dancer. She toured Egypt with the Vienna State Opera's corps de ballet and the famous tenor Richard Tauber, even being offered a camel as a present. But she had Jewish grandparents which made life impossible young police officer broke off their engagement.

Despite no experience of housework she came to England on a domestic visa. The work proved unsatisfactory but she made connections on the ferry over and soon contracted a marriage of convenience to an eccentric Englishman, Donald Douglas, enabling her to resume work as a dancer.

Her father Georg Lelewer was a distinguished Viennese Supreme Court Judge and Anita was able to get an entry permit to England for her parents just before war broke out. They moved to a Quaker boarding house in Ramsgate. The manager, Fritz Bild, later became her second husband. An engineer 14 years her senior, he had led a fairly Bohemian life in Vienna; his tobacconist parents perished in the Holocaust.

When the coast became dangerous they were transferred to London where their son Peter was born in 1943. Anita walked to hospital while Fritz was under curfew to avoid internment.

Anita had several narrow escapes in the Blitz and built up a successful career as a dancer, choreographed

Cossack dances for ENSA, sang in operetta and acted the principal boy in several pantomimes. She also co-directed and acted in seaside repertory theatre and later wrote and broadcast for the BBC's German service.

Settling in Highgate she lived in the same house for over 60 years until her death in 2012, aged 97. She wrote memoirs for her family which Peter Bild has published together with the Viennese exile researcher Irene Messinger. They are accompanied by scholarly articles by renowned experts as well as pieces by close family members, including her granddaughters telling fond memories of a much-loved Oma who gave wise advice interspersed with a fine sense of humour.

This is a most extraordinary book telling of a fascinating and full life. The description of childhood in pre-war Austria is very interesting, particularly the vignettes about relatives and way of life. Her transition to England is equally enthralling, leaving readers wishing they had met this remarkable lady.

Janet Weston

UPROOTED: HOW 3000 YEARS OF JEWISH CIVILISATION IN THE ARAB WORLD VANISHED OVERNIGHT

by Lyn Julius
Valentine Mitchell, 2018
ISBN 978 1 910383 64 3

Jews in the Middle East and North Africa preceded the Arab conquest and Islam by 1,000 years. Yet today there are barely 4,000 left. Lyn Julius explains why these ancient communities disappeared almost overnight. There are startling similarities with the ethnic cleansing under Nazism. The difference is that the majority survived and rebuilt their lives in Israel.

There is another difference: we refugees..... from Hitler and the Nazis did not have to wait long to see their nemesis. We saw the total defeat of their military, their cities destroyed and their leadership put on trial at Nuremberg in the name of their whole evil ideology. It would seem there was nothing more to fear from it, especially as the German nation has shown deep contrition. Or was there?

About a million Jewish refugees from

Arab and Muslim countries were driven from their homelands within a few short years of WW2. They have not seen any kind of recognition from the perpetrators or wider world of the injustice done to them, let alone seen the perpetrators called to account.

Yes, the Jewish refugees, most now Israeli citizens, have seen the armies of their persecutors destroyed several times over and now they are seeing some countries smashed to smithereens – certainly a nemesis – but the Arab and Muslim rulers, who adopted the Nazi ideology and fused it with their 1500 year-old tradition of dhimmitude (discriminatory rules against non-believers) are as yet impervious to any conception of the perniciousness of their actions, such is the lethal force of religious and racial prejudice combined, encased within a tribal mentality.

So, no 'perpetrators', no 'victims' – most of the latter were quietly and with great hardship integrated into Israel. Iraq even hoped to destroy the newly-declared state by expelling so many Jews at once that Israel would never be able to cope. These expulsions were planned before the War of Israel's Independence and before there was a single Arab refugee from Palestine.

Into the vacuum of this half-hidden history stepped Yasser Arafat with his invented people and state. His 'Palestinian narrative' must surely be the precursor and inspiration for all subsequent pedlars of fake news and false facts... But it has been very destructive and painful for Israel.

Lyn Julius meticulously documents the experience of the Jews in Muslim countries leading to their expulsions. The accounts are relentlessly awful; one wonders if the Muslim Middle East is ever going to leave behind its medieval mindset and allow Israel to live in peace.

Hanna Nyman

Have you read any books recently which you think are worthy of a review in these pages? If so please email our editorial team on editorial@ajr.org.uk

Save our Shuls

Historian Simon Schama joined TV presenter Natasha Kaplinsky at the recent launch in Parliament of a project to preserve the historic synagogues of Europe.

They are among dozens of names from the worlds of politics, heritage, the arts and religion to add their support to the initiative which aims to bring the current state of these historic synagogues to a wider audience.

Commissioned by the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, the project lists 3,318 synagogues, mostly pre-dating WW2, in 48 countries across Europe. The buildings have been catalogued based on their artistic, urban and historical significance and their condition rated to help focus preservation efforts on the most important sites at risk.

The findings have highlighted 160 buildings which the Foundation believes urgently need attention if their rich cultural history is not lost for ever. Two of these are UK synagogues: Merthyr Tydfil and Sunderland.

At the launch of the project on 7 February at the Speaker's House in Parliament, Mr Schama said: "Synagogues were always places of gathering ... so we are essentially putting back together memories of living communities. We might reasonably ask where there are no Jews – because of extermination or assimilation - why should we bother? The answer lies in human vitality. We will be bringing back not only Jewish

memory, we will bring what Europe was – a place that had Jewish life as much as it had Christian life."

Natasha Kaplinsky, who last year received an OBE for services to Holocaust commemoration, spoke about her paternal family's links with Slonim in Belarus and its Great Synagogue, one of those in the 'at risk' category.

Ms Kaplinsky said: "Slonim had 17,000 Jews prior to the Second World War. By the end it was estimated there were 200. Slonim isn't just an old synagogue in need of a bit of TLC and repair, it is a lasting testament to a destroyed community and a place of profound education. It feels important to restore the buildings so that we can learn from our past and turn something as horrendous and horrifying as the Holocaust to help increase our understanding, knowledge and empathy so that we can combat the growing intolerance in our world and be forever mindful of the dangers of prejudice."

In Merthyr Tydfil the Foundation has helped investigate a feasibility study to restore the building and preserve it as a Jewish Museum of Wales telling the rich story of the 250-year-old Jewish community there. In Sunderland the Foundation is working with the Churches Conservation Trust to identify possible future uses for the site.



Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue

Michael Mail, founder and Chief Executive of the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, said: "Prior to WW2 there were some 17,000 synagogues in Europe. Of the 3,318 now left, less than one quarter are functioning synagogues. The rest are either abandoned, in ruins or turned into buildings for other purposes. While other religious buildings have suffered during the 20th Century, with many of these synagogues it was the catastrophic loss of their communities of users during the war which makes the challenge of preserving Jewish cultural heritage so much harder."

Backing the project to preserve the sites, more than 40 high-profile supporters including Downton Abbey creator Lord Julian Fellowes, authors Linda Grant and Howard Jacobson; architect Daniel Libeskind; sculptor Sir Anish Kapoor; journalist Robert Peston and former ministers Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Tristram Hunt, have signed a letter calling on European governments and heritage agencies to support all efforts to save and preserve the most at-risk synagogues.

To find out more about the project and how to get involved see www.historicsynagogueurope.org



From L-R - the Rt Hon Jim Murphy, Natasha Kaplinsky, Dame Helen Hyde, Michael Mail and Simon Schama

Around the AJR

Most of these reports are summaries of much longer reviews which, due to lack of space, we are unable to include in their entirety. If you would like further information on the actual event please contact either the author or the AJR regional co-ordinator.

BOOK CLUB: "ELINOR OLIPHANT IS COMPLETELY FINE"

Our friendly, chatty group discussed this book by Gail Honeyman: enjoyed by all but tinged with sadness, conversation soon moved onto HMD events and everyone's different journeys to the UK.

Susan Harrod

ESSEX (ILFORD): HAPPY 2018

We celebrated the new year 2018 with a warm get-together which enabled us to catch up on recent news and events with other members: a friendly and pleasant morning.

Meta Roseneil

GLASGOW BOOK CLUB: BOOKS AND BIRTHDAYS

Instead of a communal book we decided to discuss individual favourites and also celebrated 2 first generation members' birthdays with a lovely tea at the home of Anthea Berg.

Ruth Ramsay

LEEDS: DETECTIVE SGT. LEACH SPILLS THE BEANS

We heard a fascinating account of the worst of human nature and the professionalism of the police in bringing criminals to justice. The detective was involved in a number of headline-grabbing cases during a career spanning 43 years in the police force.

Robin Gilmore

Tip from Edinburgh

A delightful gathering of continental friends met, ostensibly to view the film about the Russ family "The Sturgeon Queens". Unfortunately the equipment failed so we ended up discussing our own families and recipes that have found their way down our family lines.

Some members, with the help of their phones, located various Russ & Daughters outlets in New York. It seems that if you want subsequent generations to continue the family business then pretend you don't want them in! The Russ family are now in their fourth generation, having been in the business since 1914.

Karl Stern

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Susan Harrod

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Child Survivors' Association-AJR

Henri Obstfeld

020 8954 5298 h.obstfeld@talk21.com

MARCH GROUP EVENTS

All AJR members are welcome at any of these events; you do not have to be affiliated to that particular group. As the exact timings of these events are often subject to last minute changes we do not include them in the AJR Journal and suggest you contact the relevant regional contact for full details.

Pinner	1 March	Brian Nathan – "A-Z of Jewish Band Leaders"
Kingston and Surrey	5 March	Stephen Ison – Jewish Care and Claude Vecht Wolf – AJR Computer Support
Ealing	6 March	David Barnett – "The Balfour Declaration"
Ilford	7 March	Nick Dobson – "Agatha Christie – A life of Crime"
Leeds CF	7 March	Social get-together
Edinburgh	7 March	Mike Ireland
Nottingham	8 March	Lunch time social get-together
Glasgow Book Club	8 March	Social get-together
York	12 March	Social get-together
Essex (Westcliff)	13 March	Nick Dobson
Norfolk	13 March	Colin Davey – "Deconstructing Denial"
Birmingham	14 March	Social get-together at Andrew Cohen House with lunch
Didsbury	14 March	Social get-together
Glasgow	14 March	Lunch at Marks Deli
Bromley CF	15 March	Social get-together – Stephen Ison to speak
Newcastle	18 March	Speaker. Details to follow
Brighton	19 March	Pam Fox – "The Jews of Golders Green"
Edgware	20 March	Les Spitz – "Around the World with my Camera"
Book Club	21 March	Social get-together
Radlett	21 March	David Harris – "The History of JFS"
Muswell Hill	22 March	Louise Heilbron – "The First Woman Rabbi"
Manchester	25 March	Musical Presentation with Brian Green
Bradford	27 March	Social get-together
North London	29 March	Colin Davey – "Deconstructing Denial"

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

AJR staff and members were involved in many of the hundreds of different UK events that took place around January's Holocaust Memorial Day.

On Thursday 25 January at the UK's National Commemorative Ceremony, the letters of AJR member Vera Schaufeld were read by Charles Dance OBE, Sir Derek Jacobi CBE, and Maureen Lipman CBE. The moving ceremony was attended by over 1000 guests, including survivors of the Holocaust and genocide and numerous faith, civic and political leaders.

The AJR's own HMD commemoration service was held on 24 January at Belsize Square Synagogue, attended by senior representatives from the embassies of Slovak Republic, Germany, Austria and Hungary. Speakers included Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and AJR member Manfred Goldberg whose story was featured in the February issue of this Journal.

The Chair of the AJR's Kindertransport Special Interests Group Sir Erich Reich led a delegation including Lord Alf Dubs and Barbara Winton to 10 Downing Street on 30 January to help raise awareness of the plight of modern day refugees. The group delivered a letter reminding the Prime Minister of the Dubs amendment regarding unaccompanied children. The AJR is cooperating with other community groups such as Citizens UK to urge the Government to do more to bring to the UK those who are at risk having fled oppression.

Meanwhile the British Holocaust Heroes Medal was awarded to Otto Schiff, who in 1933 helped to create the German Jewish Aid Committee (later the Jewish Refugees Committee) which helped to bring Jews from Germany and Austria and support them financially and practically.

AJR members also took part in numerous other HMD events in London, including at the Jewish Police Association, the Ben Uri Gallery, and Belmont United, Finchley Reform, Pinner United, and Edgware & Hendon Reform synagogues. Outside London members and staff were actively involved in countless events.

In Manchester one talk focused on the magnificent efforts of the Quaker community to assist refugees to escape Germany and Austria, while in Salford the BBC Philharmonic Quartet took part in an event at the Broughton Hub. In Bury local school students told the story of AJR member Sam Laskier, who escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto as a young boy, while in Scotland First Minister Nicola Sturgeon gave an address at an event marking the Nazi massacres at Rostov on Don.

It is impossible to review every event here so please forgive us for highlighting just a few.



AJR at Belsize Square



Centre for German Jewish studies



Jewish Police Association



Kindertransport group outside 10 Downing Street



Northwood



UK national ceremony



Pinner



Eva Clarke at Belmont with AJR staff



Winter Gardens, Sheffield



Below: Edgware and Hendon Reform

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



PLUS ÇA CHANGE



When my parents came to England in 1938 their energies were devoted primarily to finding work, establishing a

family and building a home. Those dark and dismal pre-war days were a far cry from the sunshine and relative stability that characterises life in Israel today. When I first moved to Israel in 1964 I hardly imagined that I and my family would endure several wars and innumerable skirmishes, children and grandchildren who served in the military and a way of life that was far removed from the relatively comfortable environment I had left behind in North West London, the achievement of which was my parents' ultimate aim.

Over the years, however, my life has become more comfortable, the younger generation has performed military service and emerged more or less unscathed, and I can certainly count many blessings. Nonetheless, just as my parents in their day hankered for tastes and sounds, as well as the people and places associated with the country they once called 'home,' I still sometimes long for tastes, sounds, people and places that remind me of England's green and pleasant land.

Now that innumerable TV channels are available to me round the clock, I still tune in to BBC and Sky news channels and even enjoy watching the hoary old chestnuts embodied in the British comedies that are constantly repeated on the channel known here as BBC Entertainment.

In the 1940s and 1950s the generation of refugees from Germany and other countries of Central Europe remained in contact with one another by speaking on the phone, meeting in one another's homes and encountering one another in the cafés and restaurants that were frequented by other refugees, mainly in Finchley Road and Swiss Cottage. My parents and their friends would gather in our home of an evening, play the piano together and enjoy 'kaffee und kuchen' and other home-baked delicacies. There would be conversation and laughter, cigarette smoke would swirl around the room and at the end of the evening everyone would repair to their homes for another week of enduring the daily commute to work in order to earn a living.

But now we are in the digital age, and reaching out to others like myself, namely people living in Israel who are originally from England, is far easier. Travel is also a much simpler and cheaper undertaking than it was in those far-off days, so that going back to England to catch up on old friends and enjoy things that we still long for is not as insurmountable an obstacle as it once was.

One of the most prominent phenomena of this digital age is the prevalence of social media. Facebook, Twitter and other catchy internet features seem to be taking up an inordinate amount of our time and energy while at the same time enabling us to remain in contact with one another. Thus, some time ago a bright spark somewhere out there in the ether had the idea of creating a Facebook group entitled 'Brits Living in Israel' for connecting former residents of Great Britain now domiciled in Israel. At present the group has almost 5,000 members.

People in the group provide one another with information about how and where to obtain favourite items which are freely available in England but difficult to find in Israel. Other subjects discussed (and mainly complained about) by the members of the group have been the attitude of Israel's TV channels to the policies and terminology of the BBC ('terrorists' or 'freedom fighters'), the price and availability of much-loved foods and sweets, the difficulty of finding reliable handymen and the agony of dealing with Israeli bureaucracy.

The information network is faster and more streamlined today than it was when my parents came to England, but the sense of comradeship between people who originate from the same foreign country and miss the same things endures.

AJR CARD AND GAMES CLUB



Please join us at our Card and Games Club

Monday 9th April 2018 at 1.00pm

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

Open to all levels Bridge players – come and join us

We also offer card games, backgammon, scrabble. You decide.

Games are dependent on numbers being sufficient – the more the merrier

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

£7.00 per person



Booking is essential – when you book please let us know your choice of game.
Please either call Kathryn Prevezer on 07966 969951 or email kathryn@ajr.org.uk

FANCY A CRUISE?

Carol Rossen is planning a cruise for AJR members this Autumn and would love to hear from people interested in coming along. The suggested dates are in October/November for 11 or 12 nights and proposed destinations include Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar and the Canary Islands. Departure would be from Southampton with coach travel included.

Contact karenmarkham@ajr.org.uk or
020 8385 3070 for more info.

LOOKING FOR?

The AJR regularly receives messages from our members and others looking for people or for help in particular subjects.

Here are some of the most recent requests – please get in touch directly with the person concerned if you can help.

JEWISH REFUGEES IN SUSSEX

Lesley Urbach is looking for information and memorabilia about Jewish refugees in Sussex, for an exhibition and possibly a book. Her own mother and aunt came on a Kindertransport and stayed in the Wyberley convalescent home in Burgess Hill.

lcurbach@aol.com

VIENNA TO NORTH WALES

Agnes Isaacs, the AJR's Northern Outreach Co-ordinator, is seeking to trace anyone who attended Rabbi Wolf Gottlieb's Vienna Youth Aliyah School during the early days of the Anschluss and then went to the B'nei Akiva hostel at Gwrych Castle, near Abergele in North Wales.

agnes@ajr.org.uk or 07908 156 361



The Girls in Wyberley, Burgess Hill, 1939)

ÉMIGRÉ ACTORS – ANTON DIFFRING

Lilian Levy's article (February 2018) about émigré actors included a photo of Joseph Stein and others at Bush House in 1967. Some may recognise Anton Diffring (centre). Anton, although partly Jewish, played Nazis in many films. He was a close friend of my dear cousin, the late actor Annette Savory, who was married to BBC producer Gerald Savory and acted under the name Annette Carell. If anyone knew Annette, Anton or Gerald I would love to hear from them.

joan.cromwell1@btinternet.com



Anton Diffring in the centre

HILDEGARD SEIDOWSKY

Dr Hans-Joachim Seidowsky and his friend Dr. Paul Oestreicher are searching for any records relating to the one surviving member of his wider family, Hildegard Seidowsky, who fled Germany to the UK sometime during 1934-1938 and re-emigrated to the US c.1940.

paul.oestreicher.nz@gmail.com

FAMILY OF EDITH LOEFF

Irving Adler is seeking any surviving relatives of Edith Loeff, a Kindertransportee from Vienna. Irving is related to Edith's nephew, Kurt Spielmann, who perished in Auschwitz. A 'Stone of Remembrance' will be placed in Vienna in May for Kurt and other family members.

irv@adlerfw.com

EASTBOURNE LANDSOWNE HOTEL

SUNDAY 1 JULY TO
SUNDAY 8 JULY 2018

Come and join us for a week
Make new friends and meet up
with old friends

£450pp for twin/double
£475 for single room



Sea View rooms an additional £15 per room per night

Carol Rossen will be among those
accompanying the trip

Space is limited so book early

For further details,
please telephone Lorna Moss
on 020 8385 3070



JOSEPH PEREIRA

(ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years)
is now available for DIY repairs
and general maintenance.

No job too small,
very reasonable rates.
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robert@jackmansilverman.co.uk

ERRATA

Our February issue carried a review of the book "Pathfinder of Great Musicians" by Edith Stargardt-Wolff. We mistakenly attributed the review to Michael Levin when it was in fact written by the author's relative, Walter Wolff.

Our February issue also carried some incorrect details for our forthcoming holiday in Eastbourne. The correct dates for this trip are Sunday 1 July to Sunday 8 July 2018 and the cost will be £475 single, £450 twin/double. See advert to left for more details.

OBITUARIES

Fritz Lustig

Born Berlin 31 March 1919,
Died London 18 December 2017



Fritz Lustig fled Nazi Germany and as a young Jewish refugee assumed a vital role as a “secret listener” to German prisoners’ conversations during the war for British intelligence services.

Born in Berlin, Fritz came to England in April 1939 but was later interned on the Isle of Man as an “enemy alien” under Churchill’s order to “Collar the Lot!”.

In the camp his love of music shone through when he joined a group providing entertainment to other inmates. He was eventually released to join the British Army’s Pioneer Corps and was very pleased at last to be doing something to help the war effort. “After all we ex-refugees had far more motivation to fight the Germans than our British contemporaries,” he explained.

As an amateur musician he was fortunate to be able to join an army orchestra, but itched to do something more effective. He was transferred to the intelligence corps and immediately promoted to sergeant where he worked at Latimer House and Wilton Park, Buckinghamshire eavesdropping on the conversations of German prisoners of war. In the “M” or microphoned room, an excellent knowledge of German including colloquialisms and local dialects was key.

The top secret work, he was told, was more important than driving a tank or firing a machine gun. Not only did the listeners hear vital military information but details of atrocities were recorded and specially annotated. Particulars of civilian life and morale were also of great interest to the authorities. Two enemy prisoners were allocated to each bugged cell, always paired so it was fairly easy to know who was speaking. The team worked long hours with only one full day off a week.

During this time he met his future wife Susah Cohn, another German refugee who was working on intelligence and translations. They married in 1945 but Susan died in 2013. In civilian life Fritz was an accountant and a gifted musician. His son Robin said: “He was a devoted amateur cellist and was playing regularly in string quartets until only a few months before his death.”

Fritz was an AJR member and quite regularly sent letters to the Journal and provided interesting reminiscences on revisiting the Peveril internment camp after more than 70 years. He is survived by Robin, a journalist and broadcaster as well as Stephen, a music publisher.

Janet Weston

Hugo Marom

Born Brno 9 October 1928,
Died Israel 31 December 2017



In 1939 Hugo and his brother Rudy were able to flee Czechoslovakia on one of the transports organised by Nicholas Winton. After the war they discovered that both their parents had been murdered, their mother in Auschwitz and their father in Treblinka.

During the war Hugo and Rudy remained in Britain with other Czech Jewish children. As teenagers they wished to retain their Jewish identity and so created their own community. A synagogue was established with a Rabbi who conducted services when he was available; the rest of the time the Bar Mitzvah-age children (including Hugo) led the service.

His family could trace their Czech antecedents back for many centuries so he and his brother returned to Brno in 1945 to find their parents, only to discover the awful truth of what had happened to the entire Jewish community they had known. Nonetheless, he stayed in Brno, studying at the University of Technology (VUT) and there met his future wife, also a Holocaust survivor.

“I dreamed of becoming a pilot back when I was a young boy,” Marom once said. He completed a pilot’s course in Czechoslovakia and then made his way to Israel during the War of Independence, where he led air squadrons. He was one of the founders of the Israel Air Force (IAF) and was lauded as an outstanding pilot.

In 2009 Marom contributed to erecting a memorial to the parents of the ‘Winton children’ at Prague’s main railway station.

Kathy Cohen

Hans Cohn

1923 – 2018



It is with great regret that we announce the death of Hans Cohn on 21 January 2018.

At the end of 2017 he gave an interview to the AJR Journal and we featured the resulting article on his life in our January edition.



AJR FILM CLUB

Our next film showing will be at
Sha'arei Tzedek North London Reform
Synagogue, 120 Oakleigh Road North,
Whetstone N20 9EZ

on **Monday 12 March 2018**
at 12.30pm

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

HIDDEN FIGURES



Three female African-American
mathematicians (Taraji P. Henson, Octavia
L. Spencer, and Janelle Monáe) provide
crucial calculations for NASA's space race
against the Soviets, all while dealing with
the racist and sexist assumptions of their
white co-workers. Kevin Costner, Kirsten
Dunst, and Jim Parsons co-star in this
adaptation of the book of the same name
by Margot Lee Shetterly. Directed by
Theodore Melfi.

£8.00 per person

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL

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

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LUNCH

Wednesday 7 March 2018

At New North London Synagogue

12.30pm

We are delighted that we will be
joined by **Mona Golabek** who wrote
the play



The Pianist of Willesden Lane

The Pianist of Willesden Lane, telling the
story of Mona's mother, Lisa Jura's survival
and the strength her music brought her
throughout her traumatic youth.

Mona is currently working with The
Holocaust Education Trust on a project with
school children. In this regard we will be
joined by pupils from Akiva School.

Call Susan Harrod on **020 8385 3070**
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Exhibitions & Events

I PAINT WHAT I SEE

Burgh House, Hampstead, is hosting a retrospective of works by Belinda Salmon Harding. The exhibition shows the amazing breadth and depth of Harding's work, from simple sketch books to large three-dimensional work in cast glass.

7 – 11 March



EXODUS COMES TO BUSHEY

Over 70 masterworks by émigré artists such as Frank Auerbach, Marc Chagall, Mark Gertler and many others from the Ben Uri Collection, are now on display in the Exodus exhibition at Bushey museum.

Until 24 June

BROKEN GLASS

The Watford Palace Theatre is hosting Arthur Miller's play *Broken Glass*, which focuses on a couple in New York City in 1938, the same time as Kristallnacht. Running through the play is the question of whether something badly broken can ever be repaired: a marriage, an identity, a country?

Until 24 March

PINNER: YOM HASHOAH

AJR members Ann and Bob Kirk, who arrived in Britain on Kindertransports

from Berlin and Hanover respectively, will be the guest speakers at Pinner Synagogue's 80th anniversary of the Kindertransports. The Chargé d'affaires at the German Embassy will also give a brief address.

11 April

JW3: YOM HASHOAH

A performance of *The Jewish Wife*, Bertolt Brecht's chilling play about everyday German life at the dawn of the Nazi regime, will be followed by a short ceremony led by Rabbi Roni Tabick and singer Aaron Isaac.

11 April

PESACH @ BELSIZE SQUARE

Rabbi Altshuler and Cantor Heller invite you to join them for Second Night Seder on Motzei Shabbat.

020 7794 3949.

31 March

AJR SAYS IZIDOO

The AJR is delighted to become the first UK partner for Izidoo – an exciting new technology that we hope will enable our members to maintain their independence, remain healthy, and enjoy life.

The technology has been developed by an Israeli company and works via a simple device that plugs into a television and allows users to receive information about relevant events in the community and form connections with others who share similar interests. Users will also be able to learn new skills, partake in lectures and even keep fit classes, summon (non-emergency) help, video call family members and share photographs. They will also be able to access AJR support services easily, such as help with shopping or – for those in North West London – 'meals on wheels'.

As Izidoo's first partner the AJR will begin



with piloting the technology among small groups of members, who will all be provided with initial training and ongoing support and evaluation. If the pilots are successful the technology will be made more widely available.

"This simple technology will help AJR members to stay connected to their family and friends, to form new friendships, to take advantage of ongoing learning opportunities, receive at-home services, and a whole lot more – all from the comfort of home," explains AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman.

For more information please contact Carol Hart on 020 8385 3070 or carol@ajr.org.uk

#STOLENMEMORY



The International Tracing Service (ITS) has released a catalogue of over 3,000 personal belongings from concentration camp inmates which it hopes to return to their family members.

The majority of the preserved objects came from Neuengamme, Dachau or Bergen-Belsen and belonged to "political" prisoners and forced labourers from Poland, Ukraine and Russia. Last year the ITS was able to find around 90 families and return their personal mementos to them, but it still has many more descendants to trace.

Several of the items were displayed in Paris last month to help promote the ITS campaign: www.stolenmemory.org

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For the latest AJR news, including details of forthcoming events and information about our services, visit www.ajr.org.uk

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