



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## A Synagogue for Refugees

This month the Belsize Square Synagogue celebrates its 80th birthday, a milestone in the history of the Jewish refugee community. Later this year, the AJR – which has maintained close cultural links with the Belsize Square community throughout the last eight decades – will place the next in a series of special plaques on the site of the Synagogue at 51 Belsize Square.



The 2018 wedding of musical director of Belsize Square Synagogue, Dr Benjamin Wolf and his bride Rebekka, taken in front of the beautiful Aron ha'Kodesh

Jonathan Wittenberg begins his fascinating book, *Walking with the Light* (2013), with his grandfather's detailed and haunting account of the synagogue in Frankfurt as it was left after *Kristallnacht*: "It offered a picture of terrifying devastation. The great candelabrum lay on the floor, smashed into a thousand pieces. The benches, the lecterns, the pulpit where I had so often stood, the glorious organ, the cantor's prayer desk were all burnt. The

Holy Ark was broken: the Torah scrolls had been stolen."

His grandfather was Rabbi Dr George Salzberger. A few days later he was arrested and sent to Dachau where he was regularly beaten. He never spoke to his family about his terrible ordeal in Dachau. At home, his daughters were forced to throw their family prayer books out of the window. Six months later  
*Continued on page 2*

### REMEMBER & REFLECT

This month we celebrate the amazing work of Josiah Wedgwood, preview a landmark event about the Kindertransport, and share more insights into the year-long *Insiders/Outsiders* festival.

Holocaust Memorial Day features prominently and we invite readers to look at the latest plans for the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. A powerful report of a recent visit to Poland provides sobering context for these initiatives.

We hope you find these articles interesting and, as always, look forward to receiving your comments.

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## A Synagogue for Refugees (cont.)

Rabbi Salzberger and his family managed to escape from Nazi Germany and arrived in England in April 1939.

That Spring the first Friday night services took place at what was to become Belsize Square Synagogue, organised by a group of German refugees. With the assistance of the redoubtable Miss Lily Montagu they took place in the Montefiore Hall, next door to the LJS, opposite Lord's Cricket Ground. She was one of the key figures in the early history of the newly named New Liberal Jewish Association and became its first Chairman.

The first six services were each conducted by a different rabbi. All were German refugees. Rabbi Dr Werner van der Zyl, who had studied with Leo Baeck, had been a rabbi in Berlin. He later became a founder and President of Leo Baeck College. Rabbi Rudolph Brasch and Rabbi Manfred Swarsenski were also both from Berlin, Rabbi Bruno Italiener was from Hamburg and Rabbi Salzberger (who presided over the service on 28 April) from Frankfurt. It was Salzberger who became the first rabbi of what was to become the Belsize Square Synagogue.

Most of the people who attended the first service were also from Germany and this is what gave the Belsize Square Synagogue (BSS) its unique feel. It was a synagogue for German-Jewish refugees and both its first two rabbis, Salzberger and Jakob Kokotek, were Germans. The BSS's first non-German rabbi was not appointed until the 1980s, when Rabbi Rodney Mariner took over. Shards of stained glass from one of the stained windows of the Neue Synagogue in Berlin were later displayed in the foyer at 51 Belsize Square, a symbol of the connection between Germany's dark past and the BSS.

It was this which gave the BSS its distinctive atmosphere. In 1942 the New Liberal Jewish Congregation (as it had now become) held a fund-raising concert at the Wigmore Hall. The programme is revealing, with music by Beethoven, Liszt and Brahms. This was 19<sup>th</sup> century central European *Kultur* transplanted to London. In *Three Rabbis in a Vicarage* (2005), his history of the BSS, Antony Godfrey describes how Religion classes were conducted in German until 1952 and the

comments of some members at Board meetings were still recorded in German as late as the early 1960s.

There was something else Germanic about the feel of the BSS. Godfrey tells a story of Cantor Davidsohn going to the nearby Cosmo restaurant for his lunch. A waitress recognised him from Berlin. "How are you Magnus?" she said. "To you I am still Oberkantor Davidsohn," he replied.

Most important of all, the BSS was the first and only British synagogue in what is known as the *Liberale* tradition within German Judaism, influenced by the ideas of Franz Rosenzweig and Leo Baeck. What also distinguished the *Liberale* services was the importance of music, especially of 19<sup>th</sup> century German Romantic composers like Lewandowski and Sulzer, performed by cantor, full choir and organ accompaniment.

For the founding members of the Synagogue, it was a home from home, an important connection with the homeland they had been forced to leave. One cannot understand the huge emotional attachment they felt for their new synagogue without appreciating its place in their experience of exile. At a time of such displacement and loss, the Synagogue represented continuity: the Lewandowski liturgy, the Hebrew text, Salzberger's sermons in German and the glorious choir and organ accompaniment.

Jonathan Wittenberg describes how at the end of his life Rabbi Salzberger spoke of "his threefold loyalty, to Judaism, his spiritual home, to Germany, his cultural home, and to England, which had saved his life and the lives of his family." Frankfurt was not just his home. It was where Goethe had been born and where Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber began their German translation of the Hebrew Bible. Frankfurt was part of that extraordinary synthesis of Jewish and German culture which fed into the history of the BSS.

This continuity is symbolised by the story of the Alexander family Torah scroll. It had been in the Alexander family since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Antony Godfrey writes how, when the Alexanders fled from Germany, devoted staff members packed up their belongings and sent them to England, including the Alexander scroll, carefully wrapped and hidden under some books. Dr Alfred and Mrs Henny

Alexander would carry the scroll to every service and carry it home afterwards.

The Synagogue didn't move to 51 Belsize Square until 1951 when the Church Commissioners of St. Peter's Church sold the old Vicarage and some of the adjacent land for £6,750. Until then it had a peripatetic existence, moving from one location to another around Belsize Park. It changed name several times and only became the Belsize Square Synagogue in 1971.

Change was slow. When Rabbi Salzberger retired at the end of 1956 he was succeeded by another German refugee, Jacob Jankel Kokotek, who had studied in Breslau. Gradually the founding members of the synagogue, nearly all German-speaking Jewish refugees, have been joined by many families of non-German origin. In particular, the rabbis have changed. Rabbi Kokotek was succeeded by Rabbi Rodney Mariner, from Australia, who became the longest serving rabbi in the history of the Belsize Square Synagogue. Rodney Mariner brought with him a less formal and remote style than his two German predecessors. Salzberger was almost sixty when he became Rabbi at BSS. Mariner was barely forty. Salzberger had studied at the universities of Berlin and Heidelberg and had been awarded the Iron Cross during WW1. Mariner, by contrast, left school at fifteen and worked in engineering and as a schoolteacher before he became a rabbi. Another non-German, Rabbi Dr Stuart Altshuler, born in Los Angeles, succeeded Mariner in 2011.

The story of the Belsize Square Synagogue is an important part of a much larger story: how German-Jewish refugees came to north London and found a new home and identity there. It has undergone many changes in its first eighty years. But there are important continuities also. An expanded synagogue hall in a new extension were added to the existing building and opened in 2010. The opening address was given by Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Rabbi Salzberger's grandson. "This community," he said, "has a unique and deeply important identity. Its beginnings lie in the raw hearts of refugees, a remnant of great continental congregations, who left everything behind..."

**David Herman**

# HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL PLANS

The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation invites AJR members to review its planning application for the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre at Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster.



Proposed view of the new UKHM in Victoria Gardens, looking south

Lord Pickles, who co-chairs the UKHMF along with Ed Balls, told the AJR Journal: "The Holocaust had a huge impact on Britain – we are the nation of Kindertransport and liberation; of post-war survival and reconciliation. But it is only right to explore what more could have been done to protect the Jewish communities of Europe from murder at the hands of the Nazi state.

"At the core of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is a commitment to learn from this darkest chapter in our history, to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to explore the universal lessons of the Holocaust.

"To achieve this we will provide a Holocaust education resource for people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds, to increase awareness

hatred and intolerance can lead if left unchecked – a lesson that is vital given recent rises in reported antisemitism.

"Our planning application now been submitted to Westminster City Council and each of us now has a chance to say why we believe this memorial should be built at the very heart of our national life."

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR VIEWS

The consultation on the planning application is available on the council's website at the following link. <https://idoxpa.westminster.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=PL0CVYRP27O00&prevPage=inTray>

You can also write a letter to the council c/o David Doward at the following address. Include the planning reference 19/00114/FULL in your letter.

Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP

## UK ANTISEMITISM AT RECORD HIGH

The number of antisemitic hate incidents recorded in the UK rose by 16 per cent in 2018, the third year in a row to see a record total of incidents, according to figures released by the Community Security Trust (CST).

CST recorded 1,652 antisemitic incidents nationwide in 2018. The highest monthly totals in 2018 came in May, with 182 incidents; April, with 151 incidents; August, with 150 incidents; and September, with 148 incidents. It is likely that these higher monthly totals were partly caused by reactions to political events in the UK and overseas, involving the Labour Party and violence on the border

of Israel and Gaza, during those months.

Forty-five per cent of the incidents recorded by CST in 2018 involved the use of extremist language or imagery, and 456 of these involved language or imagery relating to the far right or the Nazi period. Almost a quarter of all incidents involved social media in some form. The most common single type of incident involved verbal abuse randomly directed at visibly Jewish people in public. In fact a total of 724 incidents involved verbal antisemitic abuse.

You can view the full report on [www.cst.org.uk](http://www.cst.org.uk)

## Unveiling of AJR Plaque in memory of Professor Sir Ernst Chain FRS (1906 – 1979)

Nobel Prize Winner, 1945, for the discovery of penicillin and its curative effect in various infectious diseases.

Founder Imperial College's Biochemistry Department, 1964



**Tuesday 9 April 2019**  
at

**Sir Ernst Chain Building**  
Imperial College London,  
South Kensington Campus, London, SW7 2AZ

Please contact Susan Harrod on  
020 8385 3070 or email [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk) for details.



# *'For our honour's sake we dare not keep them out'*

— Josiah Wedgwood,  
March 1938

Josiah Wedgwood (1872-1943), the great-great-grandson of the potter of the same name, was the Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyne, 1909-1942.

After representing the Liberal Party and then sitting as an Independent Radical MP, he joined the Labour Party in 1919. He was elevated to the Peerage in 1942, sitting in the House of Lords until he died in July 1943.

During his parliamentary career Wedgwood campaigned on issues such as home rule for India, the creation of a British Commonwealth based on shared principles of democracy and equality, the taxation of land value, the creation of a biographical dictionary of Members of Parliament, and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine as part of a British Commonwealth. In March 1936 the Jewish Chronicle called Wedgwood 'one of the earliest and most zealous friends of the Zionist cause' and thanked him 'from our hearts'.

Wedgwood became one of the most determined opponents of appeasement after Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933. He vociferously campaigned for those seeking to escape persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe to be given refuge in the Colonies and Palestine and Britain. This article focuses on his calls that the Jews be allowed into Britain between 1933 and the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939.

At the end of March 1933 Wedgwood, addressing a meeting of the Anglo-Palestinian Club, urged Britain to welcome and absorb the persecuted Jews of Europe and to make 'Palestine a haven of peace for

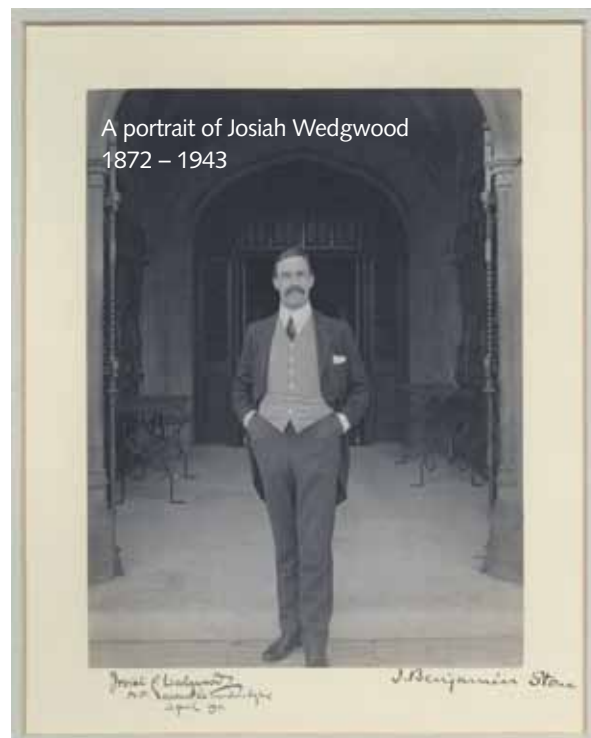
them'. Britain, he declared, needed to 'show the world what was decent behaviour and their reprobation of what was not decent behaviour.'

On 13 April 1933, speaking in the House of Commons, he suggested that it was Britain's duty to grant hospitality to the oppressed whatever 'the Prussian Aryan may feel about the Jews, or the peace-mongers or even the Socialists.' Just over a month later the Home Secretary did not respond when Wedgwood asked whether the British government was going to do anything to help the people who were being persecuted in Germany to escape even though their situation worsened each day. He continued to make such statements and ask parliamentary questions up to and beyond the start of the Second World War. He asked for visas on behalf of individuals as the war drew nearer. His last appeal, before the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939, for a permit for a Frau Lasmann, destitute in Poland after being expelled from Germany, was turned down.

However, Wedgwood was always going to have little success in his efforts to secure refuge for the Jews as Britain's immigration policy, established by the 1905 Aliens Act and the 1919 Aliens Restrictions Amendment Act, ruled out the entry of aliens for permanent settlement. There was no legal obligation on the government to admit refugees. The only people allowed permanent entry were those whose presence offered some benefit to the country, or people with strong

personal or compassionate reasons. Entry did not become easier as the persecution grew in Germany and spread to Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939 respectively, although certain additional categories of people were allowed temporary asylum such as those ready to be domestic servants, unaccompanied children and in the case of Czechoslovakia, political refugees. Britain's national interests were put ahead of humanitarianism before and during WW2. Wedgwood did not, he declared in July 1936, 'like the part which England had played in the refugee question.' Despite his ceaseless efforts on behalf of the persecuted Jews and socialists, his opinion was not to change over the remaining seven years of his life.

Wedgwood disliked injustice and cruelty and in November 1933 he told a meeting that he saw all that was going on in Germany as 'a vast moral evil violating justice.' And 30 months later he described Germany as a country without justice where people seemed to have been transported back to the fifteenth century. While the government's position was that asylum could only be given if it was in the country's interests, Wedgwood believed that one should 'do justice though the Heavens fall... it ought not to be a question of expediency but of justice.' One could, he continued, justify any actions in the interests of the state, 'people had been burned at the stake in the interests of the state.' In May 1934, he told the House of Commons 'I am not pro-Jew, but pro-English, I set a higher value on



the reputation of England all over the world for justice than for anything else.'

Wedgwood regularly argued that Britain had to help the Jews for the sake of its reputation for hospitality, generosity and liberty, telling MPs in April 1933 'Get these people in, and get them here to strengthen our home and our love of liberty.' After Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938, Wedgwood proposed that Austrian Jews be allowed into Britain and be naturalised. He reminded his fellow MPs that while they were sitting there in peace, all Jews, rich as well as poor, were suffering terribly and gave an example of a Jewish woman being made to scrub the streets with her tongue while crowds of Austrians looked on and jeered. 'We cannot conceive of these things...for our honour's sake we dare not keep them out.' His proposal was rejected by the House.

A year later, in a speech described by the *Sheffield Telegraph* as 'notable for its undercurrent of emotion', Wedgwood read out a letter from a young Jewish Viennese woman pleading for a telegraphed visa for herself and her four-year-old child. Her husband was in a concentration camp and they were without money or food. 'People like these,' Wedgwood exclaimed, needed to be given refuge and 'not allowed to die of starvation ... Surely, we in this country might do something to help these people here,' he begged. 'To do nothing and leave these people to die or languish in concentration camps because no country would take them in time should fill the average Englishman with a feeling of pity and shame.' In another speech, he said that if people actually saw the Jews begging in Regent Street he was sure 'the heart and conscience of England would be moved to do better than we are doing.'

Wedgwood believed that refugees and immigrants benefited the country and he described the view that refugees would take jobs and food from British people as ridiculous, uncharitable and ignorant. He pointed out on several occasions that refugees created as many jobs as they took. 'It is not by national selfishness that the problem of unemployment will be solved,' he wrote in March 1939.

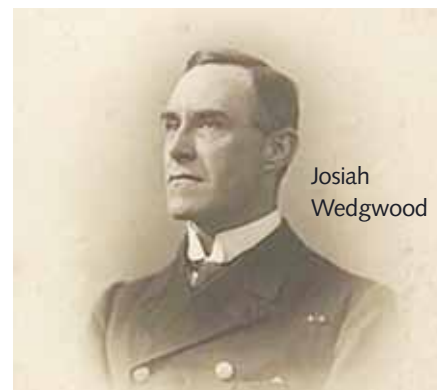
Wedgwood condemned Britain's restrictive immigration policy and the blockages in the system which slowed down or prevented the entry of the desperate refugees. In April 1939, referring to one of the many people he could not help, Wedgwood told the

House that there were thousands of people who were huddling in doorways, hoping to come to England; yet the restrictions made it impossible for anyone without money or contacts to get out. Given that the Nazis had taken away the Jews' money, he asked 'What can we expect these millions of poor people to do?'

He was infuriated when the government blamed the voluntary groups involved with the refugees for any failures in the immigration system, telling MPs in April 1936 'There is too much of this desperate attempt by the Government to put the blame on somebody else. They are responsible for the visas and for the conditions under which these people come to this country.'

Wedgwood himself paid the guarantees for over 200 individuals of £50 each (approximately £3200 in today's money) and housed many at his home in Staffordshire. Dr Theresa Steuer, an Austrian refugee who, along with her husband, was guaranteed by Wedgwood, paid tribute to him at public meetings on several occasions. The biography of Gabriella Auspitz Labaon, a Jewish woman from the Carpathian Mountains whom he saved together with her brother, is entitled, *My Righteous Gentile: Lord Wedgwood and other Memories*. In it she writes extremely warmly about Wedgwood's hospitality and support for her.

In May 1934 Wedgwood was founding chairman of the German Refugee Hospitality Committee. From December 1938 he sat on the newly established Parliamentary



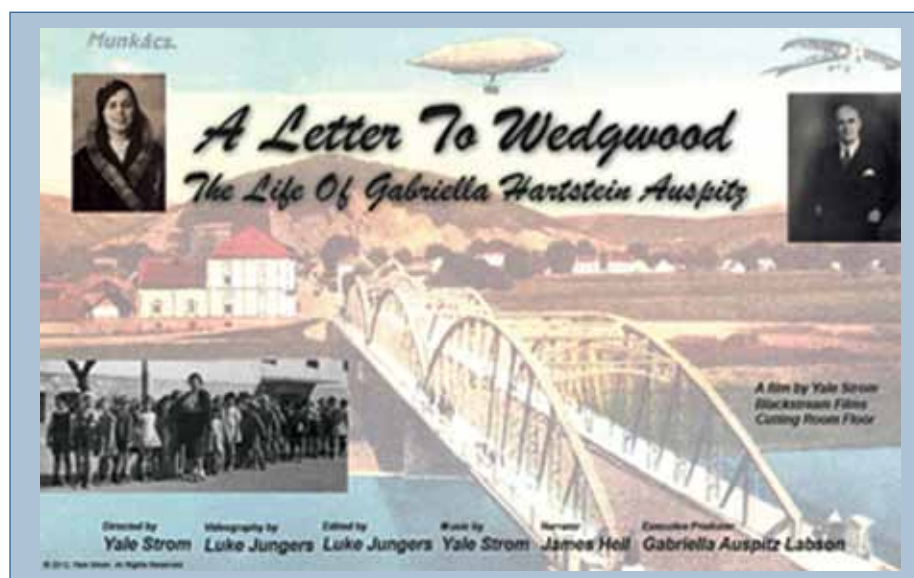
Josiah Wedgwood

Committee on Refugees. Wedgwood continued to campaign for the Jews after the outbreak of the war, particularly arguing that they should be allowed into Palestine. Together with Eleanor Rathbone he led the calls for the end of internment of the refugees detained in Britain, Austria and Canada.

While a Foreign Office official wrote that Wedgwood was hopelessly unbalanced on the subject of supporting the Jews, the United Jewry Fellowship called him 'one of their greatest non-Jewish friends in the British Parliament'. And Dr Joshua Stein writes that 'it is certainly likely that Wedgwood's constant harping helped to establish a climate whereby it became more acceptable to help the Jews.'

Like Eleanor Rathbone, Wedgwood's name and efforts on behalf of European Jews deserves to be remembered and honoured by the Jewish community. Unfortunately it is not, while the image of the generosity of the British government continues to be upheld.

Lesley Urbach



A poster for a film based on the life of Gabriella Auspitz Labaon, who was among the many Jews directly helped by Lord Wedgwood

# Letters to the Editor

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

## FROM TOASTERS TO POSTERS (February)

In writing about the refugee contribution to British life I do hope that the late Martin Esslin will not be forgotten. He was born in Hungary but his spiritual home was Vienna. As a young man he worked with Max Reinhardt. Later, as head of the BBC's radio drama department, he introduced British listeners to many previously unknown continental authors – including Bertolt Brecht.

Esslin (who was a personal friend and introduced me to the BBC) offered the publisher George Weidenfeld a book he proposed to write about Brecht. Weidenfeld declined saying "You and I know and admire Brecht but here, in England, nobody has ever heard of him." Esslin found another publisher!  
*Peter Fraenkel (Retired Controller, BBC European Services) London EC2*

## UNCOVERING YORKSHIRE'S ... SCHINDLER?

I found the February article on David Makofski very interesting as I only knew that my father, Max Kochmann, came to the UK in early '39 under an apprentice scheme offered to him in Leeds but knew nothing more. This prompted me to email an enquiry to the Leeds Archives.

They asked for his date of birth and then sent confirmation showing his home address in Berlin which coincided with my grandparents address there. He was offered an apprenticeship at J Salinsky & Sons Ltd, but my father never went to Leeds once he arrived in England, having found an engineering job in Welwyn Garden City with another refugee enterprise.

I have requested a digital copy of the record (for which they charge £7.80) for my own archives: All sorted within two days. A great service and all done from the home computer. It really brings home how valuable David Makofski's work was in giving so many young people under Nazi persecution an escape route.

Thank you Diane McKaye for bringing

this little bit of family history to the pages of the AJR Journal.

*Ernest Kochmann, West Bridgford, Notts.*

## CZECH MATES (February)

In response to Mr. Taussig's mention of the Winton transports and later the Czechoslovak Kindertransport children from Prague, I wish to point out that these are, of course, the *same* transports. As a "Winton child" I am concerned that there should be no confusion.

The 669 children saved by Nicky Winton and his associates were not part of the British 10,000 Kindertransport programme. Indeed children from the rump of Bohemia and Moravia after Munich were deliberately excluded: entry conditions for Kindertransport children differed from those brought in through the Winton mission.

*Tom Schrecker, Prague, Czech Republic*

## LETTER FROM ISRAEL (February)

I read Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's *Letter from Israel* about who is a Holocaust survivor with great interest. The late Otto Deutsch told me that he did not consider himself a Holocaust survivor as he came to England on the Kindertransport. He considered himself a refugee from his much loved home city of Vienna. He saw Hitler, a fellow Austrian, march into their country with his Nazi troops. Otto had a great respect for those who had survived 'the Camps' like my dad, Emil Stein, and David Kutner, who both attended local AJR meetings in Westcliff.

It is really sad that antisemitism is raising its head in the UK and around the world. I share Otto's opinion about who is a Holocaust survivor, but more important we are all fellow Jews who are just a quarter of one per cent of the world's population. We should stand shoulder to shoulder in these much troubled times, in the knowledge that we have 'the right of return' to Israel, which sadly we did not have during WW2, with the loss of six million men, women & children.

*Larry Lisner, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex*

## INSIDERS/OUTSIDERS (February)

In his erudite leading article David Herman draws attention to the planned Festival to honour the contribution of Jewish refugees to British life.

We, largely of central or eastern European origin, normally regard ourselves as "The Jewish Refugees" even in the second and third generation but in this country there are also numbers of South African Jews who escaped the intolerable political pressures of their homeland. Many attained high status here in medicine, the arts and in communal life. Should they not be included and honoured in our list?

*Hans L Eirew, Manchester*

## KINDERTRANSPORT 'COMPENSATION'

After endless postponements of the compensation amount, the German government has at last announced that all living Kinder will receive a one-time amount of €2500 each. It is obvious that had it been paid at inception, it would have been very much greater. Yet even taking account of inflation, the total compensation would have been infinitely smaller than the value Germany robbed from the Kinder, not to mention other Jews in Germany and Austria.

Based on inflation rates since WW2, €2,500 would now be worth almost €106 million per Kind! And €1,060 million for 10,000 Kinder. The grand sum of it would not only break my calculator, but all our hearts, to state the amount, the German government would have to pay for our six million!!

Our people were worth that sum to the Germans to pay for their war! In contrast, the measly €2,500 'compensation' is being paid far too late to most of us, and is an insult of the highest order. It was Hitler's grand strategy, realising that the rest of the world would not be too bothered at the loss of Jewish lives! But they paid in the end for their ignorance, as the result.

*Fred Stern, London*



# REMEMBERING & RETHINKING

Eighty years after the British operation to provide a safe haven for 10,000 unaccompanied child refugees from Nazism, how should the Kindertransport be remembered?

This is the central question that will bring together experts, eyewitnesses and stakeholders from numerous countries, when the AJR hosts

## Remembering & Rethinking: The international forum on the Kindertransport at 80.

This landmark event, co-sponsored by the UK special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, The Rt Hon. The Lord Pickles, will take place from 15-16 April at the prestigious Lancaster House with a programme sure to interest many AJR members.

Speakers will shed light on lesser known strands of the history of the Kindertransport. Author Louise London will discuss the evolution of Government policy that led to the Kindertransport. Dutch Filmmakers Pamela Sturhoofd and Jessica van Tijn will preview their work to bring the story of Truus Wijsmuller – an instrumental figure in organising the Kindertransport – to a wider audience. And Anna Hajkova will discuss her research into Marie Schmolka, a central figure in the effort to rescue Jewish children in Czechoslovakia.

Another emphasis will be on the noteworthy accomplishments of those who came to

Britain on the Kindertransport. Hella Pick, the trailblazing foreign correspondent for *The Guardian* will discuss her life's work, and Melissa Hacker of the Kindertransport Association will highlight many other individuals' stories.

AJR chief executive Michael Newman explains: "Through this forum we hope to build bridges between scholars, educators, practitioners, policy makers and those who may have a more personal or tangential interest in the subject. We hope that many AJR members and friends will take advantage of this opportunity to work together to remember and rethink policy."

Central to this rethinking, Michael explains, is the need to consider the contemporary relevance of the history of the Kindertransport. Many of the organisations that the AJR supports through its educational grant making programme will be represented, including the Holocaust Educational Trust, The National Holocaust Centre and the Wiener Library. Particular attention will be paid to how our understanding of the Kindertransport can contribute to today's policies towards refugees. One special guest will be Mark Hetfield, President of the HIAS (formerly the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), whose work to provide support for refugees in America tragically came to light following the recent shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Hetfield will be joined by some of his British counterparts, including Barbara Winton, the campaigner and daughter of Sir Nicholas Winton, and representatives from Safe Passage UK.

An academic conference, **Kindertransport Symposium – 80 years On: Critical Approaches to Kindertransport Research and Historiography**, was held on 22-24 January 2019 at the Centre for Advanced Studies, University College London. Approximately 90 people attended the three-day symposium, which involved 11 different panel discussions with speakers from the USA, Australia, Ireland, Belgium, Israel, The Netherlands, India, Germany and Italy, as well as the UK.

According to AJR member and former Kind, Professor Robert Shaw, attended the event: "The Symposium was refreshingly wide-ranging, not just a glorification of the humanitarian aspects of saving 10,000 innocent young lives, but also showing the emotional sufferings of young children wrest from their parents and thrust into a country, whose language and customs many did not understand." Professor Shaw said he "...was quite intrigued by the number of speakers doing their PhDs on the Kindertransport, Holocaust and related Studies. Large numbers of current refugees, many unaccompanied minors, are desperately trying to find a safe place of refuge. Thus what has been learned, and is still being learnt, from the Kindertransport, both good and not so good, has beneficial relevance for the future."

## Remembering & Rethinking

The international forum on the Kindertransport at 80

15 – 16 April 2019  
Lancaster House, London



**Speakers confirmed so far:** The Rt Hon. The Lord Pickles, UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues | **Hella Pick CBE**, former journalist, *The Guardian* | **Mark Hetfield**, HIAS | Rebecca Singer, World Jewish Relief | **Louise London**, Author, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948* | **Barbara Warnock**, Wiener Library | **Bea Lewkowicz**, Refugee Voices: The AJR's testimony archive | **Anna Hajkova**, University of Warwick | **Melissa Hacker**, The Kindertransport Association (KTA) | **Brigitte Bailer**, University of Vienna | **Hannah Lessing**, The National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism | **Pamela Sturhoofd & Jessica van Tijn**, Filmmakers, *Truus' Children* | **Mike Levy**, Anglia Ruskin University | Representatives from **Safe Passage UK** and the **Holocaust Educational Trust**  
**Additional speakers will be announced in March 2019.**

### Registration & fees:

#### Two days:

£60 / £40 concessions  
(students, AJR members)

#### Single day:

£40 / £30 concessions

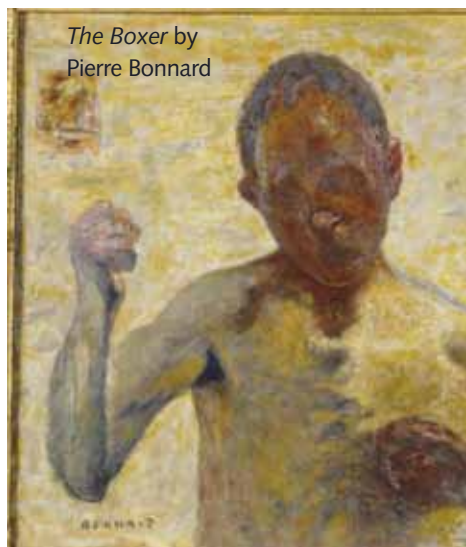
#### To register, please visit

[HTTPS://  
INTERNATIONALFORUM.  
EVENTBRITE.COM](https://internationalforum.eventbrite.com)

For more information, email  
[SUSAN@AJR.ORG.UK](mailto:SUSAN@AJR.ORG.UK)

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

**Pierre Bonnard: The Colour of Memory at Tate Modern shows how Bonnard achieved both; his tendency to revisit works sometimes years later to recover the moment of its inspiration can be a tall order for many artists who may prefer to embody the experience in something new. Not so Monsieur Bonnard.**



*"A painter should have two lives, one in which to learn and one in which to practise his art" said the Impressionist Pierre Bonnard*

Recapturing the memory that inspired an earlier painting was his driving force. Throughout his years he rarely deviated from his personal domestic life which seemed to enclose him. A red checked tablecloth set for tea may be the main subject, with a woman holding a cup, leaning towards her dog, and the bare shape of an extended arm reaching for a cup beside her; colour and perspective run riot.

Or a door open at an odd angle invites you into a blaze of yellow mimosa bringing the garden into the house. Some sense of Cubism is at work here, with the long, asymmetric angles defining what should take your attention. These personal visions are fleeting, insubstantial, an "à la recherche du temps perdu" moment, and yet it is the view from the window, the garden pouring into the house, a glimpsed landscape that tells us about space not opening out but drifting in, somehow confined.

There were two loves in Bonnard's life: his 30 year relationship with Marthe de Mélny, his muse and later wife, and his brief engagement in 1923 to René

Monchaty, which he broke off in order to marry Marthe two years later, resulting in Monchaty's suicide. So not such a haven of domestic bliss, after all, but one shadowed and mysterious.

These shadows loom in his own self-portraits, none of which shows a happy man but one openly troubled. In *The Boxer*, for instance, his contorted face and raised fists in the mirror, presented without brush, palette or canvas, betray pure anger. Bonnard's developing sense of colour indicates a romantic character, but these selfies tell a different story.

On the romantic theme I was struck by the rigidity of his nudes, standing upright, without a trace of the sensuality you might expect of a Renoir or a Degas or a Picasso. But as Marthe's growing infirmity required her to take several baths a day, he became fascinated by what happens to the nude body under water. *The Bath* does have its own odd sensuality focusing on the stomach, part of the legs and the wondering gaze of the bather herself, meditating on her own body. *Nude in the Bath* 1936 seems

almost to prefigure the death of Marthe, cramped within the coffin-like tub, where the water seems like a mystical, vaporous aura around her.

These water paintings show a more relaxed, fluid side to Bonnard; his nudes tentatively dip in or out of the water as in *Nude Crouching in the Tub*, (1918). In *The Mantelpiece* he offers an oblique study of the nude stretching before a mirror with a horizontal nude painting behind her.

Bonnard seems so preoccupied with his homely world that the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 seems almost to elude him. As German forces reached the river Marne, 30 miles from Paris, the couple, living in St Germain-en-Laye found themselves within earshot of the war. Then aged 46 and eligible to serve in the French army, Bonnard continued to paint but was not insensitive to his surroundings. *A Village in Ruins near Ham*, painted in 1917, shows the blurred soldiers reduced to minuscule figures in the ruined village.

The reduction of people to fleeting aspects of humanity often typifies Bonnard, but the loss of his wife in 1942, devastated him. He illustrated a book of fictional letters between his family, recalling the happiness of first meeting Marthe and becoming recognised as an artist of substance.



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**CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**



# SUSTAINING THE BEN URI

The Art Notes column in our February issue speculated about the future fate of Ben Uri's art collection and its Jewish heritage. David Glasser, Ben Uri's chair, explains why the concerns are unfounded and how its proud Jewish heritage remains at the centre of its future.



George Grosz, (1893-1959) *Interrogation (of Erich Mühsam)*, 1938

Our Trustees and senior management are responsible for the long-term survival of Ben Uri as a nationally and internationally respected art museum. Our Jewish heritage is at the core of our existence and, since 2001, we placed this within the wider artistic context, both inside and outside the Jewish community.

We receive no public funding nor do we have a permanent or well-located building to showcase our collection. We have worked incredibly hard to raise the necessary funds to run the museum at the level to which we aspire and are hugely grateful to all those who do support us. The bottom line, however, is that without an adequate and permanent gallery and sufficient funds, the fate of over 95% of our wonderful collection is to lie unseen in an expensive art store.

The Trustees agreed that we needed an ambitious strategy to ensure the survival of the Ben Uri in a purposeful and expansive form and, therefore, prioritised achieving substantial, distinctive public benefit. This is all set out in the Ben Uri Sustainability and Public Benefit Strategy which was published on our website last October.

In short, we will:

- Research, and publish as an online resource: the Jewish and immigrant contribution to British visual arts, building upon our 15 years' experience in this area.
- Continue to qualitatively build our art collection including works by non-Jewish immigrant artists (which, perhaps inadvertently, Ben

Uri has done since at least 1992). One day, for example, we hope to have works by Kokoschka and Schwitters, both non-Jewish artists, who fled Nazi tyranny. They, too, are part of the wider story of genocide, forced journeys and migration to Britain, a narrative which Ben Uri has successfully brought, and will continue to bring, to audiences across the country.

- Develop accredited art interventions using the Ben Uri art collection for those living with or at risk of dementia. These programmes, ten years already in the making, now have real potential of being nationally prescribed and will spread benefit, our name and heritage across the country.

This is a formalisation and expansion of our longstanding existing strategy, but the charity has to be in funds to deliver its benefit. After years of effort, the Trustees and senior management reluctantly, but unanimously, concluded that the only way to deliver a purposeful future and put the charity's finances in a solid state was to sell certain pictures of value that were irregularly (or in some cases never) exhibited. This was certainly not by selling, as asserted last month, half of our collection. We have more than 1300 works; 24 were offered for sale at Sotheby's, of which 14 sold. These were good works, but not the 'crown jewels', as we retained the best by these artists. Prior consultation with the artist or donor is a pre-requisite before any sale.

By contrast, over the past 18 years we have acquired 300 works including

masterpieces by Auerbach, Bomberg, Chagall, Epstein, Gertler, Grosz (not Jewish), Herman, Rosenberg, Soutine and Wolmark.

Moreover, in some cases, our collection contains many works by the same artist (often folios containing dozens of prints or drawings), the majority never exhibited. There is no public benefit if they are never seen. In order that these works are exhibited and enjoyed, our strategy declares that we will offer these works free to other museums and community charities, including AJR day centres.

It was also reported that the entire Ben Uri Advisory Panel resigned, whereas, in fact, it was 11 of the 26 members. Their publicly-stated concern was the specific choice of artworks, and not the strategic direction.

In conclusion, over the past 18 years, we have built an international reputation for the institution and our collection. Our exhibitions have toured to over 20 venues across three continents. We were the first museum to tour an exhibition about Nazi-looted art. Our scholarship on Jewish, immigrant and refugee artists is recognised internationally. We have published more than 40 books. Our decade-long programme using art from our collection to help those suffering from dementia has also been widely recognised.

Now, with funds available, we can grow and flourish, continuing to proudly represent the Jewish community within the wider arts, academic and mental health sectors.

# Stick to the guidebook

It must be here somewhere. I looked at the map again; there are so many unnamed side-streets in Vienna. I was tiring in the afternoon heat. Left here? Right there? No helpful signs. I'll ask that policeman. "Excuse me, where is the Holocaust Memorial?" He stopped and stared at me. Then he pointed towards a narrow side-street and walked on. I entered an almost deserted Judenplatz and saw it.

When we had visited Tate Britain, we saw posters for a Rachel Whiteread exhibition. We entered and saw lots of sculpted everyday objects. And a photo of her Holocaust Memorial in Vienna.

In Vienna I walked around it. A 'house', but instead of bricks were thousands of 'books' filling the shelves, spines facing inwards. All anonymous. The 'doors' to the 'house' had no handles, so could never be opened. There were the names of the many camps to which Austrian Jews were deported. This was a bunker-like structure, in contrast to the beautifully preserved magnificent architecture of Vienna. Simon Wiesenthal – an architect – once commented: "This monument shouldn't be beautiful, it must hurt." But I could not sense this hurt.

I read: *"In commemoration of more than 65,000 Austrian Jews who were killed by the Nazis between 1938 and 1945."* Interesting wording. Had not the Austrian people welcomed the incoming German Army in 1938? And willingly accepted the Anschluss? Germany took five years from Hitler's accession to build up to Kristallnacht. Austria did it in a few months from the Anschluss. Austria is not noted for its wartime resistance movement, nor for its high number of 'Righteous Gentiles'. The Jews were killed by Austrians, not by invaders called Nazis. But that exact wording had been

*"I don't feel comfortable in Austria. They haven't faced their past."*

*Baroness Neuberger,  
The Times,  
25 October 2018*



The memorial designed by Rachel Whiteread at Vienna's Judenplatz

prescribed for the sculptor.

I walked back and looked again. Was the name of this Square a good reason (or excuse) to keep it away from the main tourist areas?

Behind the memorial was a tiny Jewish Museum, although there is a slightly bigger one elsewhere in Vienna. No visitors apparent, just a bored-looking security guard. Restaurant tables reached out almost to the memorial itself. At the other end of the square was a pub. And a massive statue of a serious-looking Gottfried Lessing, 18th-century German writer, staring disapprovingly at the memorial.

The diners and drinkers and passers-by seemed not to see the memorial. Was it only visible to me? No-one approached it.

In Berlin the vast 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' (no ambiguity or lack of clarity with that wording) takes up a large area near the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag – a site that could have been sold for huge sums. In contrast, Vienna's memorial took up no potential building space, can be walked round in seconds, and offers very little information.

At Yad Vashem in October 2018, Angela Merkel stated: *"Germany has a perpetual responsibility to remember those crimes and to confront antisemitism, xenophobia,*

*hate and violence."* In Austria ex-Nazi member Bruno Kreisky was four times elected Chancellor (1970-1983) and current Chancellor Sebastian Kurz included the Austrian Freedom Party in his ruling coalition. The major German Party leaders completely ruled out coalition with the AfD following the 2018 election. Enough said. I leave the square.

Huge numbers stand around the Stefansdom, taking photos (the ideal site for the memorial, I think.) I walk on and cross into Resselpark, towards the Belvedere Palace. Suddenly I stop. We all gaze up at a huge memorial towering over us. I come closer. It honours the 17,000 Russian soldiers who died 'liberating' Vienna. Despite the human rights abuses many Russian soldiers committed on civilians and retreating soldiers, Austria wasted no time – the vast monument was already complete by 1945's end. And in such a high-footfall area. But almost four times that number of Austrian Jewish civilians had been killed – and they had to wait until 2000 to be 'remembered'.

The sun descends, the crowds disperse. Tomorrow I will be just a normal tourist. Keep to the guide-book. Life is easier that way.

**David Wirth**

# Designed by Refugees

The contribution that refugee designers made to British visual culture is a highlight of *Insiders/Outsiders*, the year-long, nationwide arts festival supported by the AJR and which was previewed in our February issue. Many may have been unjustly forgotten or neglected – but now, no longer.

Anna Nyburg has spent years trawling the relevant archives, and interviewing people with special knowledge of these artists in exile. Her research is summarised in a chapter of the book that will accompany the festival – *Insiders/Outsiders*, edited by Monica Bohm-Duchen. It will heighten awareness of these highly skilled and influential craftspeople.

They include Hans Schleger (London Transport bus stop), Gaby Schreiber, née Wolff (interior designs, including Cunard liners), Grete Marks (ceramics and glassware), Tibor Reich (Concorde upholstery), Elisabeth Tomalin, née Wallach (textiles, for Marks & Spencer, among others), Frederick Henri Kay Henrion, né Heinrich Fritz Kohn, (regarded as a pioneer of corporate identity) and Max Gort-Bartens, né Grodzinski (Dualit toasters).

Over a cup of tea at her home near Wandsworth Common, surrounded by books, I asked Anna Nyburg how she became interested in refugee/exile studies. It is an unusual story. She is British through and through, and has no family ties to anyone who fled from Nazi Europe. Her name might offer a clue, but that would be misleading.

“Nyburg” is a modified form of the Dutch “Nijburg”. A few years ago she received a letter from a family in Holland with that name, who thought they might be related. It turned out that the Nijburgs were originally from a German-speaking part of Europe, had been in the diamond trade – and were Jewish.

But, in fact, Anna Nyburg was by then already involved in exile research. She had grown up in North America, where her father worked as a scientist. After studying modern languages in Toronto, Munich and Norwich, she resolved to settle in Britain – and found she was unfamiliar with the British way of life, herself something of an insider/outsider.

She had a spell as a lexicographer at Harraps, until the now defunct Holborn publisher declared her redundant. Amusingly, although her interest was languages and adult education, her first books, such as *French for Fun*, were for children who had not yet learned to read. Anna Nyburg’s break came when Imperial College, in South Kensington, recruited her to its modern languages department. There she met Charmian Brinson, today the doyenne of exile studies in Britain; she encouraged Anna Nyburg to complete in 2009 a doctoral thesis that a few years later emerged as a well-received book about émigré art publishing houses, especially Phaidon, and Thames & Hudson.

Anna Nyburg had by then published a biography of the graphic artist Hellmuth Weissenborn, who fled to Britain because of his Jewish wife. She has since become an active committee member of the Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, attached to London University; it brings together scholars from all over Britain. Even her partner shares her research interest: he runs a bookshop in North London that specialises in new and second-



Anna  
Nyburg

hand works of Jewish interest, and occasionally presents her with a rare book that he has come across.

Nyburg has enjoyed her years of teaching and researching. It has enabled her to travel to places such as LA’s Getty Center and to meet illustrious people. Cherie and Tony Blair welcomed her into 10 Downing Street when she coached their eldest son Euan in German. Lord Weidenfeld received her at his sumptuous Embankment residence – Klimts and Schieles decorated the walls. Julian Barnes spoke to her about his late wife Pat Kavanagh, a leading literary agent with friends from the refugee community.

Is German and Austrian Exile Studies not a dying ‘industry’, I enquired. Nyburg will have none of that. Work is under way to learn more about refugees who found sanctuary in Britain’s colonies. And scholars have so far tended to overlook refugees’ role in developing Britain’s trade and industry.

Reflecting on the topic, Anna Nyburg concludes that the fruits of scholars’ research must be accessible. She wants the wider public to appreciate more fully the remarkable extent to which refugees ‘repay’ their host country for agreeing to offer them shelter. Anna Nyburg is helping to achieve that goal.

*Martin Uli Mauthner has published books about German writers in French exile, and French writers groomed by Hitler’s Paris envoy, Otto Abetz.*



# REVIEWS

**RETTET WENIGSTENS DIE KINDER**  
**Ed. Angelika Rieber and Till Lieberz-**  
**Gross**  
**Fachhochschulverlag Frankfurt am**  
**Main**  
**ISBN 978-3-947273-11-9**

It is to be hoped that this excellent book will receive an English translation in order to reach the much wider audience which it deserves. It contains the biographies of twenty former 'Kinder' from, or connected with, Frankfurt and is powerful testimony to the appalling experiences of Jews in Germany in the 1930s and '40s, as well as to the resilience of the children and the bravery of their parents. The book's title *Rettet wenigstens die Kinder* ("Save the Children at Least") refers to the correspondence of families desperate to send their children to safety.

Each of the poignant life histories recounted in this volume differs from the others, as children from varying backgrounds were transported to far-flung countries, most of them never to be re-united with their families. In addition the book has erudite, comprehensive and well-researched sections on how the Kindertransports were organised and which countries opened their doors to the young refugees. A total of 20,000 children were rescued, of whom nearly 10,000 came to Britain. A further 10,000 were dispersed to Belgium, France, Holland, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, amongst others. The USA was reluctant to accept any on the grounds that "it is against God's will to separate children from their parents" but finally relented and approximately 2,500 children were sent to Canada and the United States.

The editors and contributors to this book worked under the umbrella of the *Projekt Jüdisches Leben in Frankfurt*, an independent organisation which acts in close co-operation with the City of Frankfurt to welcome former citizens and their

descendants who wish to accept the City's invitation to visit. The *Projekt* is now working towards the erection of a Kindertransport memorial to the Frankfurt children, their families and the helpers, to be located within sight of the main train station (the Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof) from which the children departed.

The final section of the book is devoted to short biographies of some of those who helped with the Kindertransports and travelled with them, as well as to a very comprehensive bibliography. There are dozens of high-quality photographs of people, places and documents and this beautifully produced volume is an asset to the corpus of work on this subject.

*Lilian Levy*

## **WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?** **(THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY)**

**by Gerhard Biss**  
**ASIN: B00XNAV0WQ**  
**Bound Biographies**

This is a fascinating autobiography of a "little Austrian boy" who waved at Hitler before arriving in the UK on the Kindertransport.

Born in Vienna in July 1931 Gerhard's first memories were of being excluded from school because he was Jewish and other children making racist jibes when he passed. Propaganda leaflets were dropped from Luftwaffe planes promoting the Third Reich. He joined roaring crowds on the Danube Bridge for a good vantage when Hitler appeared as Germany annexed Austria in March 1938. "I waved to Herr Hitler and I'm sure he waved back to me," he told his mother. She was not at all impressed.

By then his father had already fled the Gestapo to Switzerland. Six months later seven year old Gerhard was told to pack for England, where his younger brother Walter had already been sent, although they were not to meet again for another 74 years. So he set off in lederhosen with a small bag and label round his neck on what seemed an endless journey.

At Liverpool Street Station he was met

my Mrs Ivy Chambers, his adoptive mother – who was to prove devoted – and new sister Joy, 10 years his senior. He spoke no English so struggled at school in south Croydon until an unhappy evacuation interlude. Working class suburban life is well described.

Back with "Mum" and "Pop" calamity struck when the family was bombed out, Biss in pyjamas, Pop in his postman's trousers and Mum in a fur coat. Descriptions of the Blitz and Doodlebug raids are very evocative.

Biss, who was an active member of the local church choir and enjoyed sports and scouts, eventually struck lucky with his education at Commercial College. Proficient shorthand always served him well. After naturalisation he did two year's National Service in the RAF and then resumed his shipping career.

Some years later he joined the merchant navy, enjoying a life of world travel and adventure. Back in civvy street, despite the wanderlust, he worked in personnel in the Saudi Arabian heat for a staggering 22 years, including during the first Gulf War. Desert life meant segregation of the sexes, strict modesty and a – not always successful – alcohol ban. Some very amusing and sometimes bizarre anecdotes are included.

Biss never married, although he had girlfriends, but reflects on matrimony, psychology and the search for identity in the second part of this lengthy book. He made a fleeting unannounced visit to see his birth mother while on a VSO vacation posting in southern Austria and found his immediate family had survived the war. It would have been interesting to know more about what happened to them. But he was fully assimilated into the British way of life, even writing to congratulate the Queen on her Diamond Jubilee as "one of those lucky little children who arrived on the Kindertransport".

*Janet Weston*

# Holocaust Memorial Day



AJR chairman Andrew Kaufman (2nd left) with, from left to right, the Ambassadors of Israel (Mark Regev), Slovakia (L'ubomir Rehak), Germany (Peter Wittig) and Austria (Michael Zimmerman)

**AJR's memorial service for Holocaust Memorial Day was held on 22 January 2019 at Belsize Square Synagogue in London, under the theme of Torn from Home. Our keynote speaker was Lord Eric Pickles, Co-Chair of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation.**

Freddy Kosten was interviewed as part of the ceremony by Dr Bea Lewkowicz, director of AJR's *Refugee Voices* testimony archive. Freddy arrived in England on the Kindertransport in March 1939 and was taken in by Benn Levy – a successful playwright and screenwriter who became a Labour MP in 1945, and Benn's wife, American-born actress Constance Cummings. Freddy was apparently picked up from Liverpool Street Station in a Rolls Royce, and got to meet people such as Laurence Olivier. His fascinating story is available to view on [www.refugeevoices.co.uk](http://www.refugeevoices.co.uk).

Danny Kalman, the son of refugee Ernest

Kalman, spoke movingly about what he sees as the second generation's obligation to remember their parents' experiences and proactively oppose racial persecution.

The ceremony was very well-attended by AJR members, their families and friends, as well as guests of honour Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Israel (Mark Regev), Germany (Dr Peter Wittig), Austria (Michael Zimmerman), and Slovakia (L'ubomír Rehak).

Also in attendance were representatives of the Claims Conference, who were in the UK to assist Kinder in registering for the new payment from Germany and who took part in a special workshop for Kinder before the service.

This service was one of dozens of events throughout the UK that were facilitated or attended by AJR members and staff. Greater Manchester, in particular, hosted a number of HMD events, some taking place for the very first time. They included a film event at the Home Arts Centre, a civic reception at Manchester Central Library, a moving performance by the BBC Philharmonic String Quartet in Salford, an event at Heathlands Village,

a secondary schools event in Bury, and a commemoration service at Manchester Cathedral featuring Manchester's first elected Mayor, Andy Burnham, Greater Manchester Police, the students of Manchester Hillel House and many of the Local Authorities in the region also hosted HMD events this year.

AJR's Northern Volunteers and Community Co-ordinator Fran Horwich – who attended almost all of these events – wrote "In the current climate of growing antisemitism, it is heartening to see so many organisations honouring those lost during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, in the hope that the lessons can be learned for the future."



HMD Compensation Claims Conference workshop



Lighting the six memorial candles at AJR's memorial service



Greater Manchester's first city-region wide HMD event



# POLAND THROUGH FRESH EYES

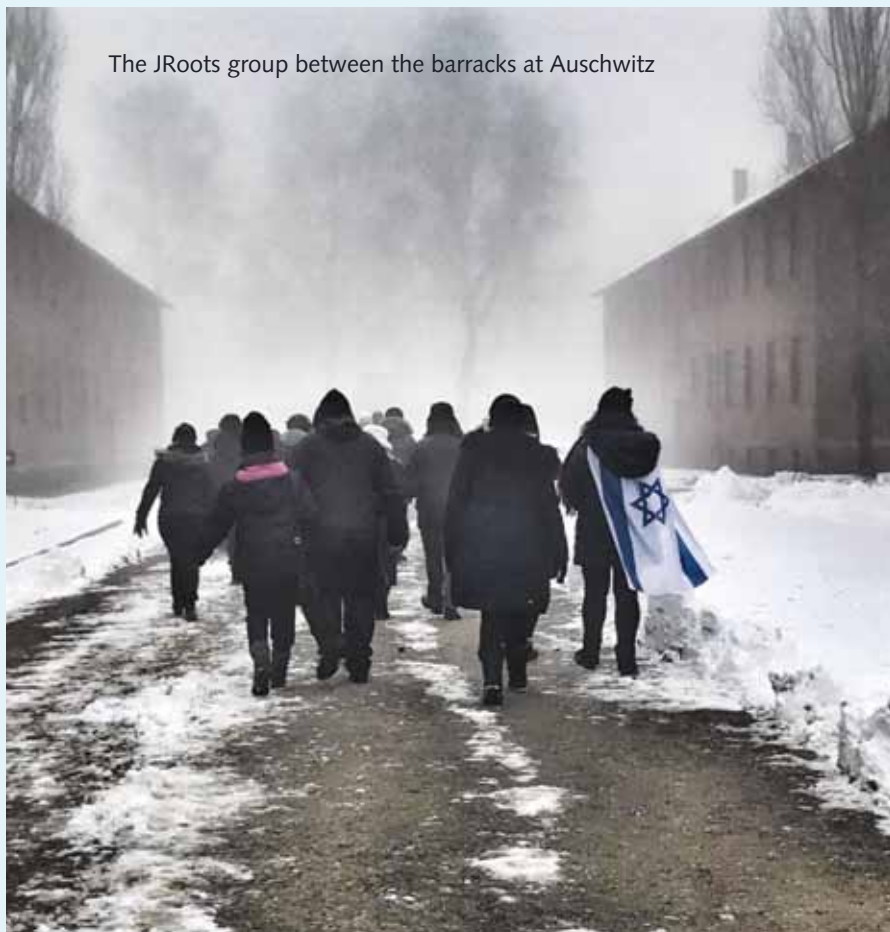
Many AJR staff have made it their mission to visit the countries and places that our members talk about. Here **Ros Hart**, one of our Southern Outreach Co-ordinators, shares her account of a recent trip to Poland with JRoots.

It was a trip that I knew I had to do but I went with trepidation and fear of what I would experience. We were fortunate enough to have a survivor, Mala Tribich, accompany us and we walked the streets of her youth whilst she explained what happened to her and her family. Her story was haunting, from the ghetto of Piotrkow to the Ravensbrück concentration camp and Bergen Belsen where she contracted typhus. Most of her family perished, but her brother, Ben (Helfgott) and she somehow survived, coming to England and building good lives for themselves. Mala was so dignified in the way she spoke. She does not hate and has no anger, yet she



One of the graves in the Lodz cemetery where 40,00 Jews from the Ghetto were buried

The JRoots group between the barracks at Auschwitz



spends her life educating people about the horrors.

We saw bullet holes in walls of an old synagogue, and we walked in single file through the forest in the pouring rain at night until we came to a memorial to 500 innocent souls who were murdered simply for being Jewish. We visited the Lodz cemetery and saw over 40,000 graves of those slaughtered in the ghetto. We went to Chelmno, a clearing in the forest the size of two football pitches, where 350,000 Jews were taken to be murdered in cold blood and thrown into deep holes one on top of the other. We lit candles and said Kaddish for those dear departed souls. We sang *Am Yisrael Chai* loudly as we left – alive and defiant.

Auschwitz was shocking. We stood in the gas chambers where 1.2 million beautiful Jewish souls were mercilessly killed by poisonous gasses, dying a slow, painful death. Birkenau was so vast, the barracks were stark and basic, and the latrines offered no privacy or dignity. The 'prisoners' wore thin cotton rags which were never washed or changed, and temperatures plummeted to – 25°C in the

depths of winter. How anyone survived is incomprehensible, but somehow some found an inner determination. Amongst the horror and despair was also comradeship and bonding, and some of the stories we were told were uplifting, showing how humanity and love can win through.

We saw displays of human hair, shaved from the Jews as they arrived in Auschwitz, the discarded empty suitcases, the glasses and the mountain of shoes. It was heart-rending and distressing to see. We went into the records room where names of all the victims are listed alphabetically in massive hanging books, taking up the entire room. We walked the pathways of the camps with barbed wire on either side of us, we stood in the huge, vacuous barracks and saw the bunks, three tiers high where they slept three per bunk with a thin blanket to share. We saw the cattle trucks where they were crammed in with no food or water for days to get to the camp, many of them dying on the way. Someone had brought armfuls of white  
*Continued on page 15*



# LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## MUSIC: THE PATH TO PROGRESS



Not long ago I was privileged to attend a concert in a private home given by young musicians who are students

at Jerusalem's Hassadna Music Conservatory. Together with the rest of the audience, I was greatly impressed by their professional standard and aplomb. Some of the musicians were of Ethiopian background and displayed admirable technical skill and musicality, performing complex works – both classical and jazz – for a variety of instruments, playing individually and in small ensembles.

The Hassadna Music Conservatory was founded in 1973 in the belief that all children are entitled to benefit from being able to enjoy music, and that the way to help children from deprived and underprivileged backgrounds to advance is through music. The idea was to make musical education available to all children, irrespective of their physical or mental ability, socio-economic level, ethnicity or religious affiliation.

Now, forty years later, the institution is firmly established and has trained numbers of leading Israeli musicians. After many years of being housed in

accommodation that was not always best suited to its task, the Conservatory is currently in the process of building its own dedicated structure. Since its inception the institution has employed first-rate musicians as its teaching staff, enabling youngsters from diverse backgrounds to benefit from an education that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

While I was preparing material for this article my cleaner, who is of Ethiopian origin, noticed the page with a picture of some of the pupils on my desk. He pointed to an Ethiopian youngster holding an oboe and said: "I know him. He's the son of a friend of mine. He travels all over the world now." Just one more illustration of the connection between the different groups living in Jerusalem and the Conservatory's contribution to this.

The Conservatory now numbers 700 pupils aged from three to eighteen, representing the full range of Jerusalem's religious, national and economic diversity. The staff comprises one hundred professionals, some of them born in Israel, others immigrants from various countries. They include concert artists, chamber musicians, established composers and members of Israel's leading orchestras. Together they provide the careful guidance necessary to bring out the best in the gifted students, enabling them to achieve excellence and international acclaim.

In the framework of its pre-music track, the Conservatory undertakes an outreach programme for children in kindergarten

and elementary school, seeking to expose very young children to the fundamentals of music – rhythmic movement, dance, singing and improvisation – as well as enabling them to experiment with a variety of instruments. The Conservatory has also introduced a programme called 'Bridges of Light' which offers youngsters with disabilities or special needs a course of study that is adapted to their abilities. All these children learn piano, and some also learn voice, as well as participating in activities with the rest of the students. The project has won national and international renown as one of the most successful programmes for children with special needs.

In fact, the Shalva Choir, consisting of children with special needs, was a leading contender for inclusion as Israel's entry for the forthcoming Eurovision contest, to be held in Tel-Aviv, but eventually withdrew as some of its members are observant Jews and could not perform on Shabbat.

Many of Hassadna's students have won prizes in Israeli and international competitions, and have been awarded scholarships to continue with their musical studies. Several have received the status of 'Distinguished Musician' from the IDF, enabling them to pursue their musical education while undertaking military service. The Conservatory's orchestral ensembles have performed at music festivals in the USA and throughout Europe, winning prizes at several of them.

Chrysanthemums and stuck them in the snow and into the handles of the cattle trucks – a little ray of hope within such devastation.

We cried a lot, but we also sang and danced in defiance and unity. We prayed and recited poems and meaningful words that some of the victims had written to their loved ones. Not all the stories were of horror and cruelty, we also heard wonderful tales of hope, courage, strength and love.

Although a tough trip, I have come back a changed person. I feel blessed and grateful that I was born when and where I was. I feel honoured to have spent three meaningful days in the company of fellow Jews, all sharing the same emotional journey, which has built friendships and a deep bond. I am particularly in awe of Mala Tribich and the other survivors who I am privileged to work with through AJR, and I feel duty bound to spread the word. Rabbi Garson told us to build bonfires

so that we light up the world with knowledge to ensure that such horrors are never allowed to happen again. I am already building those bonfires, and I urge and encourage everyone who hasn't been, to go and see what our relatives went through. Some lucky ones survived – most didn't. Only by going and standing on those very sites of mass murder is there any comprehension of the sheer enormity of inhumanity and madness of what took place.

# OBITUARIES



## HARRY GRENVILLE

**Born:** Ludwigsburg 22 February 1926

**Died:** Dorchester 6 November 2018

**Harry Grenville, né Heinz Greilsamer, was born into a moderately prosperous family in Ludwigsburg, north of Stuttgart, in 1926.**

There is no need to rehearse the events that led to Heinz and his sister Hannah being dispatched in 1939 to Cornwall on the Kindertransport, in the expectation of their parents joining them to go to America. Alas, like so many, they perished in Auschwitz.

On joining the British army in 1944, Heinz changed his name to Henry Grenville, the latter chosen to honour the extraordinary kindness of the Jagos, his Cornish foster family, by picking a local name. The war ended before he saw active service but he was kept on as an interpreter and worked in POW camps. He met his future wife, Helen, a Dorset farmer's daughter, during this period.

Harry, as he was always known, took an accelerated two-year degree in Biology at King's College London and trained to teach. His career was spent in grammar schools in Cirencester and Belper and for the last 23 years, at Repton School, Derbyshire. Many who worked with or were taught by him were utterly oblivious of his history. He didn't hide it – the few who caught his minimal accent would be told, when they asked, which part of Germany he hailed from and why he had left, but he didn't want his life or his children's to be defined by the catastrophe.

Only in the last years of his life, when retired in Dorset, did he become deeply involved in Holocaust education, on the back of his attendance at a Dorchester HMD event in 2011. Chatting with him afterwards, the organisers persuaded him to offer a contribution in 2012. Thereafter he became a mainstay of the event, even taking part in this year's HMD commemorations when the local event organisers replayed a recording of his last interview as a tribute to his immense contributions.

Harry's Holocaust education work extended to schools across Dorset and the south. He was tireless in presenting a precise, thoughtful narrative of what had happened, carefully making the point that it was the Nazis not the German people as a whole who were to blame, and that the lesson for today was constant vigilance and political activity to forestall new outrages. Latterly, he was welcomed back to Ludwigsburg to lay *Stolpersteine* for his family and again for the re-dedication of the *Synagogenplatz*. His death was as keenly mourned there as in England. At the time of his death, HMD organisers were considering his nomination for the Honours List – it would have been richly deserved.

Jane Grenville



## RALF KOLTAI

**Born:** 31 July 1924 Berlin

**Died:** 15 December 2018 Châtellerault, France

**The late Ralph Koltai was a kindertransportee who repaid Britain's hospitality many times over.**

His contribution was as a stage designer, one of the most influential of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He brought the aesthetic of Modernism to British theatre.

A sculptor by instinct, he uncompromisingly used contemporary technology, and materials such as plastic, metal and glass. His work for the RSC, National Theatre, ROH Covent Garden and English National Opera among many other companies both here and abroad left an indelible impression. His fame was such that he was commissioned to design the opening production for the iconic Sydney Opera House.

Born to Hungarian/German parents in Berlin where he attended a progressive Jewish school, he was sent to Britain in 1939. His first years were spent in Scotland where he endured hardship and considerable hostility. In 1943 he enrolled at Epsom School of Art to train as a commercial artist before volunteering for the Army, ending up in the Intelligence Corps. He served as a typist, translator and investigator for the British delegation to the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg.

From 1948-1951 he studied at Central School of Arts and Crafts (now Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts) where he became head of Theatre Design between 1965-7) and set out on a seven decade career that has involved designing more than 250 operas, ballets, plays and musicals around the world. He collaborated with the greatest directors of the day and his designs for the musical version of Fritz Lang's expressionist masterpiece, *Metropolis* at London's Piccadilly Theatre broke the £1m barrier for the first time.

In 1975 he co-founded the Society of British Theatre Designers, was appointed CBE in 1983, and in the following year was honoured as a Royal Designer for Industry (RDI). In 1997 he published *Ralf Koltai: Designer for the Stage*.

Ralf was a highly assimilated refugee but somehow

remained an exile all his life, an independent spirit and thinker. 'I don't respond well to being told what's wanted' he said in a Times interview, 'I try to find ways of introducing art into theatre, and occasionally I get somewhere near'. He made rural France his home from 1989, working from his beautiful house there, increasingly focusing on perhaps his greatest love, sculpture in metal. At 91 he designed three operas for Welsh National Opera.

I first met Ralf in 1987 when he directed and designed Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* for the Hong Kong Arts Festival of which I was international programme director. It was a revelation to see how much his team loved and respected this larger than life sixty-something, so cool in leather jacket with trademark long and slender cigar gripped between his teeth. We met often in the intervening years. He was wise, witty and fun. A Titan.

He is survived by his second wife, Jane Alexander.

Joseph Seelig

## DOROTHEE SMITH

Born: 28 April 1931 Corsica

Died: 22 July 2018 Liverpool

**Dorothee's mother was Latvian and a staunch religious Zionist; her father was of Polish Chassidic origin, a leftist political Zionist.**

They married in Palestine and, while on a return trip to Europe, their ship stopped in Corsica where Dorothee was born, the family returning to Latvia approximately six weeks after her birth. Her younger sister, Gita Esther, was born in 1933 in Libau and Dorothee and her parents returned to Corsica in 1936. They had entrusted the younger sister into the care of childless relatives. Gita and her uncle and aunt were murdered in 1941 together with most of Libau's Jewish community.

The war years were very difficult for Dorothee. Her father was a prisoner of war, and she and her mother found it hard to survive. She was very academic in school, developing a love for French literature and British culture. After the war she went to the University of Aix-en-Provence and then to teach in Oxford and Edinburgh. She was an "assistante" in French in the early '50s, met her future husband, Dr Ian Smith and they settled in Liverpool.

Dorothee spoke eight languages and found work easily, teaching French in some of Liverpool's best schools. She became a well-known home tutor to countless school children and adults and was also skilled at interpreting: she coached the executives of Liverpool's insurance corporations in conversational and business French.



Her proudest achievement was her longstanding chairmanship of the "Société Littéraire Française de Liverpool" which promoted French culture and language. In recognition of this the French Ministry of Culture awarded her the prestigious "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques".

Dorothee was cheerful, bubbly and extrovert, with a lively Mediterranean personality. She disliked injustice, and was an active member of the Liverpool 35s group which campaigned against the harsh treatment of Russian Jewish refuseniks. She was a devoted and energetic grandparent and great-grandparent. She supported many communal societies, and would always help outsiders, as she had once been herself.

Dorothee Smith had a difficult childhood in turbulent times, dodging the Holocaust, greatly scarred by the cruel loss of her sister and many other relatives. She loved Liverpool and her life was full and active; she would want people to gain comfort from the many warm memories we have of her, rather than to mourn her passing.

She is survived by her son and daughter, and a large extended family.

Dr Maurice Smith

## LOOKING FOR?

The AJR regularly receives messages from members and others looking for people or 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.

### HOWICK FAMILY

Edith Einhorn left Vienna on a 1938 Kindertransport and stayed with a family Howick in Surrey before travelling to the USA in 1940. Her daughter, Renée Kornfeld, is seeking anyone who was on the same Kindertransport and also information on the Howick family. [ramfeld@aol.com](mailto:ramfeld@aol.com)

### HANNELORE (Hannah Lora) EHRlich

Margaret Hill would like to know the whereabouts of this little girl who came to her kindergarten school in Cullompton Devon. During WW2 the Barbican Mission placed Hannelore with the Metters family at Craddock House, Uffculme, Devon. [hill562@btinternet.com](mailto:hill562@btinternet.com)

### ASPIRING DOCUMENTARY STARS

Families are being sought to take part in a new documentary film which will coincide with a major international conference about the Holocaust, scheduled to take place in Canada in 2020.

Producers are hoping to interview three generations of one family about the Holocaust and contemporary antisemitism. The 'ideal' family would include one living Holocaust survivor, one child of the survivor who has personally experienced antisemitism, one grandchild of the survivor who has personally experienced antisemitism. [jessica@secretariatcentral.com](mailto:jessica@secretariatcentral.com)



# Around the AJR

*These are just two of the many recent AJR events around the country.*

## ILFORD

We had a most nostalgic morning invoking wonderful memories of our younger days as Charlotte Balazs related the history of the famous Dorice and Cosmo restaurants. The former was owned by her Auntie Doris and her uncles were waiters in the latter. Both of these 'Finchleystrasse' venues offered refugees the opportunity to meet and find comfort in their new country.  
*Meta Roseneil*

## NORTH LONDON GROUP

This talk was so much more than an account of the (mis-)fortunes of a family in Hungary. Marcus Ferrar gave a most interesting talk about the life of Jews in that country during the war years where they were not persecuted until 1944 and now live in relative harmony with their fellow citizens.  
*Hanne R Freedman*

## MARCH GROUP EVENTS

All AJR members are welcome at any of these events; you do not have to be affiliated to that particular group. Please contact the relevant regional contact for full details.

Edinburgh	3 March	Exhibition at Scottish Arts Club
Kensington	4 March	Ruth & Peter Kraus hosting
Ealing	5 March	Paul Lang – Jewish view of the Selfie
Liverpool	5 March	Claude Vecht-Wolf – The Story of the Beatles
Glasgow 2nd Gen	5 March	Marks Deli Nosh and Natter
Ilford	6 March	Jonathan Sumberg – Working for the BBC
Wessex	6 March	Rabbi Maurice Michaels. Lunchtime social get-together
Pinner	7 March	Brian Nathan – A-Z of Jewish Band Leaders
Newcastle	10 March	Social get-together
Didsbury	11 March	Social get-together
Hull	11 March	Social get-together
Bromley	12 March	Social get-together
Birmingham	13 March	Social get-together
KT Lunch	13 March	Les Spitz – Travels with my Camera
Glasgow Book Club	14 March	Social get-together
Film Club	18 March	<i>Finding Your Feet</i>
Edgware	19 March	Jonathan Lewis – Jewish Chaplaincy in the Armed Forces
Leeds	20 March	Pre-Purim party
Radlett	20 March	Rabbi Jeff Berger – Jewish Refugee Experience in Kobe during WW2
Oxford	21 March	Social
Glasgow	24 March	Steven Anson – Reviving Augsburg's German Jewish Heritage
Bath/Bristol	25 March	Trevor Bedeman – Trips to Belarus
Book Club	27 March	Book Club
Muswell Hill	28 March	David Barnet – Joe Lyons and his Corner Shops
North London	28 March	Rabbi Celia Surget – The Marathon-Running Rabbi

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**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
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susan@ajr.org.uk

**Child Survivors' Association-AJR**  
Henri Obstfeld  
020 8954 5298  
henri@ajr.org.uk



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## LUNCH

on **Wednesday 13 March 2019**  
at **12.30pm**

at **Alyth Gardens Synagogue**



## LES SPITZ TRAVELS WITH MY CAMERA

We are delighted to be joined by Les Spitz who is an amazing photographer. Les will be showing an audio visual presentation of photographs of his travels to South Africa, New York, Vietnam. A treat for the eye and the ear, come along and see these beautiful pictures set to music.

**£7.00 per person incl. lunch**  
**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL**

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

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## AJR FILM CLUB

on **MONDAY 18 March 2019**  
at **12.30pm**

**Sha'arei Tsedek North London Reform  
Synagogue, 120 Oakleigh Road North,  
Whetstone, N20 9EZ**

Lunch of Sandwiches, Bridge Rolls, Danish  
pastries and tea or coffee will be served first

## FINDING THEIR FEET

Starring **Imelda Staunton, Celia Imrie and  
Timothy Spall**

On the eve of retirement a middle class, judgemental snob discovers her husband having an affair with her best friend and is forced to live with her bohemian sister on an inner city council estate. She is like a fish out of water next to her outspoken, serial dating, free-spirited sibling, but she reluctantly lets her sister drag her along to her community dance class, where gradually she starts finding her feet... and romance. In this hilarious and heart-warming modern comedy, a colourful group of defiant and energetic 'baby boomers' shows her that retirement is only the beginning, and that divorce might just give her a whole new lease of life – and love.

**£8.00 per person incl. lunch**  
**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL**

Please either call Ros Hart on  
07966 969951 or email  
roshart@ajr.org.uk

## www.fishburnbooks.com

### Jonathan Fishburn

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

He is a member of the Antiquarian  
Booksellers Association.

Contact Jonathan on  
**020 8455 9139**  
or **07813 803 889**  
for more information

## AJR CARD AND GAMES CLUB



**Monday 15 April 2019 at 1.00pm**  
at North Western Reform Synagogue,  
Alyth Gardens, Temple Fortune,  
London NW11 7EN



Bridge, card games, backgammon, scrabble. You decide.  
**£8.00 per person, inc lunch**

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

## Books Bought

### MODERN AND OLD

**Eric Levene**

020 8364 3554 / 07855387574  
ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk

# Events and Exhibitions

## ENEMY ALIENS

Dr Rachel Pistol of King's College London, and the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, talks about *War-time experiences of Jewish refugees in Great Britain: The internment of enemy aliens*. The event is hosted by the Kitchener Descendants group.

Wednesday 20 March, 6.00pm

Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/jewish-refugees-in-great-britain-internment-during-wwii-tickets-55507640848?aff=ebdssbdestsearch](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/jewish-refugees-in-great-britain-internment-during-wwii-tickets-55507640848?aff=ebdssbdestsearch)

## JEWISH HISTORY MONTH

March is Jewish History Month and this year's theme is *Big Screen Little Screen, Jews in British Cinema and Television*. Many top-class historians and well-known personalities are taking part in events in London, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Southampton, Bristol, Sussex, Essex and Hertfordshire. On 28 March film historian Joel Findler, who has written several articles for the AJR Journal, talks about *Immigrant Jews in the British Film Industry from the 1930s until the 1980s*.

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/jewish-history-month-18389915567](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/jewish-history-month-18389915567)

## CRIMES UNCOVERED

A new exhibition traces the stories and the legacies of the individuals and institutions who worked during and immediately after the Holocaust to record and collect information of atrocities and bring perpetrators to justice.

Until 17 May

Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP

## HANDS ON THE GLASS



A Czech glassmaker installing the 'hands on the glass' memorial at Prague station in May 2017

AJR is delighted to invite members to an exclusive screening of a new documentary capturing the making of the 'farewell memorial' installed in Prague's main railway station in May 2017.

The memorial is a replica of the carriage door from Kindertransport train. One side of the window features children's handprints, the other side their parents'.

The 80 minute film that captures the memorial's creation and the heartbreaking stories behind it, will be screened on Tuesday 25 June at a special event hosted by the Slovakian Embassy in London. If you would like to attend please contact Susan Harrod on [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk) or **020 8385 3078**.

## AWARD TO JUDITH KERR

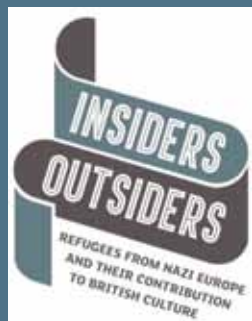


Judith Kerr illustrating one of her many bestselling children's books

Germany's Society for Exile Studies (Gesellschaft für Exilforschung) is awarding honorary membership to the world-famous author Judith Kerr.

Judith left Germany with her family in 1933. She has created both enduring picture books such as the *Mog* series and *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* as well as acclaimed novels for older children such as the semi-autobiographical *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*.

The Society will present Judith with her award at an AJR-supported event featuring former consultant editor of the AJR Journal, Dr Anthony Grenville. Monday 18 March, 6.30pm Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ceremony-to-award-honorary-membership-to-judith-kerr-tickets-55070982792](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ceremony-to-award-honorary-membership-to-judith-kerr-tickets-55070982792)



These are just two of the many events coming up shortly as part of the 2019 *Insiders/Outsiders* Festival:

### A CELEBRATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK CULTURE IN WARTIME BRITAIN

Historian Jana Barbora Buresova will discuss the influence of London's Czechoslovakian refugees during World War 2.

27 March 2019, 6.00pm – 7.00pm

Senate House, London WC1E 7HU

<https://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/events/event/17661>

### SEEING DAYLIGHT

When fleeing the Nazis aged 13 Dorothy Bohm was given a camera by her father. Since then she has become one of Britain's most eminent photographers.

13 March, 6.30pm

V&A Museum of Childhood,

London E2 9PA

[www.vam.ac.uk/moc/events/seeing-daylight-documentary-film-dorothy-bohm/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/events/seeing-daylight-documentary-film-dorothy-bohm/)

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