



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Our Ten Plaques

A few weeks ago, the AJR unveiled a plaque at Belsize Square Synagogue. It was the tenth site in our scheme intended to commemorate leading Jewish refugees who built new lives in Britain, as well as places and buildings which have special connections to Jewish refugees.



AJR Trustee Frank Harding unveiling a plaque in Edinburgh to commemorate Sir Rudolf Bing

Frank Harding, a trustee of the AJR, came up with the idea for the scheme. When I interviewed him recently, he told me that residents and visitors alike have learned a great deal from the AJR plaques, both about particular individuals but also about the general contribution of refugees. As with English Heritage, someone has to have been dead for twenty years before they can be commemorated with a plaque. And, crucially, they have to have made a significant contribution to some aspect of British life and culture.

Of course, he told me, there are challenges. Which building do you choose

to commemorate a particular person? With famous scientists, for example, they have chosen the labs where they worked rather than their homes. But sometimes the owner of the building doesn't want a plaque and there have even been objections by relatives of the person being commemorated.

The first AJR plaque, to honour the life of Sir Hans Krebs (1900-81), the Nobel Prize winning biochemist, was unveiled at the Department of Biochemistry in Oxford in May 2013. He left Germany in 1933 after he was dismissed from his university job.

*Continued on page 2*

## IN AUGUST COMPANY

Among the many and varied articles in our August issue you will find a very insightful article (page 3) by a member of the second generation, Ian Austin MP, explaining why he felt he had to leave the Labour Party.

There is also news of a new compensation scheme introduced by the Dutch Railways (page 5), plus an account of the last boatload of Kinder to arrive from Poland prior to WW2, and a report on the United States Holocaust Museum's testimony archive.

Please enjoy reading and send us any comments.

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*Please note that the views expressed throughout this publication are not necessarily the views of the AJR.*

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## Our Ten Plaques (cont.)

"His colleagues," wrote Jeremy Seabrook in *The Refuge and the Fortress*, "packed twenty crates with his scientific apparatus, and he left on the night train from Freiburg. He was welcomed, almost penniless, at Victoria Station by Hermann Blaschko [another refugee scientist]."

The second plaque, also in 2013, commemorates the life of the founder of the Paralympics, Sir Ludwig Guttmann (1899-1980), and is situated at the National Spinal Injuries Centre, on the site of Stoke Mandeville hospital. An eminent neuro-surgeon, Guttmann came to Britain in March 1939, and revolutionised the treatment of paraplegics during and after the Second World War.

In November 2013, the AJR erected a plaque in honour of The Cosmo, a restaurant and café on the Finchley Road between the 1930s and 1998. It was an unforgettable taste of central Europe in north London, famous for its strudel, goulash and schnitzel.

In December 2015, the AJR erected its next plaque in honour of Leo Baeck (1873-1956), a prominent leader of Progressive Judaism, who lived at 283 Watford Way, London NW4, from 1945 until his death in 1956. Just before he died Baeck became the first president of the famous Leo Baeck Institute for the study of the history and culture of German-speaking Jewry.

In August 2016, the AJR erected a plaque at Glyndebourne in honour of Sir Rudolf Bing (1902-97), General Manager of the famous opera house from 1936. In 2017 another plaque was placed to commemorate Bing, this time in his capacity as Founding Director of the International Edinburgh Festival in 1947, before he moved to New York in 1949 where he was General Manager of the Met for over 20 years.

In September 2016, a plaque was unveiled to honour Lord Frank Schon (1912-95), the Austrian-born Chairman of the National Research Development Corporation, at his former house in Whitehaven.

In 2018 a plaque was erected in memory of "Tante Anna", Anna Essinger, at Bunce Court School. Born in Ulm in 1879, she founded a co-ed progressive boarding school in southern Germany in 1926. In

1933 Essinger came to Britain and brought 65 Jewish pupils from her school to Bunce Court, a Tudor manor house near Otterden in Kent, which was evacuated to Shropshire briefly during the war but returned to Bunce Court in 1945. The school closed in 1948 and Essinger died in 1960. Pupils at Bunce Court School included Gerard Hoffnung, Leslie Brent, Frank Auerbach and Peter Morley, the TV filmmaker best known for his documentary, *Kitty – Return to Auschwitz*.

Leslie Brent, the famous immunologist, said, "I felt loved and that is so important for any child. I am grateful to the staff for dealing so discreetly with the loss of my family, burdened as they must have been with their own loss of loved ones."

In April this year a plaque was unveiled in memory of Professor Sir Ernst Chain (1906-79), another Nobel prize-winning scientist, at the building at Imperial College named after him. Together with Alexander Fleming and Howard Florey, Ernst Chain was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1945 in recognition of their discovery of penicillin. Chain was appointed a fellow by the Royal Society in March 1948 and was knighted in July 1969.

### KITCHENER PLAQUE

On 2 September a plaque will be unveiled at the Bell Hotel in Sandwich, to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kitchener Camp for refugees from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Many of these men had been arrested during November 1938 and incarcerated in Sachsenhausen, Dachau and Buchenwald. With the support of the Home Office, the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) managed to organise transport and accommodation for the refugees and to support them financially (the inmates received 6d. pocket money per week plus one 2 1/2d postage stamp).

The Kitchener Camp, named after Lord Kitchener, had been derelict since the First World War. It opened in January 1939 and between February and the outbreak of World War Two in September, just under four thousand Jewish refugees, all of them men, were put on trains from Berlin and Vienna. They travelled via Ostend and Dover to Sandwich in East Kent.

Kitchener had its own orchestra and football team and even a 1000-seater

cinema built with money donated by the Odeon Cinema tycoon, Oscar Deutsch. During summer 1939, a few of the men managed to get their wives and children out of Greater Germany using the system of 'domestic service visas' for their wives and the *Kindertransports* for their children. However, most families were not able to get out of Germany in time. There is an excellent website about the Kitchener Camp at [www.kitchenercamp.co.uk](http://www.kitchenercamp.co.uk) and if you would like to attend the unveiling of the plaque on 2 September please contact [clareungerson@aol.com](mailto:clareungerson@aol.com)

We have also recently been given permission to install a joint plaque to honour Milein Cosman and Hans Keller, as well as another plaque to honour Otto Schiff, the philanthropist who was responsible for administering the emigration of tens of thousands of Jewish people from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia before the Holocaust. This plaque will be installed at Woburn House.

What is immediately striking about the existing and planned plaques is both the range of people honoured – from teachers and bio-chemists to opera managers – and the range of places where you can see them, from Hampstead to Cumbria, and from Kent to Oxford. This perfectly captures the diversity of refugees in the 1930s and '40s and their enormous contribution to British life. This is just the beginning of an ambitious scheme. Keep your eyes peeled for future announcements.

**David Herman**

**Note: See the new Interactive Map on the AJR website which shows the location of all the blue plaques, with information and photographs about each one. If you have any suggestions please contact the AJR at the usual address.**

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# LET'S RID POLITICS OF RACISM

In February **Ian Austin**, Member of Parliament for Dudley, quit the Labour Party in protest over its handling of antisemitism. Here he explains his decision and his pledge to AJR members.

On 16 March 1939 a ten year old Jewish boy was woken in the middle of the night by noises from the streets of Ostrava, a city in what was then Czechoslovakia. Peering out of the window, he saw the German troops marching into the town square.

A few days later, his mother and teenage sisters waved him off on a train as he escaped to England. He never saw them again. Rounded up and sent first to a ghetto, they were murdered in Treblinka on 5 October 1942.

Despite arriving able to speak only three words in English, he grew up to become the youngest grammar school headteacher in the country, was honoured by the Queen with an MBE and adopted four children, the second one of whom is me.

I grew up listening to my dad telling me about the Holocaust and about the evils of racism. That led to me joining the Labour party as a teenager, and the first thing I did when I became an MP was to lead a campaign to drive out the BNP from Dudley.

So I am appalled and ashamed at the extent to which antisemitism has poisoned the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn.

I am shocked and ashamed that a party that has had such a proud tradition of fighting racism has caused huge offence and distress to the Jewish community.

Over the past few years we've seen Ken Livingstone's bizarre nonsense about Adolf Hitler and senior members legitimise the myth that Jews were the chief financiers of the slave trade.

Jewish MPs – particularly women – have been subjected to the most horrendous abuse and terrible, violent threats, even being told they don't have human blood.

Some Labour members have been arrested on suspicion of racial hatred and the party faces a full official inquiry for racism by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

And let us not forget that this crisis was triggered by the shocking discovery that Corbyn had defended that grotesque racist caricature on a mural in East London.

I knew I had to do much more to tackle this terrible problem. Last year, whilst in Krakow to take part in the March of the Living, I was introduced to an Auschwitz survivor now in his nineties. When told I was an MP, he looked up and asked for which party. When I replied "Labour," he said: "Are you not ashamed to be in the Labour Party with all the antisemitism."

And the truth is that I was deeply ashamed.

A few weeks later I joined the Jewish community at a demonstration against antisemitism in Parliament Square.

Susan Pollock was there too. Born in Hungary in 1930, she was imprisoned in Auschwitz as a child but survived the war. She now spends her time working with the Holocaust Educational Trust, visiting schools and colleges to teach young people about the evils of racism and prejudice.

The first time I met her was when she



Ian Austin MP

came to speak at our annual Holocaust commemoration in Dudley. The second time was at that demonstration, an anti-racist protest against the Labour Party!

Dozens of friends of mine left the Labour Party in protest at the culture of extremism and racism that Jeremy Corbyn had allowed to develop, and in the end, I knew I had to walk out too.

I did not leave to join another party but to shine a spotlight on the problem in the Labour Party and to encourage others to take action to tackle it.

I have never been more certain of anything in all my time in politics. I know my responsibility. This is a basic issue of decency and fairness – of what is right and what is wrong – and I know whose side I am on.

I have met and listened to countless refugees and survivors. I have seen at first hand the fantastic work the AJR does to support them and to honour them and their legacy.

And I want to promise all of them – these remarkable men and women who have contributed so much to our country – that I am going to do all I can to rid politics and the Labour Party of the poison of anti-Jewish racism.

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# Memories of Fritz Spiegl

**Eva Amann, a retired teacher of English who lives near Cologne, recalls her unusual friendship with Fritz Spiegl, an Austrian Kindertransportee, whom The Guardian summed up as “a professional flautist, an archivist of obscure music and an enthusiastic agent provocateur and tease.” He settled in Liverpool, where he died in 2003.**

“Around 1996 I became acquainted with Fritz Spiegl’s column in the *Daily Telegraph*; it was called “Usage and Abuse” and a friend cut the articles out for me and sent me a bunch from time to time. I enjoyed his way with words and his acute observations on language. In one column he discussed the problem of translating Shakespeare’s metaphorical language and his frequent use of puns. As an example, Fritz quoted that line from *Julius Caesar* where the cobbler explains his occupation. “A trade, sir, that I hope I may use with a safe



Eva Amann and Fritz Spiegl

conscience, which is indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.” Fritz wondered how you could render this pun in another language.

As he wanted to know about modern translations, I sent a letter to the editor pointing out several modern German translations that I knew. Fritz opened his letter back: “Sehr verehrte Frau Amann, or should I say Fräulein Amann?” I could not resist replying in German with that famous line from Goethe’s *Faust*, when Gretchen gives short shrift to Faust’s come-on line: “Mein schönes Fräulein, darf ich’s wagen...” by saying gruffly that she was neither a Miss, nor pretty - “Bin weder Fräulein, weder schön!”

Our correspondence had been going on for a while, when he phoned me and suggested a visit to Liverpool on our next trip to Britain. In the summer of 1998, on our way to the Lake District, we stopped for two nights in Liverpool and stayed with Fritz and his wife, Ingrid. Their lovely home originally consisted of two houses in a magnificent Edwardian terrace, but they had the walls knocked out to create spacious rooms. There were musical instruments everywhere, but the most unusual piece of furniture was a fake bookcase.

When Fritz showed us to our room he seemed to walk right into the bookcase, but it opened and turned out to be a door. The “books” on the shelves were made of cardboard, but with the most exquisite leather binding, some with gold lettering - all by Fritz. Of course, he invented the titles of these fictitious books. I remember two that I found particularly funny: Arnold Schoenberg, *How to Compose Easy Tunes* and

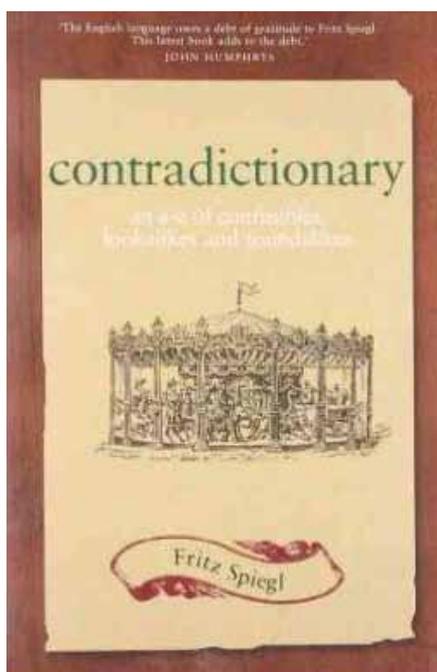
Oswald Mosley, *My Yiddisher Momma*.

Once we had ventured beyond the door, Fritz led us to a room with a splendid four-poster bed and enquired slyly: “Now, Bernhard, would you like to sleep in the bed where Soames violated Irene?” My poor husband looked bewildered at such an outrageous proposition, but was soon enlightened: Ingrid and Fritz had offered some of their rooms and their magnificent garden as sets for the filming of John Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Saga*. “We had lots of fun with the film crew and chaos for many weeks, too”, Fritz commented drily, “but it paid for the repainting of the outside of the house.”

After that weekend we stayed in touch and talked on the phone occasionally. In 2001 Fritz told me the Austrian Government had offered to compensate him for the material loss his family had incurred after the *Anschluss*. Commenting on this belated initiative, Fritz said: “If this happened in an English pub, you’d call it a cheap round, as there are hardly any people left who can profit from this offer. As to the damages, I can list those precisely: on the day of the *Anschluss* I was summoned home from boarding school and when I arrived my mother was sitting in front of our house clutching an ashtray – otherwise the house was entirely empty: The village neighbours had seen to that.”

I consider myself fortunate to have met Fritz and to have enjoyed his company. I shall never forget him.

(Vimeo has an online interview with Fritz Spiegl, “Ich bin Engländer”) <https://vimeo.com/143848147>



*Contradictionary*, by Fritz Spiegl

# LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## HUMANS WITHOUT BORDERS



A chance remark made by one of my fellow-pupils in the weekly German-language class I attend in my

neighbourhood retirees' club aroused my curiosity. Thus I learned about the activities of a group of Israelis who have made it their mission to assist Palestinians whose children require advanced medical treatment in Israeli hospitals. Like the other members of the volunteer organisation known as Humans Without Borders (HWB), two or three times a week my fellow-pupil, Tuvia, who today looks more like a geriatric hippie than the bank manager he once was, goes to one of the military checkpoints around Jerusalem (e.g., Kalandia or Bethlehem), picks up a Palestinian child, with one or two accompanying parents, and drives them to one of the Israeli hospitals where they are treated for one of the various diseases that afflict the young Palestinian population. Apparently, because of the high rate of intermarriage in Arab families the proportion of children suffering from renal diseases is particularly great. The hospitals involved in the Jerusalem area are Hadassah, Sha'arei Tzedek and Augusta Victoria,

and on an average day there are some twenty or thirty journeys to and from hospitals.

Thus, a child can undergo dialysis or chemotherapy, treatments which are not always available in the Palestinian hospitals. Sometimes they recover and sometimes they do not, and the cases which are unsuccessful are invariably very distressing for all concerned, including the Israeli drivers, who develop an attachment to 'their' clients and their families. Tuvia proudly showed me a photo he had been sent of a baby born to a Palestinian family after the death of the child he had been driving to and from hospital for some time. Tuvia has a B.A. in Arabic language and literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, so communicating with his 'clients' is not difficult. In most cases the families know basic Hebrew, and can thus overcome the language barrier.

Naturally, a project of this kind involves considerable organisation and co-ordination. When the association was originally founded in 2002 by Canadian immigrant Larry Lester, the co-ordination on the Palestinian side was implemented by Gamila Yafit Bisio. Today, however, all the arrangements are made by means of various messaging apps. HWB is a non-government, non-political charitable organisation, and has some 200 volunteers from all sectors of Israeli and Palestinian society, as well as from the world community. The costs of medical treatment

are paid by the Palestinian Authority.

In addition to transporting Palestinian children in need of advanced medical treatment in Israeli hospitals, the key aims of the organisation are to visit and support the children and family members during hospital treatment, secure medical devices for use by the children in their homes and provide practical support to these families and communities in their daily lives. A similar organisation is based in the Tel Aviv area, with many more volunteers, who are often called upon to collect children from the Erez crossing to Gaza and bring them to hospitals in Israel.

HWB also organises fun days and picnics for the children and their families, whether as a day on the beach or outing to a swimming pool, with food and entertainment laid on. HWB believes that it is every child's right to grow and develop in a caring and supportive environment, and is committed to enhancing the safety and well-being of Palestinian children and their communities. By promoting direct, friendly contact between Palestinians and Israelis, and through its efforts to brighten the lives of the children and ease the anxiety of their parents, the organisation contributes to the fostering of greater mutual respect between the two sections of the population. The organisation is a recognised charity, and donations may be made through the New Israel Fund.

## Dutch Railways Compensation

The Dutch national railway company has announced it will pay compensation to those who were taken to death camps and also to the relatives of those who were murdered.

Survivors who were transported by the company Nederlandse Spoorwegen (NS) are due to receive

15,000 euros each. Widows and widowers are eligible to receive 7,500 euros and if there is no surviving spouse, the children of victims should receive 5,000 euros.

Application forms should be available from 1 August from the website below or by calling Melanie Jawett on 020 8385 3072.

<https://commissietegemoetkomingns.nl/en>



The Mayor of Barnet, Cllr Caroline Stock, attended our recent Edgware group meeting. Pictured here with her husband and the AJR's Ros Hart, Cllr Stock said she was honoured to be in the presence of 20 Holocaust survivors.

# Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication and respectfully points out that the views expressed in the letters published are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

## CHANNEL ISLANDS IN WW2

In the AJR Journal (July) I read that the AJR film club will be seeing *'The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society'*. I have only read the book and avoided the film for the following reason. In the book's acknowledgements the author wrote 'If nothing else, I hope these characters and their story shed some light on the sufferings and strength of the people of the Channel Islands during the German occupation'. Sufferings and strength - but what about their weaknesses? On page 80 we read: 'The Commandant of Guernsey had ordered all Jews to report to the Grange Lodge Hotel and register.' But what actually happened to them? In a report sent to the Home Office in August 1945 we read: "When the Germans proposed to put their anti-Jewish measures into force, no protest was raised by any of the Guernsey States Officials, and they hastened to give the Germans every assistance." In striking contrast, measures against the local Freemasons led to "the Bailiff making considerable protests". Three Jewish women from Guernsey were sent to their deaths in March 1942. No publicity was given to this in the Channel Islanders' own accounts of the occupation. In his book *Journeys from the Abyss* Tony Kushner noted that 'for the best part of forty years no one showed any inclination to find out more about this episode in the islands' past'.

Michael Levin, London SE23

## HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

I spoke at the Hay on Wye festival on the subject of "Have we failed in our education?"

In view of racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism I was invited as a Holocaust survivor to join the distinguished panel of Barbara Winton, the Lord mayor of Worcester, Jabbar Riaz and Professor David Green of the University of Worcester.

The horrors of two world wars and the Holocaust were the catalyst for

the creation of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the EU. The era established principals of tolerance, equality, humanity and democracy. These have guided successive generations. Today those values are threatened by racism, a tide of hostility and nationalism and religious intolerance.

How can we stem this tide? Through education, action and promoting inclusion, understanding and community cohesion.

Our event was sold out, the response and feedback from the audience was powerful. Although I hesitated to join this distinguished panel, I felt my contribution and effort at the age of 90 years was worthwhile and I feel privileged to have joined the debate on such an important matter.

Dr Mindu Hornick, Birmingham

## KINDERTRANSPORT 'COMPENSATION'

I write in support of Nick Sigler's proposal that the German government should be lobbied to give the "donation" offer to refugee organisations on behalf of deceased Kinder. The offer of €2,500 (too little and far, far too late) would have been a bitter pill to my mother, who died in 2011. In the 1950s and '60s she claimed, and received, restitution; but the hurdles she had to jump were cruelly high, and some of the official correspondence she received was vile.

*"How come a 15-year old girl possessed valuable jewellery?" "Prove that your father paid this tax" [so – not old enough to possess jewellery, but old enough to know about her father's taxes]; "There is a record of a presumed marriage [i.e. the official record of my grandparents' marriage], but I am not prepared to accept it as proof". [How DARE they say "presumed" marriage?]*

In recognition of what so many people had to go through from their childhood right through into their troubled adult lives, it is surely right and fitting that those who are deceased should also be

awarded this sum of money, and that it should be spent appropriately on their behalves.

Judith Rhodes, Leeds

## THE QUAKERS

In reply to Walter Wolff's letter on the role of the Society of Friends in helping refugees, I heartily endorse his request for an article in the AJR Journal.

I too was told by Friends House that they had destroyed files naming refugees, but subsequently discovered that this was not 100% true. Many, but not all, files were indeed destroyed, but I understand that a name index was constructed from those files. In the end I was able to receive some very basic information about my mother. Not much, and no new information, but better than nothing and cheering to know that a record exists.

Judith Rhodes, Leeds

## JUDITH KERR

I am writing to express my appreciation of your article/obituary on Judith Kerr. Like you, I think her trilogy is her best work although the media response to the news of her death seemed to focus exclusively on the *Mog* series and *The Tiger who Came to Tea*. I read her trilogy when I was writing of my mother's experience of being a refugee in London from 1938 onwards. Judith Kerr conveyed so well the anxiety and sheer hard work of being a refugee, which my mother must have had to deal with too.

Thank you so much for highlighting that aspect of Kerr's work.

Gaby Weiner, Lewes

## ANOTHER ACCOLADE

There are various ways in which a deserving person can be awarded an accolade. One of these is to have his/her birthday mentioned in 'The Times'. This occurred on 5 July when Professor Leslie Baruch Brent, frequent contributor

# LOOKING FOR?

to this Journal, was 94. Your readers may not know that he is an 'immunologist and zoologist, whose research helped to pave the way for organ transplantation'.  
*Rudi Leavor, Bradford*

## ART LOVER

I am a member of AJR and receive the splendid AJR journal regularly and would like to say how very much I enjoy reading every page. Everything written is so interesting and I love the biographies, book section etc. I am into Art and Music and I must compliment Gloria Tessler on all her writings.  
*Sheila Grossnass, London N16*

## UNITED IN EASTBOURNE

The AJR provides a varied programme of topics and holidays. Eastbourne provides a varied choice of lovely walks, gorgeous flowers, an attractive pier, clean fresh air, the sea and lots more. Together they provided the ideal holiday for a large group from 7 - 14 July this year.

Carol Rosen and team were always on hand and a wonderful trip to Hillier Garden Centre provided us with a lovely cream tea. Above all I met some new friends and a few I had not seen for sometime and conversation flowed freely. What more can anyone ask for?

Thank you AJR!  
*Gerald Hellman, London*

## ERRATUM

We apologise for wrongly captioning one of the photos that illustrated the article *From Auschwitz to Ambleside (July)*. The group of refugee boys were not watching a film, they were actually being taught English by Heini Goldberg, the late brother of our member Frank Goldberg.

**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.**

### DR. GOSSMAN

Canon Bell seeks information on Dr Gossman, widow of an exiled German jurist, who was killed 12 November 1940 in a bombing raid on Bayswater. Earlier she had been given refuge in Crouch End by Dowain Bell's grandparents. Her brother, his wife and daughter Ursula (10) were interned in August 1940 and possibly sent to Canada.  
*dowainbell@yahoo.co.uk*

### DOMBROWSKI/SCUBACK (née Schaal)

Lisa-Marie Dombrowski, a student at the Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena, seeks information on Henriette

Dombrowski (later Scuback) born 1893. In 1953 she was living at 21 Gascony Avenue, London NW6. Also her son Erwin Dombrowski (born 1914).  
*lisamarie.dombrowski@uni-jena*

### HILDE RESTER (née TROPP)

Information is sought on Hilde Rester, born 26 August 1903, by her great-grandson Tom Sieger. It was assumed that she perished in a concentration camp, but new facts indicate that she may have escaped to Britain in 1939.  
*tsieger@coreshopsolutions.com*

### WARTIME PUBLISHERS

Freencky Portas, a student at UCL, is writing a Masters thesis on *Publishing During WW2* and is seeking information about people who worked in publishing during or shortly after the war.  
*f.portas91@icloud.com*

### RICHARD YEOMAN and HENRY BLACK

Prior to WW2 Henry Black left the KInderhaus der weiblichen Fürsorge orphanage in Frankfurt-am-Main with a group of children bound for the UK. In later years his son, Richard Yeoman, worked in films. His son and other descendants are invited to attend a memorial ceremony in Frankfurt this September.  
*till.lieberz-gross@unitybox.de*

## Volunteers Benefit

**A group of AJR volunteers gathered at the Wiener Library last month to hear Jewish Volunteer Network Chief Executive, Nicky Goldman speak of the many benefits of volunteering, including its reduction of asthma attacks!**

AJR Chairman, Andrew Kaufman MBE, said, "Tonight is an opportunity for the AJR to honour our wonderful volunteers; a group of truly altruistic people who unconditionally give their time to support our members. As well as growing in number, volunteers have



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taken on more roles, more frequently and with greater interest." AJR's volunteers currently support over 270 first generation members. Thirty percent of our volunteers have a family connection with the AJR, with as many under 30s volunteering as over 80s. Many different roles are available – please contact the office if you'd like to help.

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Each year it seems harder to find the soul of the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition, as art of every genre, statement and dimension makes war on your senses until you stagger out in a dizzy fizz.

As you might expect, this year it's animal welfare, sustainability, gender issues, climate change, the Windrush scandal, Brexit, immigration and contested borders – a huge political shout as well as an art bonanza, open to Academicians and everyone else lucky enough to have work chosen. It is serious business, but also great fun. Last year's curator, Grayson Perry, flitted from room to room, a clown in rainbow colours. This year the show was muted by the fact that times, they are a-changing.

The 251st Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, co-ordinated by painter Jock McFadyen, begins in the Annenberg Courtyard with a series of massive other-worldly look-at-me sculptures by **Thomas Houseago**, which dwarf the courtly presence of 18<sup>th</sup> Century painter Sir Joshua Reynolds. McFadyen curated a 'menagerie' in the Central Hall by a team of artists, and as you enter you are immediately in the wild. The animals are strange and beguiling: a red and white prowling tiger coated in pink foil by the **Mach Brothers**, a deer, a virtual aviary of strange birds, a large gleaming copper dog,

an owl and a hybrid of two creatures sharing one long snaking snout. In one gallery there is a menacing group of black crows which seem to have been made of black bin bags. Nowhere is climate change and the need for sustainability more powerfully expressed than in **Nicola Hicks'** gingerly polar bear poised on what appear to be melting ice caps.

Apart from the stress on sustainability, evident this year in the choice of natural materials displayed in the Architects Room, there is an emphasis on older painters, aged from the 70s to the 90s, like the 87 year old **Frank Bowling RA**, the 92 year old **Anthony Wishaw** and **Anthony Isaacs** at 96.

Gender issues and gay love are asserted in a painting of two near identical men making love by **Ksenija Vucinik**. There are mixed race and black love affairs, celebrated in **Arthur Timothy's Adeline and Bankole Timothy**. Some of the most exciting works are sculptures. **Cathy Lewis's Orlando**, referencing the novel by Virginia Woolf, is a subtle and beautiful white marble

pubescent boy-girl.

There are works made entirely out of rubbish, and there are the usual banner proclamations which present themselves as art. "We are all immigrant scum" shrieks **Jeremy Deller's** textile banner, while **Banksy** presents a shuttered and padlocked border being attacked by a rat with a hammer under the sign *Customs: Arrivals from the EU* and marked *Keep Out*. **Thomas Schütte** makes a point of isolation with his *Mann Ohne Gesicht (Man Without a Face)*, which seems to reflect the sense that the stranger is oneself.

I was very impressed with *Border Crossing* by **Cathy de Monchaux**, an intricate rectangular work involving copper wire, bandage beads, and graphite in which a mass of ghostly white horses run lemming-like between white trees and undergrowth towards a clearing. The most painterly painting, reminiscent of a Goya, is **Zatorski+Zatorski's** giclée print *The dream of the Pearl Diver's Widow*, in which a nude reclining on a shell-like sheet is caressed by an octopus. There's certainly more than a touch of S & M, but for me it is the most beautiful painting on show.

Until August 12.



Lions, tigers and bears all feature in the Royal Academy's 251st Summer Exhibition

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# Calling all Witnesses



Filming of a witness in Austria



One of the archive's Ukrainian witnesses

**One of the largest and most diverse Holocaust-related testimonial collections in the world, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Archive* holds over 22,000 interviews—and its collection continues to grow. **Noemi Szekely-Popescu** is responsible for capturing new eyewitness accounts and explains the process [here](#).**

Hearing accounts of eyewitnesses to history enables us to catch a unique glimpse of the past. Oral histories invite us to look beyond the medium and immerse ourselves in an environment of vibrant story telling. An interviewee's candour or unexpected perspective can capture a listener's imagination and leave a lasting impression.

The *Herr Archive* actively acquires and produces around 1,000 interviews each year throughout Europe and the United States. Our interviews are freely accessible by anyone in the world with an internet connection.

The archive's holdings cover a wide scope, seeking to present the most comprehensive and integrated picture of the wartime environment surrounding the Holocaust. The collection comprises

two broad categories of interviewees: Holocaust survivors and so-called "witnesses." The term "survivor" includes all individuals who suffered state-sponsored persecution by the Nazis or their allies and local collaborators, while a "witness" denotes anyone who lived during the period in question, and can describe, through their own memories, the political, social, and cultural environment of the 1930s or 1940s, including Jewish persecution. The *Herr Archive* thus takes a holistic approach to documenting the Holocaust, capturing voices at multiple levels of society in order to offer better insights into the complexity of human nature, the controversial aspects of interpersonal relationships, and the dynamic between individual actions and societal change.

The Museum has collected the stories of refugees since the 1980s, well before it opened its doors to the public in 1993. Nevertheless, work continues toward a fuller documentation of the refugee experience, including capturing the environment in so-called "host societies", i.e. countries of transit or emigration for refugees. In collaboration with the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, the *Herr Archive* started recording the memories of host society members a few years ago with a small-scale project documenting the stories of Swedish witnesses to wartime and post-war Jewish refugee arrivals. The project focused on documenting the memories of native-born Jews of other Jewish refugees arriving in Sweden. In these interviews, the witnesses described in vivid terms the changes in their communities throughout the '30s and '40s. The successive waves of displaced persons had a strong effect on the interviewees'

formative years. For example, when Danish Jews fled to Sweden in 1940, some of the new arrivals transformed teenage social lives, as host communities organised dances and established clubs for Jewish youth.

Building on the success of this and other similar projects, we are now seeking to conduct interviews with witnesses to Jewish refugee arrivals in the United Kingdom and to continue widening our lens in order to gain a richer, more complex understanding of the challenges they faced upon arrival to the UK. What were the expectations of foster families welcoming refugees? What was their understanding of the rise of fascism on the continent and of increasing Nazi expansion? What were the specific challenges to integration?

We are eager to hear Jewish and non-Jewish witnesses' memories of the societal atmosphere in wartime and immediate post-war UK, including the penury of the reconstruction years, whether from foster-siblings, classmates, neighbours or friends of Jewish refugees, and others who can aid us in better capturing life during these years.

More than 80 years after the first arrival of refugees from Nazism to the UK, we are faced with the last opportunity to rescue the evidence in the form of first-hand accounts, so that the stories of witnesses may be saved and preserved for future generations. If you know anyone who wishes to be interviewed for this project, please contact **Borbala Kriza** at [krizab@gmail.com](mailto:krizab@gmail.com).

# REMEMBERING & RETHINKING

## MARIE SCHMOLKA AND THE EMIGRATION FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The work of Nicholas Winton regarding the Kindertransport is very widely known. But readers will be less familiar with the woman who made it happen, Marie Schmolka. It was her appeal, together with Doreen Warriner, that involved Winton in December 1938. So who was this woman? In the second of our series *Remembering & Rethinking the Kindertransport*, we look at Schmolka's contribution and plans to honour her work.



Born in 1893 in Prague, Marie née Eisner was the youngest of four sisters. She married relatively late, and her marriage to older attorney Leopold Schmolka was very happy, albeit brief. After his death, Schmolka, who grew up in an assimilated family, became interested in Zionism and Jewish affairs. She joined WIZO, and thanks to her immense organisational skills and wide-ranging political networks in Czechoslovak politics, soon became a key player in Jewish social work.

After 1933 many leftist Jewish Germans sought refuge in Czechoslovakia. Their reception was far from the rosy picture that the romanticised narrative of interwar Czechoslovakia would have us believe. Schmolka led the National Coordinating Committee for Refugees in Czechoslovakia and headed the local branch of HICEM and JOINT, the transnational Jewish aid organisations. Her work was political and practical: She got to know hundreds of individuals, organised visas, negotiated with police for the right of domicile, set up housing and financial support and liaised with employers to supply refugees with jobs.

By autumn 1938, following the Munich agreement, when Britain and France forced Czechoslovakia, their ally, to surrender its Sudeten borderlands to Germany, it was no longer a harbour for refugees. Aid organisations were unable to cope with the influx of over 100,000 refugees, and

conditions in camps were poor, with hunger, diseases, suicides, and women turning to sex work. Schmolka visited the camps, collected evidence to mobilise public opinion, and wrote appeals to foreign ambassadors in Prague and to Jewish agencies abroad.

Schmolka, Warriner, and their team realised that it would be difficult to secure refuge for adults, especially political emigrants. Although the Holocaust, as it came to be, was as yet unimaginable, they recognised that leftist refugees were most at risk from the nearing German occupation. In December 1938 the overworked Schmolka and Warriner passed on the scheme of *kindertransporte* to their British volunteers: Martin Blake and his friend Winton.

Schmolka was arrested the day after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. For two months she was kept in Pankrác prison and subjected to long, gruelling interrogations by the Gestapo. She was released following protests by Czech politicians. In August 1939, Adolf Eichmann sent her with a colleague to France and Britain to help boost the enforced Jewish emigration. She made London her home, moving in with Mary Sheepshanks, an old friend from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Sadly, she died six months later on 24 March 1940, having worked herself to a heart attack.

Rebecca Sieff, the founder of WIZO, eulogised Schmolka: "She refused to be intimidated, either by the threats of hostile governments, or by the barriers of pomp and circumstance which surround even friendly governments and their chancelleries."

Today, the emigration of the grown up refugees is largely forgotten, and few in British WIZO are familiar with Schmolka's name. The focus has moved to the Kindertransport, because children's rescue is considered more moving, and some are still alive. Most former Kinder do not recall who stood behind the organisation of their rescue. Most of them have never heard of Schmolka, and believe that Nicholas Winton (who always argued he was part of a collective) was their sole rescuer. In a gendered turn of events, the women who led the rescue effort have been erased by history, replaced by the man who was effectively their intern.

The Marie Schmolka Society seeks to change this. We aim to place a blue plaque in Gospel Oak, where Schmolka spent the last months of her life. Moreover, we would like to inspire further research into women social workers in the Holocaust. More information on our work and possibility of support is on our website: [www.marieschmolka.org](http://www.marieschmolka.org)

Anna Hájková and Martin Šmok

# TRULY RIGHTEOUS

To date, approximately 28,000 non-Jews have been honoured by Yad Vashem for the tremendous risks they took in saving Jews during the Holocaust. Of these, only 627 were from Germany. The following article is written by the granddaughters of one lady who was saved by the late Johanna and Lothar Kreyssig, who not only saved several lives during the war but went on to establish an organisation which has done much to foster close relationships between young German non-Jews and the global Jewish community.

On 30 October 2018 a ceremony took place in Berlin at the New Synagogue - Centrum Judaicum to honour the Kreyssigs and name them 'Righteous among the Nations' for saving the life of our grandmother, Gertrud Prochownik. The medal and certificate were presented to their surviving son Jochen Kreyssig by the Israeli Ambassador to Germany, Jeremy Issacharoff. The ceremony was organised by the Israeli Embassy, Yad Vashem and 'Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste' in the presence of the Kreyssig family and our family. We were also able to say a few words and here is our story.

Gertrud (or 'Omi' as we called her) was a quiet, loving part of our family, sharing her marzipan chocolate, giving us cuddles, and enjoying family outings. She passed much of her time in her room, at her desk, writing letters in German to friends and family on her portable typewriter and reading *Der Spiegel* which kept her abreast of world events. Having lived through two world wars and such a



Gertrud Prochownik

difficult period in history, she was often ready to see the next great war on the horizon. At home we were surrounded by depictions of life in Germany before the war, painted by her husband, the artist Leo Prochownik (1875 - 1936), but she never spoke of her own experiences at that time. No mention was made of her work for the *Jüdische Arbeitsvermittlung*, of her losses, nor the sister and brother-in-law sent to Auschwitz, or of her terrifying time before and during the Second World War. Like many survivors she wanted to forget, or perhaps it was just impossible to relate these events to her grandchildren. We did not know it at the time but we were very lucky to have her with us at all.

Only on the death of our mother Marianne, Gertrud's daughter, in March 2016 did we uncover some papers relating to our family history. By chance we came across copies of Gertrud's correspondence with Lothar Kreyssig dating back to 1945.

Gertrud 'vanished' on 13 April 1943 at the age of 58. She used the name Hildegard Jacobi whilst she was living illegally. In her account she wrote of her flight from Berlin, pursued by the Gestapo, travelling to her first hiding place in the countryside, without papers, while carrying a cyanide tablet, and prepared to commit suicide as a form of ultimate escape. She went first to another family but when it became impossible for her to stay there she travelled by road and train to Hohenferchesar to live with Lothar, Johanna and their family from November 1944 until the end of the war in 1945. She and another Jewish woman worked among the foreigners employed on



Jochen Kreyssig receiving his honour from Jeremy Issacharoff

CREDIT: EMBASSY OF ISRAEL, BERLIN

Lothar and Johanna's biodynamic farm. Lothar Kreyssig had already risked his life under the Nazi regime. As a devout Protestant and State Judge he rejected the order to carry out the 'Aktion T4' or 'Euthanasia' laws, refusing to send mentally handicapped people to their deaths. Having surprisingly escaped Nazi retribution once, he risked his and his family's life a second time by hiding two Jewish women. After the war in 1958 he helped set up 'Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste' (Action Reconciliation/ Services for Peace) which finds places for young German volunteers to work in the Jewish community throughout the world.

That Gertrud survived the war at all is almost a miracle and we are forever grateful to the Kreyssig family for what they did. Not only did they take her in, at the utmost risk to themselves, but they treated her like a 'mensch', like one of the family, all of them sharing meals together round the table. This was something Gertrud mentioned in her letters. Her friendship with the Kreyssig family continued after the war as her correspondence proves. She would be delighted that they were honoured as 'Righteous'.

Our mother continued the family contact and we, her granddaughters, have stayed friends with two of the Kreyssig's grandchildren, Martin and Ulrike Kreyssig, who were present at the ceremony and we hope this family connection will continue for many generations to come.

**Jenny Krausz and Julie Krausz-Rogerson**

# REMEMBERING & RETHINKING

## THE LAST BOAT

Eighty years ago this month, the steam ship *Warszawa* brought its last boat load of Kinder to our shores. Filmmaker Alan Reich, whose father and aunt came on that boat, is making a compelling documentary about their journey. He shares his insights here as part of our *Remembering & Reflecting on the Kindertransport series*.



Alan Reich

"My father, Jack Reich, and his older sister, Helen, came to England without their parents. My father was 10 years old. They arrived from Poland on a ship called *Warszawa*. These were the only facts I knew.

I grew up in North West London in an orthodox Jewish community, where Yiddish and heavily accented English was spoken. I had no grandparents on my father's side, and no one mentioned them. This community of refugees and survivors did not dwell on the past. At the time I didn't show curiosity – maybe I was scared to ask difficult questions.

In 1996 - when I was already a father myself and had visited what I thought had been my father's hometown in Poland – I discovered that my paternal grandparents had in fact emigrated from Poland to Dortmund in Germany after WW1. Being Polish citizens, they were arrested at the end of October 1938 and forcibly expelled from Germany, along with 17,000 other Jews of Polish origin.

This was complete news to me. So I was curious to know how my father got to Poland – and then from Poland to England. More importantly, I wanted to understand why it had been difficult for him to share his story.

Because his story was scary to confront face on, some years ago I became infatuated by the actual boat the children

travelled on. I fantasised it as a biblical whale, into whose belly the children were saved from danger and brought to England.

The coal-powered passenger ship was built in Sunderland in 1916 by Doxford and Sons, and called the *Smolensk*. By the 1930s it had been renamed the *SS Warszawa* and sailed regularly between the new port of Gdynia, in Poland, leaving on a Friday and arriving on a Tuesday.

Thanks to search notices in the *AJR Journal* and Kindertransport newsletter, I have been able to learn much about other people who travelled on the *SS Warszawa*. From Herbert Haberberg, for example – who had just turned 14 in the autumn of 1938 – I learned that the forced deportations that my grandparents experienced were coordinated with great German efficiency, collecting Polish Jews from several stops throughout Germany.

Another deportee, Rosi Schule, told me how she was 22 in 1938 and a teacher in a Jewish boarding school near Stuttgart. At 11pm one Thursday night she was visited by two SS officers and told she had 15 minutes to pack enough for two days and take no more than 10RM. The following day, Rosi was escorted into a third class carriage with a group of children and sent towards Poland, to then be held for months in the small border town of *Zbąszyri*, along with thousands of other Jewish refugees from throughout Germany.

The tiny population of *Zbąszyri*, of around 5000, had no idea the refugees were coming. With no extra accommodation available, they had to improvise. The large train station, an abandoned flour mill and the stables of the Prussian barracks (which still smelled of horses, despite having been vacant since 1917) all played shelter to Jewish families who, in one day, had gone from having homes and jobs to becoming stateless refugees in limbo and in appalling conditions. They had to establish a makeshift community, with volunteers running everything from the hospital to the postal service. In a heated gymnasium, turned into a dormitory, Rosi looked after 100 children aged five to fifteen.

The refugees' plight made the headlines in all the Yiddish papers and even the British press. Throughout the winter and early spring many letters were sent across Europe, the USA and the Far East, seeking any visa possible.

Here in England, an international lawyer named Elsley Zeitlyn established the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund and in mid November 1938 he went to *Zbąszyri* to see the situation for himself. His campaign – 'What I saw in No Man's Land' – highlighted the plight of the now remaining 5500 refugees and the amount of money needed to sustain them.

Zeitlyn secured the support of George Lansbury, Member of Parliament for Bow. As soon as Parliament agreed, on 21 November, to allow unaccompanied children into Britain, Zeitlyn and Lansbury began campaigning to bring children out of *Zbąszyri* and find sponsors willing to pay the £50 guarantee.

The first 54 children (34 boys and 20 girls) arrived from Gdynia on the *SS Warszawa* on 15 February 1939. Zeitlyn accompanied their voyage and George Lansbury MP welcomed them at the docks. Zeitlyn then pledged to find sponsors for 100 more children from *Zbąszyri*.

In Southampton University's library I discovered letters from my grandfather – to Zeitlyn. "I come to you with a petition



Newspaper report of the children's arrival



SS Warszawa

referring to both my children," he wrote. "We are all here in *Zbąszyń* in the Refugee Camp. I don't see how to come free and what will be the future of my children. We have lived here for more than seven months now. My children... a girl of 14 and my son of nearly 10 years..." and he went on to give further details of my father and my aunt.

This letter was well written in English, but I doubt that my grandfather spoke or knew much English. Yiddish yes, and German. So who wrote this letter for him? I will never know.

The reply from Zeitlyn in London was almost immediate: "I am hoping to bring out 100 children from "No Man's Land" and would be very glad to take your children amongst them, but unfortunately, I have the greatest difficulty in finding homes for them. Up to the present moment I have not yet succeeded in more than about 30 homes out of the 100. I am afraid that I cannot promise to take your girl. First of all she is nearly 18, and the Government insists that the children brought over here, leave at 18 years of age".

Zeitlyn continued: "There are many thousands of refugee children already, and people are not willing to burden themselves with more. But I am not despairing and I hope to include your son in the next batch that I bring out. Send me the fullest details of his date and place of birth, together with photographs. I can only urge you to have faith and hope for the best."

By July, Zeitlyn had got sponsors for only 30 children. This time the *SS Warszawa* did not risk taking the shorter route through the Kiel Canal, instead sailing up to the top of Denmark and down to the North Sea, arriving in England on 1 August.

Of the 100 that Zeitlyn had pledged to save, 70 were still stuck in Poland, including my father and aunt. They said goodbye to their parents in *Zbąszyń* station and went to Ottwock, a village close to Gydnia. Conditions there were much better but it was a tense three weeks whilst enough sponsors were found. On the morning of Tuesday 29 August the *SS Warszawa* brought its final cargo of 70 Kinder. Three days later war was declared and the route was closed.

In total, Elsley Zeitlyn found sponsors for 154 children, who arrived on three journeys on the *SS Warszawa* in 1939. No passenger list has been found, but my father and his sister arrived on the last boat, together with Herbert Haberberg, Sir Erich Reich and his brother, and many others fortunate enough to have been guaranteed by total strangers in England.

I have now had the privilege to speak to several of these Kinder, giving me a not complete but complex picture of their experience of becoming refugees twice in less than two years. They all told how, while growing up, they were completely unaware of being part of a movement involving nearly 10,000 children, that we now know as the Kindertransport. As they

began to build their new lives in England, Israel or the USA, they were given little information about the organisations and individuals behind their rescue. Indeed, even after the Kindertransport became widely recognised in the 1980s, there was very little mention of the work of the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund in the mainstream history books.

I believe the *SS Warszawa* Kinder story is worth telling, now more than ever, because we are on the cusp of losing the generation that remembers those events. And it needs to be told as widely as possible. To quote the psychoanalyst Stephen Grosz, "We tell stories to make sense of our lives, but to tell the story is not enough... there must be someone to listen."

I also believe that the experience of these children is as relevant today as it was then. Only last month we witnessed another awful scene of families fleeing Libya, travelling on rickety boats which easily capsize. But in their desperation they are willing to risk everything to find safety and a better life. Of course 'our' surviving Kinder understand at first hand the refugee experience and what it is like to be rescued by the compassion and action of strangers. This is why some of them have donated their own Kindertransport compensation payment towards helping these modern day refugees via organisations such as **Safe Passage** or **Help Refugees**.

[www.safepassage.org.uk](http://www.safepassage.org.uk)  
[www.helprefugees.org](http://www.helprefugees.org)

# REVIEWS

## THE IMPACT OF ZIONISM AND ISRAEL ON ANGLO-JEWRY'S IDENTITY 1948-1982. CAUGHT SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ZION AND GALUT.

By Jack Omer-Jackaman  
Valentine Mitchell, London 2019.  
ISBN 978 1 910383 91 9

The creation of Israel put diaspora Jews under a new sense of obligation. Acceptance had previously been sought on the basis of affiliation and identification with the state they lived in. Now suddenly British Jews could be identified with a new foreign state and, moreover, one that had fought against Britain in its independence struggle. That altered everything and has been a continuing source of tension, both between the Jewish community and the wider society, and within the Jewish community itself.

Omer-Jackaman asserts that commitment to religion gradually lessened as identification with Israel increased. Readers may be shocked to recall how hostile some British Jews once were to Zionism. In 1948 the Anglo-Jewish Association 'was still publishing articles which attacked the "cancer" of Zionism, whose eradication required communal "spring cleaning"'. British Zionism was really rather limited and involved supporting Israel from afar rather than actually making aliyah. To some this was unacceptable. We are, for example, told of a 1957 conference at the Hebrew University 'at which a large number of Israeli Zionists', including Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, 'delivered tirades against the Diaspora'.

Other issues covered include the alleged 'great silence' about the Holocaust in the initial post-war years, the trial in Israel of Adolf Eichmann, the wars of 1956 and 1967, the rise of Herut and the Israeli right, and the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

This book originated as a thesis and is clearly written for an academic audience. It provides a detailed investigation of the obvious Anglo-Jewish primary sources, though sometimes the background context is

not sufficiently presented. For example discussion of the debate on the 1956 Suez crisis gives no indication of its origins as a response to President Nasser nationalising the Suez Canal and closing it to Israeli shipping. Similarly the origins of the 1967 war are sketchily dealt with. No clear mention is made of the mobilisation of Arab forces around Israel's border, nor of Egypt closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, a breach of international maritime law that cut off the port of Eilat.

At various times fears were expressed that the relative lack of antisemitism was leading to the dilution of the Anglo-Jewish community. Times have changed and antisemitism appears to be back with a vengeance.

*Michael Levin*

## GOODBYE BERLIN: The biography of Gerald Wiener

By Margaret M Dunlop  
Birlinn Limited  
ISBN 978 1 78027 420 1

The life of the distinguished agricultural geneticist Gerald Wiener, who came to the UK on the Kindertransport, is examined in this fascinating biography by his wife Margaret M Dunlop.

Gerald's work involved exploring the causes of variation in the performance of cattle and, in greater detail, in sheep. His research department in Edinburgh was world renowned, and after his retirement former colleagues made an astonishing breakthrough, leading to the cloning of Dolly the sheep.

Until the Nazis came to power Gerald enjoyed a happy, prosperous childhood in Berlin. He lived in an apartment in a friendly little street with his mother Luise and her father. Residents were stunned by Kristallnacht but through lifelong friends who had already moved to England the 12-year-old managed to get the right papers to join them. Luise soon followed but his beloved grandfather remained as he thought he was too old for the Nazis to bother about, with fatal consequences.

Gerald eventually ended up in Oxford

where Luise trained as a midwife. Through the refugee committee they met elderly cousins, Rosemary and Ruth from the famous Spooner family, who helped sponsor him through school and university. He studied agriculture after working in farming, as career choices were limited during the war.

After graduation he joined the Animal Breeding Research Organisation, becoming departmental head of physiological genetics and deputy director before retiring at the compulsory age of 60. Afterwards he enjoyed glittering consultancies for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and British Council. This took him to Ethiopia, India and China several times. The Chinese work centred on the yak and he became a great authority and textbook author on the subject. Accounts of extensive Chinese travel and relationships with the country's scientists are intriguing.

He first went to the USA in 1957, where he met family who survived the war after a very difficult time in Japanese-occupied Shanghai - the only place for which they could get visas. His parents had long parted, and his father Paul had spent time in a concentration camp before being freed to emigrate. Much to his later regret, Gerald had been dissuaded by Luise from responding to Paul, when he messaged via the Red Cross. Sadly he had died by the time Gerald visited, when he discovered he had two half-brothers, Pete and Jerry. It is wonderful to read about joyful family reunions but there was great sadness too.

Gerald and Margaret enjoyed a happy retirement. He took an active role in the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh and Biggar where he was a leading light in community heritage affairs. They moved to Inverness in 2008 to be near family. Margaret - herself a former head teacher and author of two novels - provides a very comprehensive and sympathetic account of Gerald's varied life and gift for friendship. The memoir is anchored by very helpful chapter headings.

*Janet Weston*

# My Story is on a run



Michael Ziff and Mark Regev admiring a My Story book at the Maccabi Fun Run



AJR volunteers at the Maccabi Fun Run

Israeli Ambassador Mark Regev sprinted over to AJR's stand at the Maccabi Communal Fun Run to have a look at the latest additions to our My Story book project. Regev was joined by

Maccabi GB President Michael Ziff, who was delighted to see a My Story book about Heinz Skyte, an AJR member who lives in Ziff's hometown of Leeds. Held in June at Allianz Park, London, the Fun Run

was a great way to meet members of the community and let them know about AJR, even if most of our members (and staff!) were not quite up to running around the stadium.

# Plaque at Belsize Square

Descendants of several founder members of Belsize Square Synagogue were present at the unveiling of an AJR Blue Plaque on 25 June.

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the synagogue, which was founded by refugees, the plaque recognises



Belsize Square blue plaque group of members and guests

the significance Belsize Square Synagogue has had for many AJR members. It continues today as a thriving progressive Jewish community blending modernity with tradition. Many of its members are children, grandchildren or great-grand-

children of the founders.

AJR continues to enjoy a close relationship with the synagogue, holding our annual Holocaust Memorial Day and Kristallnacht ceremonies there.

# COUNTERING DISTORTION

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is making countering distortion its priority for the next five years.

At the recent IHRA plenary meeting in Luxembourg, all 33 member states agreed to make sustained efforts

to identify and address any attempts to deny or distort the reality of the Holocaust.

AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman, who is part of the UK's delegation to the IHRA, said "Holocaust distortion and denial cuts across political, ideological and cultural divides and reinforces antisemitism and related biases. It is imperative that the AJR and other associated organisations work in partnership to ensure that the full truth about the Holocaust is widely



understood in perpetuity."

A summary report from the IHRA meeting, including links to a specially written paper on Holocaust distortion, can be seen at <https://sway.office.com/xUNxRwZJXTFT0vaf?ref=Link>.

# Around the AJR

These are just a few of the many recent AJR events around the country.



Bradford Continental Friends meeting

## BRADFORD

Bradford Continental Friends met at the lovely home of Lily and Albert Waxman and were treated to a wonderful lunch with champagne to celebrate the forthcoming 90th and 95th birthdays respectively of our hosts.

Wendy Bott

## PINNER

We were given a fascinating insight into the Stephen Lawrence case by Howard Youngerwood. He was the Crown Prosecution lawyer involved in that highly-charged case and also in the subsequent Macpherson Inquiry. His talk took us behind the scenes of the first trial and the inquiry and told us a lot about what actually happened in court.

Robert Gellman

## ILFORD

A well-researched talk by David Barnett, as always. Viscount Samuel (1870-1963) wore many hats over the years: Postmaster General, Cabinet Minister, but best remembered for being High Commissioner in Palestine, a position he carried out most efficiently. This was a very interesting piece of history, much appreciated by everyone.

Meta Roseoil



Our East Midlands group visited artist Ruth Schwiening in her studio

## EAST MIDLANDS

We met at the lovely Market Bosworth country home of artist Ruth Schwiening and her husband Jurgen. Meetings for this region are also held in Nottingham and Leicester, and we would love more people of 'shared' background to attend.

Wendy Bott

## AUGUST 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.

GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR	AUGUST	EVENT
Pinner	KAREN	1 August	Garden Party
Ealing	ROS	6 August	Elizabeth Nightingale – <i>Chiltern Music Therapy</i>
Edinburgh	AGNES	6 August	Esther Rantzen at the Festival and the Romanov Exhibition
Ilford	KAREN	7 August	Dr Helen Fry – <i>The Secret War of Trent Park – Bugging the Nazis in WW2</i>
Dundee	AGNES	7 August	Social get-together
Kingston and Surrey	ROS	8 August	Social get-together
Card and Games Club	ROS	12 August	Card & Games
Bradford	WENDY	12 August	Social get-together
Cheshire	WENDY	13 August	Judith Gordon – <i>How to build a school in South Africa</i>
KT Lunch	ROS	14 August	Social get-together – fish and chip lunch
Glasgow Book Club	AGNES	15 August	Book Club
Edgware	SUSAN	20 August	David Barnett – <i>Jewish London 1819</i>
Leeds	WENDY	21 August	Visit to Lavender Farm and talk
N.W. London	SUSAN	27 August	David Barnett – <i>Joe Lyons Corner Houses</i>
Hertfordshire	KAREN	28 August	Nick Dobson – <i>The Great Fire of London</i>
Book Club	KAREN	28 August	Book Club
Scotland KT Lunch	AGNES	28 August	Lunch for Kinder and their families

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## AJR CARD AND GAMES CLUB

Monday 12 August 2019 at 1.00pm

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

Offering Bridge & other card games, Backgammon, Scrabble & Rumikub, depending on numbers.

A light lunch will be served before playing commences

**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL** An entrance fee of £8 would be appreciated



# YOUTH ALIYAH - ONE FAMILY'S LEGACY

**German Jewry, like any society on and off stage and screen, had its stars.**

One such family came from Posemuckel - as good a name as any for obscurity. They dominated for a generation or two. Then people looked front and back, left and right, but they were no longer visible.

They were the Freier family. They began to attract some notice when Rabbi Dr. Moritz Freier was appointed to the pulpit of one of Berlin's oldest synagogues in the Heydereuter Gasse. Soon he was overshadowed by his wife Recha - a fact to which he never reconciled himself, because Recha founded an organisation which enriches Jewish life in Israel and the five continents of the earth to this day, the Youth Aliyah.

Its first objective in the 20th century was to pick up young people at a loose end in their late teens and early twenties and give them training in agriculture in model farms called Hachscharah. After a training period of six to eighteen months they were transferred to a country still called Palestine, there to build up



Children in a Youth Aliyah village in Israel

farms and model villages, which gives that country part of its backbone to this day.

So was vision transformed into achievement by the will of steel.

Two of Recha's sons, Amud and Serem, became doctors. Amud got a professorship of gynaecology and obstetrics in Boston, Massachusetts. Serem is one of Israel's leading paediatricians. The

oldest son, Shalhebet, is credited with overseeing the state of Israel's nuclear arsenal, which is believed to exist by every intelligence agency in the world and has never been officially admitted.

Together they wrote several pages of Jewish history. This history is but another word for immortality.

**Willy Wolff**

## WYBERLEY REMEMBERED

**The descendants of several Jewish girls who found refuge at a convalescent home in Sussex have helped unveil a commemorative information board near its site.**

Between 1 January and August 1939 Wyberley Ladies Convalescent Home in Burgess Hill, which was run by the Grand Order Sons of Jacob, took in 50 girls from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia, all of whom had arrived on a Kindertransport. By all accounts the girls were well looked after by Matron Hilda Joseph and her sister, Margaret, as well as by members of the Grand Order who paid for the girls' maintenance and

donated food and clothes.

The house, which had beautiful grounds, was demolished in 1956 so the information board has been installed nearby, at Marle Place Recreation Ground. Descendants of eight of the refugees attended its unveiling, along with local residents, dignitaries and community representatives.

AJR member Lesley Urbach, whose German mother and aunt were among the young residents of Wyberley, and who initiated the commemoration, spoke movingly about the experience of the girls at the event. She was supported by local Girl Guides and pupils from Burgess Hill Girls school who read out quotes from several of the women who spent time at Wyberley as girls.



Burgess Hill - the new information board

"On behalf of all the families whose relatives were looked after here, I would like to thank councillors and officers from Burgess Hill District Council for helping us ensure that this significant period of Burgess Hill's history is better known," said Lesley.

More information at [www.burgesshill.gov.uk/refugeechildren](http://www.burgesshill.gov.uk/refugeechildren)

# OBITUARIES

## BRONIA VEITCH (née Schütz)

**Born:** 9 January 1935, Berlin  
**Died:** 2 March 2019, W.Yorkshire



**Bronia Veitch was the third and youngest daughter of Josef and Beila Gittel Schütz, an orthodox Jewish couple who emigrated from Poland to Germany soon after WW1.**

Ten days before Kristallnacht our father was arrested by the Gestapo and deported back to Poland. He spent years in various ghettos and concentration camps, and was sent on the death march from Buchenwald to Bergen-Belsen where he finally perished in January 1945.

After his deportation, our mother was forced to hand our shop to a non-Jew and move into Berlin's Jewish quarter. In February 1939 my other sister Ruth and I were sent via Kindertransport to Belgium, to a girls' hostel run by the Belgian Jewish Refugee Committee.

Life in Berlin becoming precarious, my mother applied for a domestic visa to

England. In August 1939, on their way, she and Bronia spent two days with us. To her great distress, my mother was then told she could not take Bronia as the UK authorities did not permit her to be accompanied by a four year old.

Being too young for our hostel, Bronia was moved to several very poorly run orphanages and was deeply unhappy. In May 1940, four days after the Germans invaded Belgium, the Committee decided that the 50 girls in our hostel should try to escape to France. Although we had promised our mother to look after Bronia we had to leave without contacting her, and Bronia thus found herself totally alone, in a country at war. With the help of Belgian resistance fighters, on the brink of deportation to Auschwitz, Bronia was rescued by a wonderful Belgian couple, Henri and Gabrielle Ball, who, risking their own and their children's lives, passed Bronia off as an orphaned niece and obtained forged papers for her in the name of Brigitte Ball (Bronneke in Flemish).

In 1946 Bronia was brought to England by her foster father and reunited with our mother, although she found it difficult to settle back into a Jewish environment and missed her foster parents greatly. She persevered in her studies and obtained an honours degree in Sociology. She battled for freedom, against warfare and racial discrimination, was interested in the arts, literature and music.

Until a year before her death Bronia lectured about the Holocaust, and her story is included in Martin Gilbert's book *"The Righteous"*. She also self-published a book about the Belgian resistance and her own wartime experiences.

Bronia was buried in a green, non-denominational cemetery and the service was conducted by friend and fellow AJR member, Rudi Leavor. She is greatly missed by son Malcolm, daughter Bobby, four granddaughters and sister Betty.

*Betty Bloom*

## RUDI OPPENHEIMER

**Born:** 1 October 1931, Berlin  
**Died:** 13 May 2019, London

**Rudi Oppenheimer endured Bergen-Belsen and survived the Holocaust with his brother Paul, and sister Eve.**



In 1935 his parents had moved them to England to live with his aunt and uncle. But his father, a banker, was then transferred to Amsterdam where the family joined him in September 1936. Germany invaded in May 1940 and in June 1943 the family was taken to Westerbork where they stayed for seven months; before being sent to Bergen-Belsen. Paul was then 15, Rudi 12, and Eve 7 and the fact that Eve was born in Britain saved the Oppenheimer siblings' lives. They were classified as 'Exchange Jews' and sent to the *Sternlager*

('Star' camp), though they were equally subjected to forced labour. Both parents died of starvation and disease early in 1945.

Six days before the British Army reached Belsen, the 'Exchange Jews' were forced to travel over 500 miles around Germany on a two week journey with no destination. They survived by eating grass and raw potatoes scavenged when they were let off the trains to avoid air attacks. Rudi and Paul had typhus so became separated from Eve. A chance reunion enabled them to contact their family in London, Eve travelling first,

followed by Rudi and Paul six months later.

Eve worked in her uncle's glove business; she passed away in 2017. Paul studied engineering, working in the motor industry. He died in 2007.

Rudi also became an engineer. He studied at Imperial College London and graduated with a degree in electrical engineering; he worked for Shell Oil for 34 years.

In his retirement, Rudi spoke tirelessly to school groups about his life and the experiences of his family. The Oppenheimers' aim was to make the world a better place for future generations. As Rudi himself stated "Standing by and doing nothing is not enough."

*Condensed from an obituary published on the website of the National Holocaust Museum, Notts.*



**FILM CLUB**

**THE BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL**

on **MONDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2019**  
at **12.30pm**

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

**£8.00 donation per person**



British retirees (Maggie Smith, Judy Dench, Bill Nighy) travel to India to take up residence in what they believe is a newly restored hotel. Less luxurious than advertised, the Marigold Hotel nevertheless slowly begins to charm in unexpected ways.

**A delicious deli lunch will be served first**

**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL**  
– also advise if you need a taxi

Please RSVP to Ros Hart on 07966 969951 or email roshart@ajr.org.uk



Kindertransport



A special interest group of The Association of Jewish Refugees

**LUNCH**

on **Wednesday 14 August 2019**  
at **Alyth Gardens Synagogue**  
**12.30pm**

*This month our Kindertransport Lunch will be a social get-together*

*Come along for a delicious fish and chip lunch and a chance to catch up with friends old and new*

**!!!Schmooze and Food!!!**

We look forward to seeing you all.

**£7.00 per person**

**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL**

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

**JOIN US FOR A DAY TRIP TO THE SEASIDE**



Tuesday 13 August 2019

Coach Leaving Finchley Road and Edgware.

**Join us for a delicious Fish and Chip lunch and dessert on Southend sea front**

Then the opportunity to wander along the front, take in the sea air, and relax amongst friends.

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

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**North West London Lunch & Talk**

Tuesday 27 August 2019  
Alyth Gardens Synagogue  
12.30pm

We are delighted to welcome back

**DAVID BARNETT**

Speaking about the History of Joe Lyons, famous tea shops and corner houses



£8.00 per person to include a delicious deli lunch. Booking is essential.

Ros Hart on 07966 969 951 or email roshart@ajr.org.uk

[www.fishburnbooks.com](http://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  
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**VINTAGE TEA WHILST CRUISING THE THAMES**



**19 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Please join us for a riverboat trip with commentary and vintage tea on The Thames from Henley

Coach pick-ups in Edgware and Finchley Road

Contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or susan@ajr.org.uk for details and to book.

# MAZELTOV

We congratulate the following AJR members, who have each received prominent awards



## HELENA ARONSON BEM

**Helena Aronson was recently presented with a BEM for Services to Holocaust Education.**

Helena, who was one of three Holocaust survivors receiving this award during the 5 May ceremony, was born in 1927 in the small Polish village of Pabianice. She spent most of the war in various ghettos, being one of only 750 Jews to survive

the Łódź ghetto. She came to England in 1946 and, apart from a seven year stint in Lagos, Nigeria, has lived in London ever since.

Both Helena's daughters and one of her grandsons accompanied her to the Tower of London, where the medal was presented to her by The Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE.

## The ELIE WIESEL Award

Peter and Marianne Summerfield have received the Elie Wiesel Award from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Washington - the Museum's highest honour - in recognition of their tireless work in Holocaust education, both in the UK and the USA.



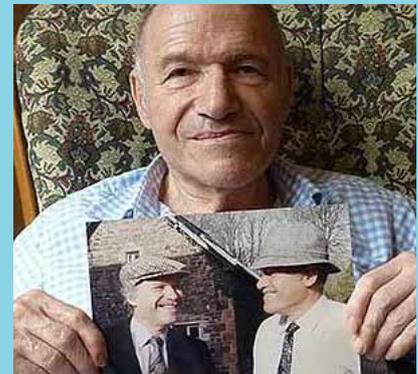
## Twin honours for Lands

Frank Land, who started his career as a young programmer on LEO, the world's first business computer, received an OBE for services to the Information Systems Industry in the June 2019 Honours List.

Frank and his identical twin brother, Ralph, were born in Berlin in 1928. Their parents, Louis and Sofia (née Weinberger), were well assimilated but grew increasingly uneasy as Jewish restrictions came into force. The family were met by Sofia's relatives in London,

then taken to Kilburn, where the boys attended Essendene elementary school, which was evacuated during the war.

Returning to London, the twins supported each other through Willesden County Grammar School and the London School of Economics, graduating in Economics in 1950 with almost identical marks. They were both then employed by Britain's largest catering company J. Lyons & Co. in the Systems Programming Team of LEO (Lyons Electronic Office). Ralph became their European Manager and established the LEO brand in Eastern Europe before Lyons sold LEO Computers Ltd. to English Electric in 1961. Frank left in 1967 to teach Systems Analysis at the LSE. He successfully built up the department, and then resigned in 1985 to become Professor of Information Management at the London Business School before returning to the LSE, where he



became Emeritus Professor.

Frank met his British-born wife Ailsa (née Dicken) at the LSE in 1950, where she became Professor of Operational Research. Frank remains actively involved via the LEO Computers Society. Ralph, who was awarded an OBE in 1996 for Export Services, is also still involved, and at 90 years old the twins are as close as ever.

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For the latest AJR news, including details of forthcoming events and information about our services, visit [www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk)

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