



## What We Forgot on Holocaust Memorial Day (cont.)

News devoted an entire issue, guest edited by an AJR staff member. But no one did more to draw attention to HMD than the BBC. Its coverage included *My Family, The Holocaust and Me* (BBC One) with Robert Rinder; a moving drama, *The Windermere Children* (BBC Two), about child survivors who came to England after the war, superbly directed by Michael Samuels and a related programme, *The Windermere Children: In Their Own Words* (BBC Four); *Confronting Holocaust Denial With David Baddiel* (BBC Two) about the history and modern face of Holocaust denial; a powerful documentary, *Belsen: Our Story* (BBC Two); and *Words and Music: Commemorating The Liberation Of Auschwitz* (Radio 3). BBC iPlayer showed films including *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, The Hungarian film, *Son of Saul*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

This was the BBC at its best: quantity and quality, programmes with well-known figures like David Baddiel and Robert Rinder and little-known stories like the pioneering attempt by psychologists to help a group of child survivors in the Autumn of 1945 recover from their experiences of trauma and loss.

However, there were disturbing gaps. Curiously, there was nothing about the liberation of Auschwitz itself, the central focus of HMD 2020. This might have raised important questions about how the Soviet occupation of central and east Europe, especially Poland, profoundly affected the way we remembered (or misremembered) the Holocaust during the Cold War. For almost half a century, the death camps in Poland and numerous killing sites in the huge region that the historian Timothy Snyder called "The Bloodlands", were out of sight and out of mind for many in the West.

This was part of a larger omission. There was little attempt to place the Holocaust in the context of central and east Europe and the former Soviet Union, either in the politics of the 1930s, issues of collaboration in the countries where most of the killing actually happened, and the politics of Holocaust remembrance behind the Iron Curtain.

That is why Belsen was a curious choice for a documentary. It is well known here because it was liberated by the British and because

of the newsreels and report by Richard Dimbleby, which dominated British views of the Holocaust for decades, so that many thought of Holocaust victims as skeletal bodies, ravaged by typhus and dysentery.

But this was misleading and unrepresentative. So many of those killed in the camps were killed within minutes of arrival at Treblinka, Auschwitz or Chelmno. Many others were shot in woods and pits during the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Villages and small towns were cleansed in hours with no time for people to starve or catch disease.

Then there is the question of the victims at Auschwitz. Jews, of course, but also non-Jewish Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, Romani and gays, the mentally ill and physically handicapped. Of course, it is important to remember the Jewish victims of the Holocaust but also others too.

One of the problems with Holocaust Memorial Day was that it was always conceived as being about other kinds of genocide, Rwanda and Bosnia, in particular, which were so resonant in 2001 when Holocaust Memorial Day was first held. HMD 2020 was meant to mark not just the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau but also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the slaughter of so many Muslims in Bosnia. There was almost no coverage of this in January. It was one of the most worrying omissions of the coverage of HMD 2020.

This raises a larger question about much of the coverage of HMD 2020. So little of it was historical. Most of it was about testimony and too often about redemption. Some of it was sentimental. Little of it was original either, compared, say, to James Kent's astonishing music documentary, *Holocaust: A Music Memorial Film from Auschwitz*, shown on Holocaust Memorial Day in 2004. I have nothing against David Baddiel or Robert Rinder, but where were the historians? It was curious that the BBC didn't repeat Laurence Rees's acclaimed documentary series, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and 'The Final Solution'* (2005), or at least make it available on BBC iPlayer.

Baddiel's programme on Holocaust denial raises another question. Britain has changed dramatically since the first Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001. The last few years have seen a furious debate about British antisemitism, especially within the Labour

Party under Jeremy Corbyn. As I write, two local councilors have been accused of antisemitism and members of the Labour Shadow Cabinet running to succeed Corbyn are keeping their heads down about what they said, or didn't say, about the rise of Left-wing antisemitism. These are burning issues that the media needs to cover properly.

How do we explain the rise of antisemitism, anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial at the very moment so many resources are being poured into Holocaust education and commemoration? Oddly, it was during the decades of silence that antisemitism declined, after a brief resurgence during the late 1940s, only to revive in the past few years. Now it is back here, in Europe and in America.

Much of this has to do with Israel. Unfortunately for the BBC, one line about Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories by its reporter Orla Guerin, during her report for *The Ten O'Clock News* received far more attention on social media than all the hours of programming to mark HMD 2020.

Commemoration is not just about redemption and testimony. It is about history, politics, asking difficult questions about the past and present. What's the point of saying that you are going to focus on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Auschwitz or the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the killings at Srebrenica, if you don't?

Finally, Gabriel Jospovici's new book, *Forgetting* (published in January), raised fascinating questions about public memory and how we commemorate the past. In my opinion HMD 2020 was about silence and omissions as much as it was about memory and we need to face up to this. I am full of admiration for the BBC and for the Holocaust Educational Trust but there are a few uncomfortable lessons to be drawn from HMD 2020.

**David Herman**



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## FIRST UK STONE

**The UK will have its first Stolperstein installed this summer as a result of a crowdfunding initiative led by Oxford University Fellow, Morwenna Blewett, who works at the Ashmolean Museum.**

The stone will be laid outside an address in Golden Square in memory of Ada Van Dantzig, a Dutch paintings conservator. Ada worked with National Gallery Consultant Restorer, Helmut Ruhemann CBE, at his private studio in Golden Square, Soho, sometime between 1934-39.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Ada left London and travelled back to the Netherlands. Despite pleas from her friends and colleagues to stay in London Ada rejoined her family in Rotterdam who were preparing to escape to Switzerland. As the British government further limited immigration in 1938 and 1939, coming

to the UK was probably not possible for the rest of the family. They left Rotterdam in early 1943. They were arrested in France - her mother, father, sister Jenny and brother Paul. On 11th February 1943 Ada was deported from the transit camp Drancy to Auschwitz. She was murdered on the 14th of February 1943. Her parents were murdered on the same day. Her sister Jenny had been murdered on the 1st of February 1943. Her brother Paul was murdered on the 30th April, 1943. Her youngest brother, Hugo, was able to escape to Switzerland with his uncle, aunt and their two children.

Morwenna, a paintings conservator herself, has been researching the impact of the Second World War on conservation and discovered the link between Ada, Ruhemann and other émigré, refugee and British restorers who were all working under Ruhemann at this time.

Delighted with the response to the crowd



Ada Van Dantzig

funding campaign Morwenna Blewett said "Thanks to everyone for making this possible. This is an amazing response and we are now able to proceed with laying the stone for Ada in early summer this year."

## YOUNG FRENCH IGNORANT

**The Claims Conference has published the results of a comprehensive national study of Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in France, which reveals critical gaps in the knowledge of many young people.**

Despite the fact that France is a country

where the Holocaust took place, 25 percent of its younger generation – including Millennials (generally, those born 1981 – 1996) and Gen Z (those born after 1996) – have not heard, or don't think they have heard, about the Holocaust. Almost a quarter of them - and 10 percent of all French respondents - believe that the Holocaust is a myth or has been greatly exaggerated. A further half of French Millennials and Gen Z believe two million Jews or fewer were murdered during the Holocaust.

Particularly worrying were the statistics that half of all French people believe that something like the Holocaust could happen in other European countries today, while 85% believe there is antisemitism in France today. And twice as many Millennials (20 percent vs. 10 percent of all French respondents) feel it is acceptable for an individual to hold antisemitic views.

The full report can be viewed on: [www.claimscon.org/france-study/](http://www.claimscon.org/france-study/)

## ENQUIRIES RISE

The number of inquiries submitted to the Arolsen Archives rose by 10 percent last year.

Around 350,000 people from all over the world have used the online archive of the Arolsen Archives since it was launched in May 2019.

Registration cards for 1.7 million people were added to the online archive on 27 January, bringing the total volume of documents available online to over 15 million.

Access the archive at: <https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/search/>

## Kinder to Vienna

The Jewish Museum in Vienna is launching an exhibition on Tuesday 19 May on the Kindertransport, and in particular on those Kinder who originally came from Vienna.

Please contact the AJR's Susan Harrod on [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk) or 020 8385 3070 if you are interested in attending the opening event. If there is sufficient interest, we may be able to organise a group trip to travel together.

# In my head I am Continental

**“Now we’re older we seem to talk about food; we used to talk about sex,” the Vienna-born Marlene Hobsbawm, née Schwarz, observed at a dinner party. She was sitting next to the Berlin-born literary and film critic Gabriele Annan, née Ullstein, and later Lady Annan. ‘Gaby’ replied: “Marlene, think of the varieties. Take spaghetti alone.... alle vongole, al pomodoro, all’amatriciana, all’arrabiata, Bolognese ....”**

Marlene recounts the amusing anecdote in her recently published memoirs, *Meet Me in Buenos Aires*. She thinks her remark was completely out of character. That cannot mean she has no sense of humour. When I visited her recently, at her apartment in North London, she reminded me of an equally witty remark that Gaby’s husband, the Cambridge academic Noel Annan, made in conversation with Marlene’s late husband, the eminent left-wing historian Eric Hobsbawm, who died in 2012, aged 95: “You are a member of the comintern, I was in the homintern” - a reference to the ‘Cambridge Five’ spy ring: Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt were gay, while a third, Donald MacLean, was bisexual.

For over fifty years, Marlene was the partner of a world-famous scholar: Eric’s books have been translated into numerous languages. But she was more than that, she insists, and a couple of years ago, at the ripe age of 85, she resolved to tell the world, and especially her grandchildren, that she has had a life of her own. And indeed, a full life it has been: she has raised two children, travelled widely and encountered numerous leading representatives of what she calls the ‘intelligentsia’ – from the Annans and the conductor Riccardo Muti to writers such as Claire Tomalin and Michael Frayn, to name but a few.

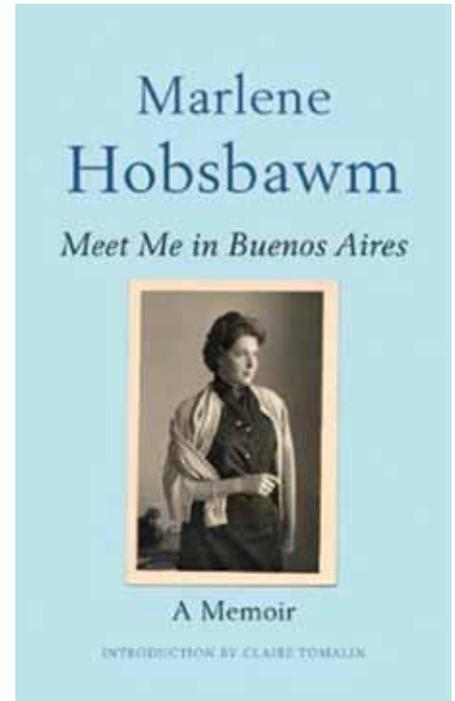
Marlene has come a long way since she spent her earliest years in the higher, smarter part of Döbling, a kind of Hampstead, hilly and green, in Vienna’s

north-west, popular among wealthy Jewish families. Marlene’s parents, Theodore and Lilly Schwarz, employed a nanny and a maid and, though mindful of their Jewish roots, did not consider themselves religious. While they associated mainly with other Jewish families, ‘mixed’ marriages were becoming more common.

Theodore Schwarz was a businessman, importing high-quality poplin and other textiles from Manchester, and distributing them throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He had what was then the *Manchester Guardian* delivered every day. When he was away on business, Lilly kept the copies for his return. Well informed on current affairs, and with business contacts in Britain, Marlene’s father resolved to emigrate in 1937, before Hitler annexed Austria. He believed Hitler would carry out his plans. Marlene recalls how her brother Walter, later a distinguished foreign correspondent for *The Guardian*, “had nothing but praise for our dad, who had the wisdom to get us away in comfort and ease when it was still possible to do so.”

Among the practical arrangements he made was to engage an English girl, who was studying singing in Vienna, to teach English to Marlene’s mother and her two elder brothers. Jennifer Church adored everything Austrian; instead of leaving with Marlene’s family, she stayed on and started helping Jews to settle in Britain. She was ultimately arrested and spent the war years in an Austrian jail.

But the Schwarzes’ non-Jewish Austrian



Marlene Hobsbawm’s autobiography

maid Dely accompanied them. They first settled in a mansion block in Hammersmith, but moved to Manchester after the failure of a business venture that involved the production of artificial marble. Theodore went back to textiles, this time exporting them. The family rented a house in Didsbury and had their furniture brought over. With war approaching, they persuaded a reluctant Dely to leave Britain; she ended up having a terrible time in war-torn Berlin.

As a small child, Marlene was confused about her identity, and refused to speak English for a while. To avoid the Blitz, Marlene was sent to a foster family in Uttoxeter; ironically, she came back to Manchester just as the bombs began to fall. Then, aged nine, she found herself in a Quaker boarding school in Cumberland; she remembers the “lovely long walks” in the beautiful Cumbrian countryside on Sundays, to and from church. But for Marlene it was “the worst idea ever.” The unhappy girl wrote to her parents, ‘I can’t bare it’ (sic) and ran away. She returned to Manchester High School for Girls.

At not yet seventeen, Marlene left home for Paris, where she studied at the Alliance Française for two years and worked as an au pair. It was the beginning of an eventful adult life. Looking back, she says “I feel totally integrated, and loyal to Britain, but in my head I am a Continental woman.”

**Martin Mauthner**

# Standing Together

We would like to thank all our AJR members who took part in various Holocaust Memorial Day events and activities around the country this January. It was both inspiring and touching to hear and witness their invaluable contributions.

## National HMD services

AJR's own HMD service was held at Belsize Square Synagogue and attended by members, friends and notable guests from the Israeli, German and Austrian embassies. AJR's CEO Michael Newman said, "As we mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz we Stand Together in memory of those who perished and to combat antisemitism and to support learning and teaching about the Holocaust."

Auschwitz survivors Frank Bright and Zigi Shipper BEM spoke about their experiences in the infamous concentration camp and the importance of testimony and sharing history with future generations.

At Central Hall in Westminster, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge joined survivors, including AJR member Ernest Simon BEM, to light candles at an International Holocaust Memorial Day event.

## Scotland

Commemorative events were held at the Scottish Parliament where the key speaker was AJR's Janine Webber BEM. Amongst other events in Scotland Glasgow University held its 20<sup>th</sup> annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture attended by more than 400 people, including a number of AJR members, while Judy Russell – the daughter of Ernest

Levy OBE – shared details of her father's experiences of Nazi captivity with guests at Inverness's magnificently restored Town House

## England

AJR members were well represented at events throughout the country. In the North of England, for example, member Abraham Pawlowski was the guest of honour in Prestwich, while in Salford Robbie Gontarz told the story of his father Sam who had been invited to speak, but sadly passed away in December. In Bradford it was wonderful to watch and hear Muslim schoolchildren honour our members and show true sadness and empathy, and Ruth Lachs shared her story in Stockport.

## Media activity

As well as taking part in and speaking at commemorative events AJR members were also very involved in a number of media activities building up to Holocaust Memorial Day. Between them they gave countless interviews for radio, television and print.

AJR's Debra Barnes, who runs our *My Story* and *Second-Generation* projects, was one of the guest editors for a special commemorative edition of *The Jewish News*. This can be seen at [HTTPS://ISSUU.COM/JEWISHNEWSUK/DOCS/1142\\_HMD](https://issuu.com/jewishnewsuk/docs/1142_hmd)

## Exhibitions

AJR sponsored a *Stand Together* week of exhibitions and talks marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. As part of these event, Dr Bea Lewkowicz who runs our Refugee Voices Testimony Archive attended an HMD event hosted by the Lord Mayor of Westminster. The Kinder Exhibition was exhibited at both South Hampstead Synagogue and Westminster City Hall.



Hella Pick CBE and AJR's Bea Lewkowicz at an HMD event hosted by the Lord Mayor of Westminster



Bert and Elaine Vulkan and Charles and Irene Drecksler at an HMD event in Scotland



Jane Banham, an AJR volunteer who works on our *My Story* project, shared excerpts from Mary Green's book



Speakers and candle lighters who took part in AJR's commemorative service

AJR member Judy Russell took part in an HMD event in Inverness's newly restored Town House



Member Frank Bright addressing guests at AJR's own HMD commemoration service



# 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.

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Holocaust Memorial Day leads me to raise the question of just who is a Holocaust survivor.

I've always assumed that Holocaust survivors were people (including non-Jews) who, despite being incarcerated in one of the Nazi camps, somehow or other managed to survive. On looking at Wikipedia I was surprised to read that the definition used by Yad Vashem is quite different. It is both broader and narrower. It is: 'Jews who lived under Nazi control whether direct or indirect, for any amount of time and survived.' This definition is also narrower because it excludes all non-Jews who were nevertheless also incarcerated in the camps.

The United States Holocaust Museum gives a much broader definition still. 'Survivors (are) any persons to include persons Jewish or non-Jewish, who were displaced, persecuted, or discriminated against due to the racial, religious, ethnic, social, and political policies of the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945'. In addition to former inmates of concentration camps, ghettos, and prisons, this definition includes, among others, people who were refugees or were in hiding.

People who fled from the Nazis but were never incarcerated in the camps (like myself and my family) clearly underwent a variety of hardships, some suffering serious trauma, while others had an easier time. To be sure we are all, of course, refugees who fled Hitler but are we really also Holocaust survivors? I need to ask whether it dishonours those who survived the horrors of the camps to group us all together as the Yad Vashem and United States Holocaust Museum definitions do. Personally, I think it does but I would be interested to hear from other readers whether they share my opinion.

*Peter Seglow, London NW3*

Since 2001 the UK has held a Holocaust Memorial Day. This year's theme is '*Stand Together*'. Last year's was '*Torn from Home*'.

Am I alone in finding it offensive that remembrance of the Shoah is perceived to need a theme?

*Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove*

This year's slogan '*Stand Together*' deserves special support, and for us it should raise a question as to whether we should reduce our emphasis on antisemitism, and cause us to throw our weight into the struggle against racism. Does it need to be more strongly stressed that antisemitism is but one aspect of racism, and that victims should stand together - and do so more publicly? Can - should - the AJR be in the forefront of this struggle?

Working in race relations, I started wearing a Magen David necklace in the days of Malcolm X, to show what I was and where I stood. But I am aware - which one of us isn't - of some of our fellows mouthing ignorant and/or prejudicial generalisations about other ethnic groups. I think public utterances have got better, but better should not be good enough. In shul or in pub, let us make it clear that racial prejudice is unacceptable, intolerable and has to be stopped.

We are entitled to ask the HMD Trust to consider its own position. Public funding imposes certain constraints but, must the slaughter of 1.5m Armenians, and many thousands of Turkish Syrians, Christians, and Kurds be passed over in silence, because the Turkish government denies history and we are concerned about relations with Ankara? Can the Trust please be brave and practice what it preaches?

*Francis Deutsch, Ilford*

## EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Kathy Cohen's wish (Letters, February 2020) to involve exhibitions in centres other than London was fulfilled on 2 February when I opened a photographic exhibition in Bradford's Cartwright Hall of almost 100 black and white photographs of the buildings of both Synagogues, (the Orthodox one having been sold

and demolished since) and worshippers, all taken by a local Muslim lady, Nudrat Afza.

*Rudi Leavor BEM, Bradford*

## REACHING THE WORLD

Your regular readers may recall that in January 2019 you published my letter offering to share my mother's cake recipes with other readers.

Thanks to AJR my mother's recipe for chocolate cake has now made its mark as far away as ECUADOR! I received a letter from Alberto Dorfzaun in which he writes: "The chocolate recipes of your Mother are great. I am on the board of directors in a chocolate company which is partially owned by Valrohna - the best chocolate from Ecuador. The cakes came out delicious!!!"

*Peter Briess, London NW3*

## MY CHAMPION

Chelsea Football Club, owned by Roman Abramovich, is fighting antisemitism very actively. They are working together with Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Jewish Museum and other relevant organisations. A group of representatives from the club attends the annual March of the Living and the club takes supporters on an educational visit to Auschwitz. The club is partnering with British-Israeli artist Solomon Souza, to have a mural on the stadium to commemorate the Holocaust. This is paid for by Roman Abramovich. Among the Premier League football clubs, Chelsea is by far the most active in the fight against antisemitism.

Abramovich also made a large donation to the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Galleries and recently gave \$5 million to the Jewish Agency. Together with the RAF Museum he is financing *The Hidden Heroes Project* about Jews in the RAF during WW2.

Besides being a major benefactor to Jewish causes, for eight years he was governor

of the distant and backward territory called Chukotka, where he was virtually worshipped because he paid for major infrastructure projects. He is known to be the most generous philanthropist in Russia. It is our country's loss that he is prohibited from coming to England. Very, very counterproductive.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath

**ERRATUM**

Max Klein wishes to point out that in his recent letter (*Where are They Now?*, December 2019) he overstated Berlin's share of Germany's Jewish population in 1933, at 40% rather than the actual 32%. Likewise, the 6.5% figure (relating to Frankfurt) should have been 5.1%. Not taking account of Germany's sizeable (100,000) population of non-German Jews accounts for the difference.

# LOOKING FOR?

The AJR regularly receives messages from our members and others looking for people or for help in particular subjects. Here are some of the most recent requests – please get in touch directly with the person concerned if you can help.

**KINDERTRANSPORT REFUGEES**

Maria Jäger, a German PhD student, is researching the topic of the Kindertransports. She focuses on the social and psychological long-term consequences the Kindertransports had for the Kinder. She would like to hear from anyone who came to Great Britain on a Kindertransport. Also, children of the "Kinder" are possible interview partners.

[Maria.Jaeger@ruhr-uni-bochum.de'](mailto:Maria.Jaeger@ruhr-uni-bochum.de)

**EVELINE KONIG**

Richard Owen has a letter dated 31/12/39 from Filipp Konig in Vienna. With it is a photograph of his daughter Eveline. He wanted his daughter protected in the UK whilst he prepared his family for a new life in USA. Any information concerning Eveline would be much appreciated.

[richardahowen@gmail.com](mailto:richardahowen@gmail.com)

**HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS**

University of Bath undergraduate Kerri Braham is researching the impact the Holocaust had on survivors' religious faith and would like to interview any Jewish survivors who experienced radical changes in regards to their personal religion before, during and after the Holocaust.

[kb676@bath.ac.uk](mailto:kb676@bath.ac.uk)

**IMRE TREITEL and/or STEVEN FEJER**

Tom Horvath Neumann is researching the history of CR Braybrooke & Co., and Biro Foods, whose proprietors were the late Mr. Treitel and Mr. Fejer respectively. They imported Hungarian foods to the UK, and Tom hopes to write the history of the businesses, whose legacy he continues today.

[tom@estom.co.uk](mailto:tom@estom.co.uk)



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# Buzz around 2G Forum

**World class speakers are lining up for the AJR's International Forum on the Second Generation this April.**

It's 24 years since keynote speaker Anne Karpf published her seminal work *The War After – Living with the Holocaust* and we look forward to hearing if her views have changed in the intervening years. Panelists including Daniel Finkelstein OBE will discuss reclaiming their Jewish identity encompassing the trend among some British Jews to seek the citizenship of their forebears. We'll hear the stories behind artefacts donated to Jewish museums and centres from the curators and archivists, and from the donors themselves.

Other subjects to be discussed will be the role of the Second Generation in keeping the stories alive and their role in running membership groups, when we will welcome Melissa Hacker, President of the Kindertransport Association of America. A number of prominent Second Generation artists, including Caroline Pick, Monica Petzel and Julie Held, will talk about how their family legacy influences their work. AJR Journal contributing editor David

AJR's 2G Forum will be held at Stamford Bridge, the home of Chelsea FC



Herman will chair a discussion of Second Generation authors who have written about the Holocaust and related subjects.

Barbara Winton will meet with a few of the children of the 669 Czech Jewish children who owed their rescue to her father, Sir Nicholas Winton, to discuss how they take forward the legacy and memory of their parents. To mark the anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, Dr Bea Lewkowicz, director of AJR's Refugee Voices, will talk to Second Generation of survivors of Belsen including Hephzibah Rudofsky, daughter of Lady Zahava Kohn and Hilary Solomon, daughter of our own editorial assistant, Lilian Levy.

**Remembering & Rethinking: the international forum on the Second Generation** will take place on 21 & 22 April 2020 at Stamford Bridge, London, in partnership with Chelsea Foundation. The full programme and ticket information is available on the AJR website. Sessions will explore a range of different issues around what it means to be Second Generation and the future of Holocaust remembrance. Topics will include psychology, identity, genealogy, legacy and memorialisation. This forum will be of interest to members of the Second Generation and their families, educators, academics and anyone with an interest in educating about and commemorating the Holocaust.

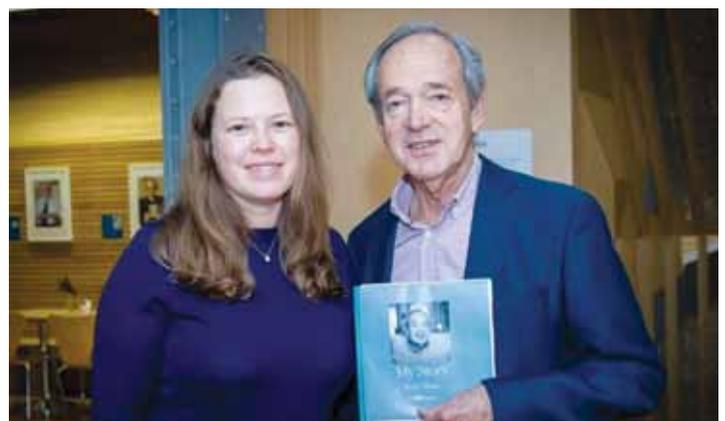
## My Story online

AJR's new *My Story* book project website currently features the life stories of 16 of our members.

AJR Head of Volunteer Services Carol Hart said, "I am thrilled that through this new website *My Story* will reach a wider audience. These books contain valuable testimony as well as illustrating how camp survivors and refugees from Nazi persecution were able to come to the UK and rebuild their lives. The project is on-going; we now have four coordinators covering most of the UK and will continue to add more books to the website on a regular basis."

AJR member Ivan Shaw said, "I was delighted to take part in *My Story*. I

AJR volunteer Lisa Bayfield who worked with Ivan Shaw on his *My Story* book



had been planning to write my own story but I never got around to it. My friends and family were very supportive and pleased with the book. My children and grandchildren especially so."

Chief Executive Michael Newman said, "My Story is a valuable resource to support AJR's commitment to Holocaust

commemoration, teaching and learning. We continue to interview members and search for opportunities to partner with educational institutions to promote the collection, and I am delighted that these books will now be available to people all over the world via our website."

[www.ajrmystory.org.uk](http://www.ajrmystory.org.uk)

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Pablo Picasso, *Femmes à leur toilette*,  
Paris, winter 1937–38  
© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée national  
Picasso-Paris) / Adrien Didierjean

A virtual workbook of Picasso's artistic development is presented in the Royal Academy exhibition, *Picasso and Paper*. It comprises all the years of his relationship with materials, from his eight year old's cut-outs of a dog and a pigeon, to his Blue period, his Rose period, his Neo Classicism, his Cubism, his Symbolism. Yet throughout it all – as TS Eliot would say: the skull is always there beneath the flesh.



Like most great artists Picasso never left his childhood behind. His revelations are acute and playful. Yet all his manipulation of paper, political squiggles on newsprint, wallpaper, card, showed this magical artist to be a serious student of human psychology and emotional reach. Working in Paris during the Nazi occupation when art supplies were limited, he tore up paper tablecloths to draw on. Many such squiggles and cartoons would eventually lead to some of his greatest works. Cut and pasted papers were key to the evolution of Cubism, and opened up experiments until then regarded as beyond the realm of fine art.

Picasso was an expansive thinker; through frivolity, sexuality or self-analysis he used Greek myths like the minotaur, (the bull masquerading as his own sexual self), emerging from the significance of bullfighting deep in Spanish culture. But the RA's emphasis on his relationship with paper hides the bigger picture – the artist as inventor and historian of his personal odyssey into modern art. We see his ability to change, re-form and challenge himself, no matter what phase he is in.

Picasso had wives, mistresses and muses galore; Marie Thérèse, Françoise, Jaqueline, Olga and Dora Marr who

becomes the weeping woman in works culminating in his famous anti-war masterpiece, *Guernica* for which from 1937, he abandoned his aversion to politics in art. But rather than attack, Picasso evokes the anguish war causes to humans and animals. A monochrome sketch of *Guernica* reveals one long visceral scream: horses, a bull and prone figures with outstretched hands.

His 1938 ink, gouache and coloured chalk portrait, *Dora, Seated Woman*, is typical of his analytical approach, breaking her down into squares, cubes and circles as though she were on a therapist's couch. But his more realistic portrait of Dora in profile is both more sympathetic and naturalistic. And then again you have his lurid and sexual *Dora and the Minotaur*. Elsewhere many portraits share their author's powerful dark eyes and haunted expressions, as though in some way they are self-portraits. The mesmerising gouache, pen and ink, *Jaqueline in the Studio*, shares this deeply troubled look.

We do not at first associate Picasso with Old Testament themes: but his drypoint, aquatint print *David, Bathsheba and the Prophet Nathan* is a majestic work focusing on a sensual, bare-breasted Bathsheba. His 1920s neoclassical period is equally fascinating. I loved the red

chalk and charcoal drawing of a blonde woman looking down with one hand turned towards us, a nod to Greek classicism. Similarly his rather puritan *Girl in a Hat with her Hands Clasped*, whose face again resembles his own. *The Village Dance*, shows an awkward couple trying to share an intimate moment.

Finally a film showing Picasso at work, *The Mystery of Picasso*, made in 1956 by Henri-Georges Clouzot, shows him drawing feverishly against the clock, while a pipe smoking, nervous Clouzot counts the seconds on each roll of film. A bare-chested Picasso draws a fish which morphs into a chicken and then a face. His huge brown eyes are fixed on the work at hand and you can feel the tension in the studio as he begins his race against the clock. Sheer magic!

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# LIVES IN FOCUS

## An Interview with Lili Pohlmann

This is the second of a series of interview profiles from the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Lili Pohlmann was interviewed by Dr Bea Lewkowicz.

**Lili was born Lili Stern in Lvov in 1930 where her maternal grandparents lived, but grew up in Krakow with her parents and brother Uriel. Her father, Filip Stern, was a bank manager and her mother, Cecylia Stern, a dress designer. Fearing the German invasion, they moved to Lvov in August 1939. The German army invaded Lvov in 1941. In 1942, her brother and father were taken to Belzec extermination camp, while Lili, her mother, and her grandparents had to move to the ghetto. Here she describes how she escaped from the ghetto to be taken in by a German civil servant, Irmgard Wieth, who hid Lili, her mother, and another Jewish couple in her flat in Lvov. In 1946 Lili came to the UK on the first of three transports of Jewish children brought over from Poland by Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld. In 1966 Irmgard Wieth received the honour of Righteous Among the Nations from Yad Vashem.**

My mother was working because it was compulsory. She worked for a German institution which requisitioned apartments for the German SS and police. It was called *Wohnungsamt* [housing department]. I stayed with my grandparents while she went with a group in and out of the ghetto.

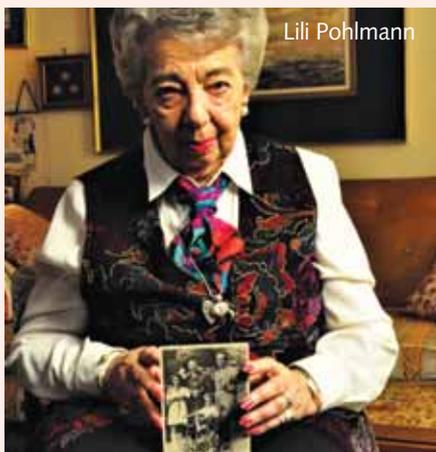
There was nothing to eat. Nothing. There were also horrendous things happening in the ghetto. One was witness to all sorts of horrors. My grandmother somehow managed to scrounge frozen potatoes or things to make something out of. And that's how it was until 18 November 1942. A few days before my mother had said to my grandmother: "There are three sisters begging me to make something for them. They said nobody else can do that for them. I keep telling them that it is very, very dangerous. I must not stay in town and it's dangerous for them and for me. But they tell me 'Nobody will know. It's just one night, that's all you need.'" So, on 18 November she told us, "Don't worry if I'm not back. I am staying for the night and I'll come back the next day."

But that evening rumours started spreading in the ghetto. Everybody was distraught. "What's happening?" we asked. "They're closing all the entrances and exits from the ghetto. Only those who work for the Army and the war industry can go in and out. Anybody else will be taken away into extermination camp," was the rumour. There was my mother on the other side. So, of course, my grandparents were desperate, and we all went down under the floorboards to the cellar. It was freezing. I was in my pyjamas and just a little sweater and slippers. And I was thinking, "Right. I have to escape because I've got to go and prevent my mother from coming back. But I cannot say anything to my grandparents, because they won't let me. So I'll have to wait until everybody is asleep... and I'll try to get

myself up so nobody can hear or see me, and escape from the ghetto."

Now, that wasn't such a simple thing. But I decided I would do that. And I waited and waited. Then I'm getting out of this bunk and going up the ladder and lifting the floorboards so it shouldn't squeak and wake anyone. But I did it. And it was in an eerie place. Not a sound anywhere, dark, black, the moon - full. The snow, virgin. I started walking in my pyjamas and my slippers and the snow was up to here. We lived opposite a railway embankment so I had to climb that to reach the Aryan side of the ghetto. I manage. I get on to the top. It's freezing but no matter. But as I was high up on the rail track, suddenly dogs begin to bark terribly. And shots all around me. I fell and I'm lying down with my face in the snow.

I wasn't wounded but I was thinking, "Any moment they'll come and kill me." After a little while the shots stopped, and the dogs stopped barking. I'm lying there, and I don't know what to do. I don't want to go back, because I need to go and prevent my mother coming back to the ghetto. So, after a while, I started rolling down like a snowball to the other side. Nobody was shooting and the dogs weren't barking - they probably thought I'm dead. I started walking. That street is the longest street in Lvov, and it has no side-streets. You just have to walk. Halfway down, on both sides of the street, were some kind of barracks. I knew there were soldiers standing on both sides but I had no escape. I either had to go back or continue. So I continued. I thought "If they shoot me, they shoot me. What can I do?" I walked. I come to a soldier standing guard. He doesn't see me. I walk past. The other one on the other side. Now I passed him. I was convinced he's going to shoot me from the back. But they didn't! Nothing! Isn't that amazing?



Lili Pohlmann

I walked and walked until I came to a tram station. And put myself into a tram which was going not far from where my mother was. It was standing empty, waiting for the morning. I sat in a corner and then - I don't know how long it took - workmen started coming in, one after another. Some look this way, some don't, so I sit there in the corner and the tram gets completely full. And by this time, many people have seen me. Then comes the conductor who sees me, and I don't know what they're going to do with me. The tram started. Nobody did a thing. Nobody said a word to me. They all looked away. I got off the nearest possible place to where my mother was.

It was very early, with curfew until seven o'clock. I had to walk and pray to God that some guardsman or other doesn't see me until I get to my mother. I come to where she was, and the main door is still closed. I had to wait somewhere - God knows where, I forget now - until the caretaker opened. And then I came up and rang the bell and they thought it was the Gestapo, because who rings the bell at seven o'clock in the morning? They were all frightened, thinking they should put my mother away. The bell rings and my mother stood there, and she couldn't believe what she saw! Don't forget what I was wearing. Don't forget it was in the middle of Polish winter. They gave me things and warmed me up. And now what to do? Because we couldn't go back to the ghetto. Where are we going to go? Now she wasn't on her own, now we were two. I came to protect her and prevent her from going back. And now she had me to cope with.

Well, my mother decided she had to go to work and take me with her. It wasn't easy to walk unnoticed but we weren't too far



Irmgard Wieth, Lili's protector, being honoured in Israel

and we managed. And now she had to think what to do.

So, there was my mother sitting sewing, and I was sitting in the corner. And at one point a very tall young woman walked in and stood there pointing and said in German, "What is that?" And my mother said, "This is my daughter." And she said, "What do you mean this is your daughter? You said your child is dead." Like this. Normal. My mother said, "Yes, my child... perished with my husband, but this is my other child. My daughter." "Oh, hm." And she went out. After a while she came back. And just looked at me and my mother and said, "You know, I need a fitting with you." So my mother said, "All right. Let's go to another room and we'll have a fitting." And she went with her. And then my mother - just imagine the courage of a Jewish slave labourer - said to her, "Frau Wieth," (that was her name) "We are in a very desperate situation here. If I go back to the ghetto with this child, we should be taken away. Will you please take us for the duration of this selection, and I promise the moment it's over, we'll go back to the ghetto."

Frau Wieth - she was very, very tall, about six foot, a most unusual height for a woman - just said, "Do you realise what you are saying to me?" So my mother did the fitting. She went her way; my mother went her way. But after an hour she came back. And she just looked at me. Didn't say anything. And my mother said, "Oh, I'm glad you are here because I really need another fitting. I must do another fitting." So they went to the room. And my mother said again, "Look I know it's terrible what I'm asking you. I know what it means. You don't need to tell me. But I don't want this child to die. If I go back on my own it doesn't matter. But I don't want this child to die."



The last family photograph, Krakow 1939

It happened three times. On the third time when she went with my mother for a fitting she said, "Right. ...I should be leaving here at five o'clock. You and your Lili will walk behind me, some distance. I shall be leaving with the deputy Mayor (because that's who she worked for) and halfway we shall part our ways. You just follow me, at a distance." ...And that's how it was. We followed her. And by that time, it was dark and we followed her not only to the German district, but to the German SS and police district. That's where she lived. And she entered a house. And we had to go after her and we didn't know which floor but she waited on the fourth floor. We had to walk, nobody should see us. All these sorts of things which you see in the cinema and you think at any moment somebody will come out or go in. She took us in. And we entered... a home. A normal apartment. Beautiful, warm, clean, light. Unbelievable. And there we were.

I didn't understand or speak a word of German at the time but my mother was very fluent. And Frau Wieth had to share her rations, because we had nothing to eat. She went to work and came back at six o'clock in the evening. And we had to sit and not move, the whole day long. Just sit, because... this was a house which was completely requisitioned for the SS and the Gestapo.

Read more about Lili Pohlmann's story on <https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Lili-Pohlmann>

# REVIEWS

## HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATIONS IN HISTORY: AN INTRODUCTION.

2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

Daniel H. Magilow and Lisa Silverman. (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

It is a normal claim that the atrocity of the Holocaust should never be forgotten but that opens up the question of how it is to be remembered. Our authors discuss this question in terms of how it has actually been represented over the past 75 years and trace its treatment through many diverse forms: photography, film, poetry, diaries, drama, the Eichmann trial, television mini-series, graphic novels, museums, memorials and even computer games.

The chronological treatment indicates different emphases in different decades. In the 1950s there was little interest in the memories of Holocaust survivors. Only in the 1960s did the history of the Nazi era become an important political issue in West Germany. In the 1970s survivor narratives were given more publicity. In the 1980s there was a 'Holocaust memory boom', and the responsibility of bystanders came into focus. Only in the 1990s did German TV begin to include perpetrators along with survivors.

Unsurprisingly the various media have commercial priorities that often override educational ones and so presentations are tailored to the desired audience. Thus, a dispute occurred as to whether the 1955 drama *The Diary of Anne Frank* was 'too Jewish', which 'was also a code word for not commercially viable in the United States'. That problem pales before issues of good taste and suitable treatment. Our authors mention the existence of a LEGO concentration camp and consider whether the comic strip 'Maus' brought Holocaust history into an inappropriate context. More disturbing still is the awareness that interest in the Holocaust is part of the wider fascination with evil and death. Some of the 'ongoing fascination' is definitely not healthy. Susan Sontag

once claimed that 'the attraction of Nazism for millions of Germans and their collaborators in other countries, was erotic and thus something to which anyone anywhere could be susceptible'. Also, that 'the SS has become a reference of sexual adventurism', so we learn of terms like '*sadiconazista*' films and 'Nazisploitation' films. Then there's the German computer game *KZ Manager* popular in neo-Nazi circles, in which the players assume the role of concentration camp commanders who earn points for gassing prisoners.

We might want 'remembering' to be in the context of denigration but the evidence in this intelligent and thought-provoking book suggests that part of the appeal of some representations of Nazism is that 'the attitudes and impulses that made it possible still persist today'.

Michael Levin

## CILKA'S JOURNEY

Heather Morris Zaffe, 2019

This is a sequel to the best-selling book *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* and is another fictionalised version of true events, this time concerning 16-year old Cilka Klein, deported to Auschwitz in 1942 from Slovakia.

Beautiful Cilka was an obedient servant, openly collaborating with the SS and becoming their mistress and receiving many privileges. Watching her mother and sister die, she knew that tomorrow could well be her turn and so clung to whatever could save her. Despite the harsh living conditions and her low expectations from life, Cilka experienced some moments of happiness, for example during an evening walk with friends or playing with her friend's little girl.

In July 1945, she was convicted as a prostitute and Nazi collaborator and sentenced to 15 years of hard labour at Vorkuta Gulag, Siberia. But she eventually fell in love with and married a Czech man, with whom she enjoyed the rest of her life in Slovakia.

The author, Heather Morris, has based much of the story on real life events but there is also a lot of fiction. Some of the

characters seemed rather artificial, like the female Doctor Yelena Georgiyevna, who is very understanding and supportive. Maybe the author wants to point out that even in the Gulag system some people were humane and kind.

*Cilka's Story* also demonstrates a dreadful consequence of war, whereby some people completely lose their sense of judgement because of the strong instinct to survive.

A distant relative of mine, who herself survived a concentration camp and returned to Prague, had a brother-in-law who ended up 'befriending' a cruel and corrupt Gestapo woman in return for retaining his residency permit. After the war both he and the woman were investigated by the Allies and, to save her from a harsh sentence, he married her. The marriage was not happy and soon broke down. Happily, their one daughter, having been raised a Christian, eventually became a doctor, converted to Judaism and married a man introduced to her by her father. Meanwhile her mother - the former Gestapo woman - slowly began to understand that her wartime actions had been the result of greed and mistaken obedience to the Führer. Under wartime conditions many similar situations arose.

Heather Morris definitely has courage to write this story but you can see from her writing style that she is from New Zealand and that this story, for her, is mainly curiosity. For many of us it was a reality, and I believe that no other fellow Czech or Slovak would dare to write a similar story.

Dr Elena Rowland

## DIVERSE LIVES

By Dr David Barnett  
Biddle Books

David Barnett's name will be familiar to many AJR members for the entertaining talks he regularly delivers for us on the lives of different Jewish Londoners. Now he has published nine of these life stories into an attractive paperback, the proceeds of which he is donating to charity.

# LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE IN ISRAEL



Whether the sun is shining or the blessed rain is falling, our life in Israel continues to provide us with interest and

amusement as well as frustration and annoyance.

Our homes, or at least those of most people, are warm and dry. The roads are well-kept on the whole, buses and trains run more or less on time, cafés and restaurants provide nourishment and shelter and the daily routine of coming and going, shopping and cooking, looking after children and/or grandchildren, attending lectures, lessons, films, theatres and concerts goes on as usual. Life on the whole, provided one doesn't live in the area near the Gaza Strip, is reasonably pleasant. It's only when one opens a newspaper or watches the news on TV that the black mood descends.

Because somewhere, beneath the surface, out there in the sphere of political machinations and manoeuvring, dark currents are at work. I'm talking about Israel, but I know that in other countries similar or worse trends are at work, albeit of a different complexion and intensity. I'm not comparing events in Israel with

the drastic developments in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Syria, where people turn out in mass demonstrations to voice their dissatisfaction with the ruling élite, are beaten, arrested and even shot for daring to do so, and in many cases are even forced to leave their homes for fear of bombardment. That situation has given rise to the refugee problem that is providing us all with harrowing examples of human suffering, reminding us of what happened to Jews in Europe not that long ago and preying on our minds and consciences.

But here in Israel all is not sweetness and light. Far from it. I have always tried to present the more pleasant side of life in Israel, and it certainly exists, political differences notwithstanding. But the grim state of public life at present cannot be ignored. After all, what sane country has to hold three general elections in the space of less than a year?

The fact that Israel's electorate seems to be almost evenly divided between those on the right and those on the centre-left is creating a situation of near-deadlock every time an election is held. Coalitions coalesce and disintegrate according to the mood of the moment and the inclination of the politicians involved, and still no firm decision can be reached.

The truth is that a coalition, even a broad, almost wall-to-wall coalition, could in fact be reached were it not for the intransigence of one man, Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. The sad fact is that he has been

indicted on charges of corruption, bribery and similar unsavoury actions, but as long as he is prime minister he cannot be tried before a court of law. Now he is doing his utmost to evade justice by claiming immunity, and using every trick in the book to stymie due process. In this, sadly but also inevitably, he is aided and abetted by members of his party. The details of the offences with which he has been charged are enough to send any ordinary citizen to jail, and this is obviously a fate he and they would like to avoid. The sad conclusion that seems to emerge is that Israel is being run by a cabal of corrupt kleptocrats who do not care that there is no functioning government, no budget allocations and no stable rule.

So why are Israelis not turning out in their thousands to demand the removal of the ruling élite? If Lebanese, Syrian, Turkish and even Libyan citizens are prepared to put their lives on the line to gain justice, why not us? My personal feeling is that people are either too dispirited by what they see happening, too supportive of that same cabal, or too worn down by the daily grind involved in earning one's daily bread and keeping one's head above the waves that seem to be surging all around us.

Another, third, election looms ahead in a few weeks. We can only hope and pray that this time at least a resolution of some kind can be found. If we don't all turn out and vote the prospect is that this stalemate will continue indefinitely.

*Diverse Lives* contains portraits of several well known Jewish people who resided in London between 1764 – 1964. Among them are Daniel Mendoza, the boxing champion of All England, and Lady Judith Montefiore, lovingly recognised as the first lady of Anglo Jewry. Other subjects include Victorian boy made good Joseph Nathan, master criminal Adam Worth, statesman and philosopher Herbert Samuel and the incredible Edith Morley.

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story is packed with well-researched facts and fascinating anecdotes, such as how in the 1840s the British media waged war on the ready-made clothing industry led by E Moses & Son. David weaves social and global history into each story, setting his subjects into context and helping us to compare them to today's entrepreneurs and celebrities.

*Jo Briggs*

*Diverse Lives* costs £8.99 and can be bought direct from David by emailing [dcb1937@icloud.com](mailto:dcb1937@icloud.com)

## FUNDED PhD

A Martin and Hannah Norbert-Miller Trust PhD bursary is available at the Institute of Modern Languages Research (University of London) for October 2020 entry to MA or equivalent graduates seeking to research on German-speaking exile, preferably in the UK. Applications will close on 31 July and further details are at <https://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/about-us/news/opportunity-german-and-austrian-exile-miller-studentship>.

# Around the AJR

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



**LUNCH**  
on **Wednesday 11 March**  
at **12.30pm**  
at **Alyth Gardens Synagogue**

We are delighted to be joined by **Dan Fox**  
*A Modern Jewish Experience of the British Army*

**£7.00 per person**  
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**AJR FILM CLUB**  
**MONDAY 20th APRIL 2020**  
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Sha'arei Tsedek North London Reform Synagogue, 120 Oakleigh Road North, Whetstone, N20 9EZ

**£8.00 donation per person**

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**ANNUAL TRIP TO EASTBOURNE**  
**Sunday 28 June – Sunday 5 July 2020**

We will once again be running our Annual Trip to the Lansdowne Hotel in Eastbourne, accompanied by Carol Rossen and other AJR Staff.

We will be travelling there and back by coach from North West London as in previous years.

Our stay will include, Dinner, Bed and Breakfast  
Single Room from £406 per person for the week  
Twin/Double Room (based on 2 people sharing) from £812 per room for the week  
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Make new friends and meet up with old friends.

Spaces are limited please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or email [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk) to receive an application form and full details.

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**Child Survivors' Association-AJR**  
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# FORTHCOMING NATIONAL EVENTS

TITLE	DATE	VENUE	TIME	DETAILS	CONTACT
KT Lunch	11 March	Alyth Gardens	12.30 pm	Dan Fox will talk about <i>A Modern Jewish Experience of the British Army</i> - see advert on p14	Susan Harrod susan@ajr.org.uk
Card & Games Club	16 March	Alyth Gardens	1.00 pm	Join us for cards & games	Ros Hart roshart@ajr.org.uk
Eastbourne holiday	28 June – 5 July	Eastbourne		See advert on page 14	Susan Harrod susan@ajr.org.uk
Film Club	20 April	Sha'arei Tzedek North London Reform Synagogue	1.30 pm	<i>Pavarotti – The man behind the music</i> – see advert on p14	Ros Hart roshart@ajr.org.uk
AJR Cruise	19 – 31 October	Celebrity Silhouette		Sail with us to Spain, Portugal and the Canaries (see advert on p7)	Ros Hart roshart@ajr.org.uk

# REGIONAL MEETINGS

The AJR operates a nationwide network of Regional Groups that offer our members a unique opportunity to socialise with friends of similar backgrounds. There will be an interesting programme of speakers, plus the opportunity to meet up with old friends and make new friends. 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 co-ordinator for full details.

GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR	DATE	TIME	EVENT
Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs	1 March	2.00pm	Paint Foundation Stones for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
Hampstead	Ros Hart	2 March	2.00pm	Maurice Kanerek - Palestine Police
Ealing	Ros Hart	3 March	2.00pm	David Barnett - Jewish London 1820
Ilford	Karen Diamond	4 March	10.30am	Maurice Kanerek - Palestine Police
Pinner	Karen Diamond	5 March	2.00pm	Sue Grayson MBE - Emigrés and how they influenced Art in Britain
Leeds CF	Wendy Bott	5 March	2.00pm	Peter Kurer - The Quakers saved my family
Newcastle	Agnes Isaacs	8 March	2.00pm	Paint Foundation Stones for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
Muswell Hill	Ros Hart	12 March	2.00pm	Rosie Axion - Chiltern Music Therapy
Glasgow Book Club	Agnes Isaacs	12 March	2.00pm	Glasgow Book Club
Harrogate/York	Wendy Bott	16 March	2.00pm	Social get-together
Edgware	Ros Hart	17 March	2.00pm	Judy Karbritz - Behind the Camera, part 2
Cheshire	Wendy Bott	17 March	2.00pm	Social get-together
Hertfordshire	Karen Diamond	18 March	10.30am	Ruth Nieman – The Galilean Kitchen Cookbook
Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs	18 March	2.00pm	Social get-together
Glasgow 2G Group	Agnes Isaacs	19 March	6.00pm	Continental Children's Evening get-together
Prestwich	Wendy Bott	23 March	2.00pm	Social get-together
Wessex	Ros Hart	24 March	2.00pm	Rosie Axion - Chiltern Music Therapy
Bradford	Wendy Bott	25 March	12.00pm	Lunch at Salt Mill
Book Club	Karen Diamond	25 March	2.00pm	Book Club
North London	Ros Hart	26 March	10.30am	Robin Jacobs - Magen David Adom
Kensington	Ros Hart	30 March	2.00pm	Social get together
Norfolk	Karen Diamond	31 March	12.00pm	Tour of the Guildhall in Norwich and lunch

# An act of faith in South Hampstead

**The AJR's Hampstead group has recently set up home in the magnificent new South Hampstead Synagogue premises in the London district of Camden. The shul reopened in 2019 after an extensive refurbishment. Two of its members, Stephen Lawson and Raphael Langham, take up the story.**



In the 1720s Daniel Defoe commented "*Jews seemed to have a preference for Highgate and Hampstead*". Jewish names are recorded in those districts from the late 18th century although there was no synagogue. In the late 19th century Charles Booth wrote of Hampstead "*the old families leave, the Jews come, the artistic and Bohemian elements prevail*".

Abbey Road Synagogue opened in 1882 and Hampstead Synagogue in Dennington Park Road in 1892. Chevening Road, Brondesbury, opened in 1900. The Hampstead synagogue had a mixed choir, but the Senior Warden assured the Chief Rabbi that although men and women sat together, they did not sing together.

By WW1 there was a significant local Jewish population and John Barnes department store opened a kosher food section. In the 1930s, the area became popular with refugees, partly because it had many bedsits and small flats. Anglo-Jewry raised funds to help and AJR established an office. German and Austrian cafés opened, with the Cosmo and Dorice becoming centres of refugee life. Many refugees struggled to adapt and the local paper regularly reported suicides. Some refugees prospered, particularly in retail, which was not always welcomed by the local shopkeepers. British fascists held meetings in Hampstead but some local residents raised funds to help the new refugees.

The beginning of the South Hampstead synagogue community was the 1938 merger of the Regent's Park Talmud Torah (established in the 1920s) with the Belsize

Park Hebrew Congregation. The combined communities ultimately changed their name to South Hampstead in 1960. Many refugees, particularly those of a "middle of the road" persuasion, joined the new synagogue, part of the United Synagogue. The more liberal established Belsize Square Synagogue, whilst the very orthodox established "Munks" in Golders Green.

In June 1938, Sigmund Freud, newly arrived from Austria, was invited to become an honorary member by both Belsize Park and St John's Wood synagogues. He chose Belsize Park, much to the chagrin of St John's Wood, although he rarely if ever was called upon to make up a minyan! He might have attended on the infamous second day Rosh Hashanah service in 1938 when the *baal musaf* was ejected because it was observed that he had shaved that day.

Early in 1939 the new community tried to buy St Saviour's vicarage on the corner of Eton Road and Eton Villas, to build a synagogue. They were gazumped by Eton College who nonetheless leased the site to the congregation. A temporary wooden hut in the garden was used for services and the vicarage was used to accommodate the office and cheder.

With the start of WW2 many men were conscripted, many children were evacuated, many families moved out. Some refugees were interned on the Isle of Man. In September 1939 the chazan was arrested at the shul and accused of forging passports, presumably to help refugees.

The buildings survived the blitz and by the end of the war South Hampstead synagogue membership was again on the rise, not only

from refugees and returning residents but from those moving from other parts of London.

After the war, services continued in the hut and, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, in Hampstead Town Hall. Children's services and the twice weekly cheder were held in the old vicarage. In the basement office secretary Phil Brummer was surrounded by hand written ledgers and cigar smoke.

By the 1950s the temporary hut had become too small and the cheder moved to Zion House on Eton Avenue. The Board started to plan for a new building on the existing site and plans were agreed for a 420 seat synagogue costing around £50,000 (about £1 million today) which was consecrated in 1962 by Chief Rabbi Dr Israel Brodie.

However, by the early 2000s it became clear that the building needed such major refurbishment that it should be replaced and it was decided to build a new synagogue on the same site. Building commenced in 2017 and the congregation evacuated to a building in Maresfield Gardens with Shabbat and Yom tov services at the nearby Marriott Hotel. On the first day of Pesach 2019 we returned to our new building and beautiful new synagogue.

Many of those involved in the development of the community were survivors of two world wars or refugees from Nazi Europe. Most had kept their beliefs and the continuing development of the synagogue has truly been an act of faith.

# A DREAM COME TRUE

Last year I wrote a book for my family about our escape from Vienna to London in February 1939. I was born in Leopoldstadt, the mainly Jewish area of Vienna, and now live in Loudwater, in Hertfordshire, so I called it *From Leopoldstadt to Loudwater - From Pfeffer to Phillips* as I was born Peter Pfeffer and I liked the alliteration.



Peter Phillips with Sir Tom Stoppard (left) after the HMD preview performance of *Leopoldstadt*

I did wonder, however, if anyone had ever heard of Leopoldstadt. Then, a minute after I picked up my books from the printers I heard on the car radio that Sir Tom Stoppard had announced a new play called – *Leopldstadt*. For a moment my driving became erratic! Were my ears deceiving me? Sir Tom Stoppard, our greatest living playwright, had written a play about the district of my birth to be performed at the Wyndham Theatre in the heart of the West End. Its Director would be Patrick Marber, another coincidence. Patrick and I shared the same Alma Mater – Wadham College, Oxford.

When would the play open? How could I get tickets? Could I meet Sir Tom and Patrick? I contacted the producers, Sonia Friedman Productions, who could not have been more helpful and made me a most wonderful offer. Would I come to a showing on Holocaust Memorial Day and bring 19 other Leopoldstaders with me? Wow! I commandeered 8 tickets for my immediate family. This left 12 Leopoldstaders to find. Thanks to the *AJR Journal* nothing could have been easier. I was inundated with

requests and the most difficult task was choosing who qualified. I decided they must have been born in Leopoldstadt and still lived there when the Nazis arrived. I know I let some down. I apologise.

None of us knew each other or what to expect but we saw immediately how generous Sonia Friedman Productions had been. We had the best seats and I thought the play was magnificent.

One of our party and fellow AJR member, Fred Stern, captured our response beautifully when he wrote: "Never in my wildest dreams, of which I have many, did I think that I would be going to the theatre to see a performance of *Leopoldstadt*. I was born there in August 1923 and couldn't believe that anybody would be bothered to write a play about it! My Volksschule and Real Gymnasium were a few minutes' walk from my home, as was the Tempel which was buried in its ashes by the Nazis.

"My two daughters and I were very grateful to be invited through Peter Phillips to the

preview on the 27 January, coinciding with the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The few of us, for whom every day counts, are the standard bearers who witnessed the greatest evil that ever beset mankind. We owe Tom Stoppard our most grateful appreciation for his masterpiece *Leopoldstadt*."

When the play ended we were taken to the bar to meet Sir Tom, Patrick and most of the cast. We also met Sonia Friedman herself, who had laid on this whole brilliant evening. Sir Tom, who it should be remembered is in his eighties, gave his time incredibly generously. He mixed with everyone, we couldn't have asked for more. Sonia thanked us for coming. What a lovely touch. It had been a memorable evening for us Leopoldstaders. On behalf of us all I thank most sincerely the whole of the *Leopldstadt* team and I wish it the success it so richly deserves.

**Peter Phillips**

**Note from Editor:** A full review of *Leopoldstadt* will appear in our April issue.

## GHETTOS COMPENSATION

Survivors of the following ghettos may now be eligible for an additional monthly pension from the Article 2 Fund which the Claims Conference has negotiated with the German Federal Republic:

**Romania:** Survivors persecuted in Botosani, Galati, Focsani, Tecuci, Roman, Piatra Neamt, Barlad, Vaslui, Alba Iulia, Constanta, Targu Neamt, Harlau, Buzau, Ramnicu

Sarat, Stefanesti, Craiova, Pascani or Bacau, between August 1941 and August 1944.

**Bulgaria:** Survivors persecuted in Plovdiv, between September 1942 and September 1944.

**Netherlands:** Survivors persecuted in the Amsterdam ghetto, between September 1941 and September 1943.

The Claims Conference has also announced new eligibility thresholds allowable under the Article 2 Fund. The income limit has been raised to approximately £38,000 p.a and the maximum allowable assets sum raised to approximately £764,000.

More information on [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org)

# OBITUARIES



## KURT TAUSSIG

**Born:** 28 August 1923, Teplice-Sanov, Bohemia

**Died:** 18 September 2019, London

**The middle of 3 brothers, my father led an idyllic childhood in northern Bohemia until the Nazi occupation of Sudetenland forced the family to flee and become refugees in their own country.**

After the subsequent invasion of the whole of Czechoslovakia, his elder brother Eric managed to arrange dad's escape, along with their younger brother Karl, on one of Nicholas Winton's kindertransport trains. (Eric was too old to qualify and remained in the country for the duration). They never saw their parents again.

On arrival at Liverpool Street the brothers were taken to Barrow-in-Furness in the care of a girls' grammar school headmistress. Kurt, too old for school, went to work as a market gardener. As soon as he could, he applied to the RAF and enlisted in 1942, aged 18. He passed the pilot training exams and found himself in South Africa on the Air Force's Empire Flight Training Scheme. He completed his Spitfire training in Palestine in 1944. He was assigned to RAF 225 Squadron, where all the pilots had to be officers, due to the top-secret and dangerous nature of their missions in the Italian Campaign, flying mostly over enemy lines. He ended the war with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

After demobilisation in 1947, he worked for Thomas Cook, then joined his brother Eric (who had miraculously survived the war having been a partisan, resistance fighter, prisoner, etc.) in an electrical business in Maida Vale, known as Collins & Co.

In about 1960 the brothers amicably parted company and my father started a brand new venture, Lords Electrical, in Little Venice, where he remained until retirement. The shop, contractors and repair workshop became very well known locally and beyond, and was something of a meeting place for local celebrities; my father was, of course, known as "Mr Collins".

In 2018 he was awarded the Freedom of the City of Teplice, and was visited in his home by representatives of the Czech parliament and Czech TV. In 2019 he was awarded one of the highest Czech State Awards, the Medal of Heroism, which I accepted on his behalf from President Zeman at a huge ceremony in Prague Castle.

His funeral in Golders Green was attended by representatives of the Czech President, the Czech Military Attaché and the Slovak Military Attaché, as well as a serving RAF fast-jet pilot.

Always remembered for his wit, humour, generosity and kind heart, he leaves his wife Anne, son and grandson, who will always miss his company.

**Richard Taussig**



## HANS EIREW

**Born:** 24 August 1924, Vienna

**Died:** 10 October 2019, Manchester

**Hans Eirew was an Orthodontic pioneer and national water polo player, who treated Rudolf Hess in Spandau prison.**

He spent his early childhood in Vienna, son of an oral surgeon. After Hitler's annexation of Austria, his father was lucky to obtain one of eight positions offered in England to refugee dentists from Austria or Germany. The family left Austria in 1939, with Hans aged 14 and sister Margaret aged 5.

Hans completed his education in English schools, placed with help from the Quakers. In four idyllic terms at Monkton Combe School near Bath, he was introduced to customs such as cold baths, porridge and Officers' Training Corps. He considered "any success enjoyed afterwards attributed largely to the impact of this wonderful school". Later, at Wigton School, his well-meaning chemistry experiments to help the war effort accidentally destroyed the cricket pavilion.

A strong swimmer, he learned water polo from the British Admiralty team using the Monkton Combe pool. He subsequently played for the Rhine Army, Sheffield Dolphins, both Lancashire and Yorkshire counties, and his country, including reserve with the British Olympic squad at the London 1948 Games. He claimed to be among the dirtiest players in these teams, an honourable distinction in water polo! His water polo contribution is celebrated with the annual Hans Eirew cup at Manchester University. He supported Manchester City FC life-long, through thick and thin (more frequently thin).

Hans qualified in dentistry at Manchester University, then progressed to consultant at Sheffield University. In clinical practice in Manchester, he was a pioneer in "functional orthodontics". This uses the jaw's musculature to remodel facial structure during treatment, achieving clinical benefits beyond merely straightening teeth. He made perilous visits behind the Iron Curtain to study with the preeminent clinician of the time in East Germany, then lectured on his behalf in the West. During a distinguished career, Hans was President of the British Association



of Orthodontics, Founder of the British Association of Orthodontists, and visiting Professor at Chicago and Michigan Universities. He advocated tirelessly for personalised orthodontic treatment within the NHS in cases when standard approaches were not promising. His National Service included posting to Berlin in 1950. Responsible for emergency treatment of prisoners at Spandau prison, he was called in to extract a diseased molar from Hitler's former deputy Rudolf Hess. This was a strange encounter, "Hess seemed quite demented by then and he refused to be given any anaesthetic, nor local, as he feared that we might want to kill him. He also insisted on remaining standing." The Hess episode was particularly intriguing given that our father was Jewish. He met and spoke many times over the years with Andrew Rosthorn, a journalist particularly interested in Rudolf Hess, his flight to the UK and subsequent time in Spandau. Our father also wrote a short piece, *The Great Hess Mystery*, and corresponded with W Hugh Thomas, Hess' prison doctor in Spandau, who wrote a number of books on the subject.

Hans Eirew's orthodontic career was certainly distinguished and he was well-known domestically and internationally. One aspect of his considerable impact arose from being a cutting edge-practitioner who was also a German speaker at a time when the leading innovator in the field, Dr Rolf Fraenkel, was an East German unable to travel or disseminate his work internationally. Our father wrote an article describing a trip he made to study there in the 1970s, at some risk, and puts the work in the context of the Cold War geopolitics of the time

Hans married Rosalind, a doctor, in 1960. Their very happy marriage was spent in Manchester and Combs in the Peak District, reminiscent of the Viennese countryside. Though 13 years her senior, he outlived Rosalind by 19 years. Hans was a raconteur, known for his dry humour, and a regular correspondent to national papers. In orthodontics and in life, he made people smile. Even recently, his hospital room could be located by following raucous laughter. When his son said "I'll see you on Friday, Dad", he replied, "I'll see you in the Daily Telegraph".

He is survived by sons, Dr Peter Eirew and Richard Eirew, his sister Margaret, and four grandchildren.

**Peter and Richard Eirew**



## **MARGOT BARNES, née BRAUER**

**Born: 19 October 1924, Beuthen**

**Died: 21 November 2019, London**

**Margot was the younger of two children born to Walter and Käthe Brauer, her brother Alfred being two years older.**

Their mother died when Margot was three and her father died in the 1930s so the children were orphaned at a very young age. They went to live with their Uncle Bernhard and his family, who owned a shop.

Shortly before WW2 Margot was fortunate to be able to leave Germany for England on the Kindertransport but Uncle Bernhard would not, or could not, give permission for Alfred to accompany her, as he said he was needed in the shop.

Margot never saw her brother again – or, indeed, any of her uncles, aunts and cousins. In England she was taken in by a loving Jewish family in Stockport, where she was educated and looked after very well.

In 1943 Margot joined the armed forces and was stationed at 583 Company CMT Littleton. Towards the end of the war she met a serving private soldier, and they were married in military uniform in March 1946.

In 1947 Margot gave birth to her first child, David, and in 1949 she had her daughter, Diana. The family lived in South East London and in the early '60s she and the children attended Brixton Synagogue. When this closed, she joined the newly-formed South London (United) Synagogue in Streatham. In the 1960s Margot and her husband divorced. She then started her major career as one of the first traffic wardens in the City of London. In the '70s she lived in Israel for a year. On her return to England she resumed her career as a traffic warden and was promoted to Senior Warden. She was very popular with her colleagues and police officers - I should know as I was a police-sergeant in the same police station. By this time, she had also become a grandmother.

She retired at the age of 65 and travelled around the world, Florida being her favourite. She also helped in a local charity shop.

In her later years she met up with some Kindertransport girls and was honoured to be introduced to HRH the Prince of Wales at a Kindertransport anniversary reunion. In the last few years her health deteriorated and she moved into Nightingale House, Balham. She passed away peacefully last November and was laid to rest at the Waltham Abbey Cemetery.

Margot had an adventurous life and is sadly missed by her family and her many friends.

**David Barnes**

# Events and Exhibitions

## YOM HASHOAH IN PINNER

The theme 'Resistance and Rescue' will be addressed by guest speakers Selma van de Perre and Bart van Es. The Dutch Ambassador will also give a brief address, and a candle lighting ceremony will be followed by a short memorial service and readings by Pinner youth.



Lien de Jong from The Hague, who survived. Now aged 86, she and Bart van Es have become close friends.

**8.00pm, Sunday 19 April**  
**Pinner Synagogue HA5 5HJ**  
**Entrance is free and no booking is required.**

[www.pinnerhul.org/events/yom-hashoah-2020](http://www.pinnerhul.org/events/yom-hashoah-2020)

When in 1942 Selma van de Perre, being Jewish, was ordered to register for 'work', she went into hiding. Having taken on a false identity, then aged 20, she joined the Dutch Resistance, forging documents and acting as a courier. In July 1944 she was arrested, interrogated and transported to Ravensbrück where she survived slave labour. Selma lost her parents and sister in the Holocaust. After liberation she moved to London

and her book *My name is Selma* will be published in English this September.

Bart van Es is author of the 2018 prize-winning book *The Cut Out Girl*. Born in 1972 in Holland he is a professor of English Literature at Oxford University. In 2014 he began to investigate the lives of his Dutch grandparents, who were active in the Resistance and sheltered a number of Jewish children. His book tells the story of one of those children,

## THE SECOND GENERATION

Gaby Glassman, a psychologist and psychotherapist who has facilitated intergenerational groups in the UK and abroad since the 1980s, will facilitate a special workshop for members of the Second Generation.

**11.00am, Sunday 15 March**  
**JW3, London NW3**

**£9 (concessions available)**

[www.jw3.org.uk](http://www.jw3.org.uk)

# PARADISE LOST

The recent Oscars ceremony reminded me of the 1970 film *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, which won a large number of prizes and earned director Vittorio de Sica his fourth Oscar.



A still from Vittorio de Sica's film *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*

de Sica, a Catholic, is known mostly for acting in comedies, which earned him enough to enable him to direct and finance some very influential films in the 1940s and '50s. With Roberto Rossellini, he was the most important director of the neorealist movement. His film *Bicycle Thieves* was voted 'The best film ever made' by ten film critics.

*The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* focused on two Jewish families in Ferrara, one rich

and assimilated, the other middle class. The first completely ignores the growing antisemitism while the latter tries to adapt to it, yet both families end up in concentration camps. The film, although sad, is beautifully photographed. Most of the scenes are shot on the estate and in the house of the Continis: their library, the tennis court, the summer house and the exquisite gardens often in soft focus and over exposed to highlight the beauty and luxury of their life. Based

on the semi-autobiographical novel of the Jewish author Giorgio Bassani, the story is partly about unrequited love and shows the effects of war on the innocents.

Whilst it is a painful film to watch you will nevertheless appreciate its artistry and you will certainly not forget it for a long time.

**Janos Fisher**

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