



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## How should we celebrate VE Day?

Next month we should be celebrating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The May Day Bank Holiday has been moved from Monday 4 May to Friday 8 May, only the second time ever that the early May Bank Holiday has been moved – the first was in 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of VE Day. But with the country currently in crisis, can we actually celebrate?



The Queen, The Queen Mother and Princess Margaret watch a procession of vintage planes fly over Buckingham Palace during VE Day commemorations in 1995 (PA)

Original plans included commemorative events across the country to honour the sacrifice so many men and women made during the Second World War, including church bells ringing across the country, local street parties across the three-day weekend, the playing of popular songs from the war and speeches by Winston

Churchill. A special gala event should be being broadcast live from the Royal Albert Hall.

Some of this may sound familiar. In 2005, to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, the *Continued on page 2*

### EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

As the AJR Journal went to press the country seemed to be on the verge of total lockdown and all our own events and activities have been cancelled - please read the letter from our Chairman and Chief Executive on page 3.

We hope that you and all our readers are staying well and positive during this difficult period. Keeping in touch with one another is even more important than ever and we would love to hear your stories of how you are coping, especially if you have any suggestions for other AJR members who might be affected.

Wishing you a happy, kosher and above all healthy Pesach.

Coronavirus: the AJR response.....	3
From Leopoldstadt to Loudwater.....	4
The hostel in Lebanon Park.....	5
Letters to the Editor.....	6
Looking For.....	7
Art Notes.....	8
Hardly a holiday!.....	9
Holocaust Memorial Day Reflections.....	10-11
Safe Haven.....	12
“Have a good day”.....	13
Around the AJR.....	14
Notice from the Claims Conference.....	15
Reviews.....	16-17
Obituaries.....	18 - 19
Letter from Israel.....	20

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

#### AJR Team

Chief Executive Michael Newman  
Finance Director David Kaye

#### Heads of Department

Community & Volunteer Services Carol Hart  
HR & Administration Karen Markham  
Educational Grants & Projects Alex Maws  
Social Work Nicole Valens

#### AJR Journal

Editor Jo Briggs  
Editorial Assistant Lilian Levy  
Contributing Editor David Herman

## How should we celebrate VE Day (cont.)

Queen and the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, attended a 'memorial show' on Horse Guards Parade. In his book, *Europe at War, 1939-1945: No Simple Victory* (2006), Norman Davies describes this show: "It took the form of a series of musical and comic items from the wartime repertoire linked by a historical narrative. The latter was read by the actor Simon Callow and was interspersed with a selection of Churchill's speeches... Hence 'Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover' alternated with 'We shall fight on the beaches!', and Flanagan and Allen numbers were followed by the theme tune from *Schindler's List*, by "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" and, in the grand finale, by "We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when."

Fifteen years on, I imagine BBC programmes would still be full of all too familiar images of young service men and women dancing and hugging in Piccadilly Circus, of Churchill and King George VI waving to huge crowds from the balcony at Buckingham Palace, all intercut with popular songs from Vera Lynn. These would portray a very nostalgic vision of Britain, a frozen vision of the past.

The current health crisis aside, there is still an excuse to celebrate VE Day. But also much to mourn. Almost 400,000 servicemen and women were killed, wounded or missing in action (including deaths from the colonies). Nearly 70,000 British civilians were killed, including 43,000 who died in London during the Blitz. On 8 May many will be thinking of those they have lost. And of homes they have lost. There were 30 million refugees in Europe when the war ended. Many never returned to their homes. Refugees who came to Britain will be thinking of the people and the world they lost. When I think of VE-Day I think of an image of my father, a Jewish refugee from Warsaw who lost his entire family during the Holocaust. As others celebrated around him on 8 May 1945, he stood alone, silent, lost in his own thoughts.

Recent histories of the Second World War have started to tell a very different

kind of story from the one traditionally celebrated on VE Day. There is a growing gap between the popular British memory of the war, with its cherished myths, and the most interesting new historical research. The tectonic plates are shifting: from the western front to east Europe, from books on diplomacy (AJP Taylor's famous *The Origins of the Second World War*), battles involving the British (the Battle of Britain, North Africa, the Pacific to D-Day) and famous British figures to the very different experience of the war in central and east Europe.

As Norman Davies writes in *Europe at War*, 'the open-minded observer will be tempted to view the war effort of the Western powers as something of a sideshow.' 4,650 were killed at El Alamein. Nearly a million died at Stalingrad. Another 900,000 died in the Siege of Leningrad. A few hundred died in the bombing of Coventry or Rotterdam; 90,000 died in the bombing of Warsaw in September 1939.

In his book, *Bloodlands* (2010), Timothy Snyder shows that the centre of gravity of the war in Europe was not the western front but Poland, Byelorussia (now Belarus) and Ukraine. They saw the most intense warfare and the worst civilian horrors from the very beginning of the war in September 1939 to the last Soviet battles against Germany in 1945. Belarus lost a higher proportion of its civilian population than any other country in Europe. Ukraine lost the highest absolute number.

The new histories of the Second World War have moved from the centres to the peripheries of Europe, from Paris and London to the Baltic and Soviet borders. Myths have collapsed under their scrutiny. The myths of Austria as the "first victim", of the "decent Wehrmacht" and of "Uncle Joe". There has been much debate about the war crimes committed by the allies: the fire-bombing of Dresden and Hamburg, the deportation of Cossacks by Britain to the Soviet Union to face certain death, the atrocities against German civilians by the Red Army. It was not until Gorbachev that we finally learned of the war crime against Polish officers at Katyn. We betrayed the Czechs but Prague survived. We stood by the Poles but Warsaw was destroyed. As the concentration camps were liberated,

Soviet security forces started to fill them with new inmates. The new histories of the war are a moral grey zone.

Sir Antony Beevor has introduced a new generation of readers to the savagery and scale of the battles in the east from Stalingrad to the fall of Berlin in 1945. Jan T Gross has told us about how antisemitic Poles slaughtered their Jewish neighbours during and after the war. After the fall of Communism, archives opened up in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and historians like Gross, Norman Davies and Timothy Snyder, who read Polish, Russian and Ukrainian, revealed the scale of atrocities in the east, by local collaborators and by Stalin's NKVD as well as by the Nazis. Stalin's crimes against civilians in Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and the Baltic Republics were fully exposed.

The Second World War seems darker and more morally complex than ever before. The war films of Jack Hawkins, John Mills and Anthony Quayle and the cosy comedy of *Dad's Army* and *Allo 'Allo* all seem a long way away, more than thirty years on. During the 1980s and '90s the Holocaust and the Eastern Front took centre stage, both in terms of morality and in terms of the sheer scale of the violence. This is the lesson of the histories of the Second World War and the Holocaust written over the past thirty years.

Our popular memories of the war, however, remain out of step. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE-Day is a chance for us to catch up. Yes, there is much to celebrate. There is also much to mourn and much to learn.

David Herman

## EU Passport Applications

The Jewish Historical Society of England invites anyone in Britain with Jewish ancestry through which they and/or their children are seeking an EU27 citizenship to participate in an online survey. More information on <https://jhse.org/inner-passport-system/>

# Coronavirus: *the AJR response*

Dear Friend

At this challenging time when your everyday lives will be impacted by the spread of the coronavirus, we are writing to assure you that the AJR will do everything possible to continue to support you, our members. At the time of going to press, the government had just announced advice for the over-70s to self-isolate, a decision that we recognise will profoundly affect you.

In response, the way we deliver our frontline services has been altered. Rather than home visits in person from our social workers and volunteer befrienders, we have started to make contact with members by telephone. Initially, and as a priority, this will be with our most vulnerable members with the greatest needs. Above all, the call will be made to establish what that member's situation is, what needs they might have – be it food, medical or social – and whether there are relatives, carers, neighbours or another communal organisation who can also assist. We know that for some of our members who were already isolated we remain their primary point of contact and that being alone can itself have a detrimental effect on a person's mental health.

While we cannot plan for every eventuality, any member of staff who contacts you will do so with the aim of trying to help.

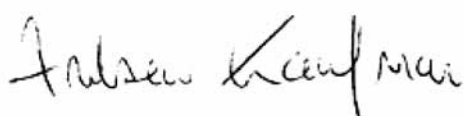
To confirm what you might also have heard by now, for the time being all AJR regional group meetings and social events have been cancelled. This includes the Second Generation conference planned for later this month and the members' holiday to the Cotswolds in May. Bookings for holidays for later this year have also been suspended.

Although all AJR staff are now working remotely rather than from the AJR offices, we remain open for business and contactable on **020 8385 3070** and by email at [enquiries@ajr.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ajr.org.uk)

As we will also in all likelihood be providing updates and guidance by email, please ensure we have your email address so we can stay in touch. If you do not already receive correspondence from us by email or have recently changed your email address, please send an email to [info@ajr.org.uk](mailto:info@ajr.org.uk) to establish contact. Updates will also be provided on our website at [www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk)

Your wellbeing remains our over-riding priority so if you display any of the symptoms associated with the coronavirus, or have underlying health issues, please follow the official updated guidance at <https://111.nhs.uk/COVID-19>

Wishing you and your loved ones much strength as we manage this unprecedented situation, and our very best wishes for Pesach.



**Andrew Kaufman**  
Chairman



**Michael Newman**  
Chief Executive

# From Leopoldstadt to Loudwater



© Mark Brenner

**Sir Tom Stoppard's magnificent new play, *Leopoldstadt*, could have been written for me. It's my family's story – almost. The play starts in 1899 at the home of the Merz family. They had done well in life, particularly Hermann, the head of the family played by Adrian Scarborough.**

They had moved away from Leopoldstadt, the area of Vienna in which Jews had settled since 1782, after being allowed back to Austria by Josef the Second. No more ghetto living for Hermann. He had renounced his Judaism and converted to Christianity. He even married a Christian. (This is where the story differs from mine. None of my family converted. Some, though, did marry out). It is Christmas time at the Merz home. Their relatives, the Jakobovicz family, are invited. There is a Christmas tree. And suddenly Jacob, Hermann's son, decides to put a Star of David on top of the tree.

This action is the theme of the play. Leopoldstadt is about identity. Jewish identity. What makes a Jew? Is it true to say that "once a Jew always a Jew"? Hermann tries very hard to be different. He wants to join the antisemitic Jockey Club. He looks down upon the Jakobovicz family. They have a Yiddish accent, they use Yiddish words, they dress as though they were still in a shtetl in Galicia.

My parents came to Vienna from Galicia just before World War 1 – early in 1914. My father, Marcus Pfeffer, like nearly all *Ostjuden*, settled in Leopoldstadt. My mother, Betti Schmarak, moved in with the Demants. Josef Demant had left Galicia twenty years earlier. He married my mother's sister and now lived in the up-market Ringstrasse, like Hermann. My mother moved in with them. She mixed with people much posher than those in Leopoldstadt – just as Hermann did, compared to mathematician Ludwig Jakobovic. (Ludwig is acted sensitively by Ed Stoppard, Tom's son).

The second scene takes place in 1924. Again, a coincidence. This was the year my parents married. The Merz family are still successful but there is now overt talk of antisemitism, of going to America, of Zionism and Theodore Herzl.

My parents were also doing well. My father was a doctor, and had a surgery and apartment in Leopoldstadt, near the Prater.

Strangely, however, though swearing allegiance to Austria, my father started to follow Herzl and the Zionists. In the play Jacob, Hermann's son, is starting to notice Zionism too and showing a definite interest in the movement. (Jacob is played by Sebastian Armesto, surely an award-winning performance).

There is a circumcision. Or should it have been a baptism? Stoppard gives us a light pause here for what could even be described as slapstick. Rosa Jakobovicz

(played well by Jenny Augen) had come over from America for the ceremony, providing the first mention of the United States and the possibility of Jews emigrating there. My mother's brother, Bernard Schmarak, did just that, becoming rich.

Now it is 1938. The Anschluss had happened in March. This is November, possibly after Kristallnacht. The two families are together in a crowded room. They knew what was happening to their fellow Jews. One of the relatives had been sent to Dachau. Many were learning how to be domestic servants because they had heard that England was taking in butlers and housekeepers.

My father was due to be sent to Dachau. He was going to be arrested by a gestapo leader because he was an "eminent Jew" and Hitler did not want "eminent Jews" in Vienna. The wife of the gestapo leader, a patient of my father's, tipped him off. He went into hiding and avoided Dachau.

We are in the crowded room with the Merz and Jakobovicz families. A Nazi bursts in, wearing an armband with a swastika. He knows every member of both families. He speaks to each individually. He orders them to pack just one suitcase and be outside the apartment by 10 the next morning. See the play to learn what happens.

In my family's case, my father managed [continued on next page](#)

# The hostel in Lebanon Park

**AJR members might enjoy reading this report recently received from Andrew Lawrence, Head of History at Hampton School, about some research he and his pupils are currently conducting.**



Some Year 9 pupils, none of whom is Jewish, were working on an extra-curricular history research project to help them design foundation stones for the proposed Holocaust Memorial in Westminster. They came across a map of their home area which included a reference to a “Kinderhostel” in Lebanon Park, a road in Twickenham close to our school.

No one locally knew about the house or its inhabitants but we had one lead: the AJR’s Kindertransport database had listings for two, unnamed, boys who lived in the house in 1939. We had no names for them, just dates of birth and arrival in Britain.

Armed with this, we wrote to the Wiener Holocaust Library. They told us the details matched those of a boy called Günter Ruf from the town of Herne in Germany.

We placed a search notice in the AJR Journal and, in response, were delighted to be contacted by Helen Levy, whose step-mother, Margot Brauer, helped to look after the boys in Lebanon Park.

We then wrote to the Kindertransport Association in New York and in response received an email from Günter, who was renamed George in Britain.

George told us about his life in Herne, the persecution that Jewish people faced there

and the terror of Kristallnacht. Five days later his father was taken to a concentration camp. On 19 April 1939 his mother and siblings took him to Dortmund station to travel to Holland. It was the last time George saw his mother.

Eventually he ended up living in 52 Lebanon Park and went to St Mary’s Primary School – the school some of our own pupils attended before coming to Hampton School. In all ten refugee boys lived at the house in Lebanon Park.

George found out that after he left Herne his mother and siblings were all sent to concentration camps. Sadly, his mother died on a death march in Poland in 1945. George’s father managed to escape, fighting for the British army against the Nazis in Africa before reaching England and finding George in 1946.

With Helen Levy’s help we also got in touch with Michael Popper, the son of another boy who lived at Lebanon Park. It was great to hear about his dad, Freddy.

We know very little about the other boys who lived at Lebanon Park. Our research continues!



*continued from previous page*  
to get a cousin to sponsor us in London and Bernard Schmarak to sponsor us in Chicago. We arrived safely from Leopoldstadt to London on 21 February 1939.

I haven’t seen a play as thought-provoking as *Leopoldstadt* for a long time. I became totally involved with the characters. Sir Tom Stoppard is a genius. It was superbly directed by Patrick Marber, and I pay tribute to producer

Sonia Friedman who was instrumental in encouraging Sir Tom to write it.

I think the only actor I have not yet mentioned and would like to praise is Faye Castelow. She plays Hermann’s Catholic wife, Gretl, with wonderful finesse.

I must admit that the final scene, in 1955, made me cry and I thought that the three actors, Sebastian Armesto, Jenny Augen and Luke Thallon were all terrific. For me, it is one of the most moving endings I’d

ever seen. Luke Thallon plays Leo who has been anglicised. He is as English in 1955 as Hermann was Austrian in 1899. He had even changed his name so as not to sound foreign.

I was Peter Pfeffer.

**Peter Phillips**  
Loudwater

***Leopoldstadt is at the Wyndham Theatre***

# 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.

## WHAT WE FORGOT ON HMD

David Herman's article (March) was a thoughtful piece and raised some important questions about how we should remember such appalling atrocities.

However, I have to take issue with his including the showing of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* in his list of examples of the BBC "at its best". Surely, this film is another piece of "Holocaust porn": a lachrymose confection of overfed concentration-camp slaves and two sweet little boys – one a prisoner and the other the son of the camp commandant – who die together in the gas chamber.

The focus of the film is on the commandant's family and the audience is invited to empathise with a German boy who apparently knows nothing of antisemitism (when he would, in fact, have been fully indoctrinated in the Hitler Youth), while the Jewish boy is presented as merely a characterless (but reasonably well-fed!) victim.

And what are we meant to make of the ending? That it was a tragic "mistake" for a German boy to be killed along with his Jewish friend? That we should sympathise with the horror and grief of the commandant's wife?

Perhaps the worst thing about it is we are asked to believe that it was possible for the commandant's son to live on the edge of a death camp and not know anything about what was happening on the other side of the wire which, of course, is the very defence of those Germans after the war who chose to deny their complicity.

The film is not as distasteful as the execrable *Life is Beautiful*, but it is down there in the same gutter.  
*Michael Johnson, London NW3*

---

I read David Herman's article with great interest. In his first paragraph, mentioning education, he omitted the excellent work that the National

Holocaust Museum and Memorial Centre does in Nottinghamshire. Most days school children arrive to see the powerful exhibitions about the Holocaust and hear the testimony of a 'survivor'. I am one of the regular speakers and talk to about 100 secondary school pupils and the public present that day; the title of my testimony is *Born a Hidden Child*. I hope that, in future, AJR articles will include this important educational venue dealing with the Holocaust.  
*Hanneke Dye, Skipton*

---

## SURVIVOR OR REFUGEE?

Peter Seglow's letter (March) expresses an issue that has exercised my thoughts also. I have come to the conclusion that this is a matter of the meaning of the word "survive", and the meaning depends on its perception. The strict semantic meaning of the word is "continue to live or exist despite an ordeal or mortal event".

The emotional meaning of the word would influence the perception of it, insofar that a survivor of the camps would consider an individual who sought refuge from the Nazi regime, and thus avoided the camps, as a refugee.

I, as one of the latter, can't help considering myself as a refugee, not wishing to diminish the incomparable suffering of the camps. That Yad Vashem considers both as survivors is academic and, in my view, unjustified.  
*Emil Landes, London N6*

---

Frankly I was a little surprised that according to both Yad Vashem and the US Holocaust Museum I am considered a 'survivor'. I have always considered myself to be a 'refugee' since I came to this country age 7 with my parents and sister and was saved from the horrors of Terezin and Auschwitz.

We were among the lucky ones who got out even though we were present in Olomouc, Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939 when the Nazi troops marched

down our street and our beautiful Synagogue was set alight and gutted. Furthermore, my father and grandfather were arrested and detained for nearly a week, their business was stolen from them, as was their newly built villa and most of their savings and possessions. We never saw any of our immediate family again although some of our more distant relatives managed to escape to USA, Israel, New Zealand etc. We arrived in Harwich on 2 July 1939 just 2 months before Hitler invaded Poland.

How can I possibly compare myself to those who suffered the inconceivable miseries of incarceration in ghettos and extermination camps? One of my close friends and her twin brother survived Dr Mengele. She is indeed a survivor and rightly so. I see myself as a refugee and fortunate to have been one.  
*Peter Briess, London NW3*

---

The Holocaust Survivors' Centre in Hendon defines a survivor as one who was in Austria or Germany on Kristallnacht.  
*Freddy Berdach, Harrow Middx*

---

Whether people are termed refugees or survivors is surely unimportant. I lived under Nazi rule in Sudetenland (northern Czechoslovakia) and again in Prague after the Nazi Invasion. I therefore consider myself as a survivor.  
*R. J. Norton, Notts.*

---

## SOUTH HAMPSTEAD SYNAGOGUE

The article on South Hampstead Synagogue (March) co-written by Stephen Lawson struck me quite unexpectedly. It was a geographic and historic description of the area I have lived in for most of my life and I have known Stephen since he was a little boy, as he went to the same kindergarten as my eldest son. I am not a member of that Synagogue but attended one Shabbat last year and Stephen came over to greet me which I appreciated greatly.

# LOOKING FOR?

Concerning Peter Seglow's query as to what we should be called, I think we could all of us be defined as "B. F.s" (Bloody Foreigners!)

*Margarete Stern, London, NW3*

## THE CONUNDRUM OF HS2

After several years of consideration, the government has decided to accept the recommendations of the high-speed rail network, known as HS2. There were as many for as against that a new network was necessary. In the absence of a common agreement, regarding the infrastructure of a hitherto untried British multi-billion-pound project, the main question remains whether there is a need for a new system at all. In the circumstance, as there was no agreement, the project should have been abandoned. There should be a minimum agreement requiring a majority of 75% for a project of that magnitude.

The problem lies squarely with the fact that all roads and rails lead to London. HS2 would increase this imbalance out of all proportion. London became the centre of industry, commerce and finance at an increasing, unstoppable pace since the end of WW1. HS2 would strangle progress rather than increase it.

Many European countries have diversified their centres of business. Thus, traffic congestion is minimised and transport comfort is not compromised. Centres of specialised activities create common interests and understanding in the population.

*Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx.*

### Write Your Life Story Record a Family History

Whether you have begun writing, researched your ancestors, or never put pen to paper, we offer a personalised service to help you preserve your precious memories for future generations.

[www.wordsbydesign.co.uk](http://www.wordsbydesign.co.uk)  
[tony@wordsbydesign.co.uk](mailto:tony@wordsbydesign.co.uk)  
01869 327548

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.

## MAINZ AND FREIBURG

British-German family historian Sandra Lipner is hoping to find someone who knew Mainz and/or Freiburg, Germany, before 1945 and would be happy to talk to her about it. She is working on a research project about the families Ganz (Ludwig Ganz AG) and Brenzinger (Brenzinger & Cie).

[sandra.lipner@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.lipner@gmail.com)

## ESCAPE FROM PARIS

Graeme Fife is preparing a radio programme for the BBC about Adolfo Kaminsky who forged ID cards and papers for Jewish children in Paris during the War. It is impossible to link with certainty any individual who survived with papers he forged but it would help the programme enormously if we could talk to someone who did escape from Paris with false papers.

[fifegraeme@bbc.co.uk](mailto:fifegraeme@bbc.co.uk)

## HUNGARY IN WW2

Author Agnes Grunwald-Spier seeks information on the Budapest Ghetto in which her mother was incarcerated with baby Agnes. Agnes would also like information on the Hungarian Forced Labourers into which her father was conscripted and, as a result of which, he committed suicide. Agnes is writing a

new book and all contributors would be acknowledged.

[agnesgrunwaldspier@gmail.com](mailto:agnesgrunwaldspier@gmail.com) or  
call 07816 196517

## DESCENDANTS OF GIZELLA DOERNER (EVA ALTON & ERIC)

Does anyone know of surviving descendants of Gizella Doerner of Northend Road W14 who died on 1st September 1970? Cremated at Mortlake Crematorium on 3.9.1970? She had a daughter, Eva Alton, and a grandson, Eric.

[Sandcdorner@aol.com](mailto:Sandcdorner@aol.com)

## KINDERTRANSPORTEES FROM CHEMNITZ, DRESDEN, LEIPZIG

The children and staff of the Montessori School in Chemnitz are undertaking a Kindertransport research project funded by the state of Saxony. The school wishes to make contact with former Kindertransport children or their descendants, especially those originating from Chemnitz, Dresden, Leipzig or other places in Saxony.

[michel@montessoriverein-chemnitz.de](mailto:michel@montessoriverein-chemnitz.de)

## HACHSHARA SETTLEMENT IN NIEDERSCHOENHAUSEN (near BERLIN)

This settlement, founded by Hechalutz in 1934, was led by Leopold and Ruth Kuh (later Kew). In 1938/39 a large group of former trainees from Niederschoenhausen went to Kitchener Camp and some were sent on to Australia. A book is to be written about these former Niederschoenhausen trainees and we are seeking their descendants in Australia or in Britain.

[gerald@marcqui.com](mailto:gerald@marcqui.com) or  
[verena.buser@berlin.de](mailto:verena.buser@berlin.de)



**JACKMAN SILVERMAN**

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Telephone: 020 7209 5532

[robert@jackmansilverman.co.uk](mailto:robert@jackmansilverman.co.uk)

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

There may be more fun in Olivia Coleman's portrayal of a libidinous Queen Anne in *The Favourite* than in Tate Britain's **British Baroque: Power and Illusion**. But in its first-time focus on baroque culture the Tate also explores the wavering links between the Stuart crown and politics.

Britain was not the natural home of baroque. All those cherubs and ornamental images are European – notably reflecting the court of Louis XIV, then extolled in England as the sun king. The French king was the envy of Charles II, epitomising glamour and aspiration. **Antonio Verrio's** *The Sea Triumph of Charles II*, (1674), presents the English monarch naked beneath his flowing ruby robes, and curly black wig, atop a sea of lesser mortals beneath the heavenly seraphim. Here is the Stuart king asserting his regal rights after his father's execution and all that Cromwellian abstinence. The new Restoration England had hardly a puritan thought in its head.



Another portrait of Charles by the same Italian artist is a sulky semi profile, a fragment from the ceiling of the king's withdrawing room at Windsor Castle, where he could gaze up at himself from his bedchamber. Then you have the flamboyant bust by the French artist **Honoré Pelle** who never visited England and probably based it on painted images. Most of the art of this period is full of swirling satins and silks, more reflective of pomp and power than artistic integrity.

But it was also the time of the Samuel Pepys diaries and **Christopher Wren's** architecture. As Surveyor-General of the King's Works Wren followed mathematical principles of geometric perfection, such as in Chatsworth House. But even his ideas were inspired by French architecture.

One room is totally devoted to aristocratic court beauties, known as the Petworth Beauties, by artists like **Michael Dahl** and **Godfrey Kneller**. But despite all the glitz of the gowns, the pale, effete faces share the same hypnotic formality.

**John Closterman's** *Portrait of a Lord Mayor of London* presents him berobed and bewigged, bejewelled sword aloft, astride a horse still more ornamented than he is: one can only chuckle at the thought of our own Sadiq Kahn in that pose!

From the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the death of Queen Anne in 1714, courtly power may have dominated art, but things were about to change. With the monarchy engulfed in self-aggrandisement, the political

élite were waiting in the wings. **John James Baker's** *The Whig Junto* 1710, an ideologically tight group of political peers developing their ideas of democracy, almost anticipates the Chequers summits of our own time. The weirdly named **Whig Kit Kat Club**, portrayed by Kneller, indicates how the artist ennobled royals, aristocrats and politicians alike.

Further aspects of this period were the decorative, emotional altarpieces, such as **Benedetto Gennari's** portrait of *The Holy Family* hung in the private Catholic chapels of Queen Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II, and Mary of Modena, the Italian wife of the future James II. After Puritan attacks on church art, the use of Catholic images for worship was still highly controversial.

One of the most exciting developments of the period was the art of trompe l'oeil – painted optical illusions of grand colonnades and staircases by Flemish painters such as **Samuel van Hoogstraten** or **Jan van der Vaart**, whose violin appears to hang solidly on a door. It is an apt metaphor for all this pomp and periwinkled power - which eventually became an illusion, too.

Until April 19

## Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street  
(off New Bond Street)  
Tel: 020 7629 7578  
Fax: 020 7491 2139

CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE



To commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, the Ben Uri Gallery has acquired this stained-glass portrait of Swedish diplomat and Holocaust hero Raoul Wallenberg by the late artist and child survivor Moshe Galili.



# Hardly a holiday!

*Irona, Syd & Margot,  
together with an  
unknown friend, in 1938*

**In August 1938 my father Sydney Grant, then a 25-year-old furrier living in London, took a bizarre trip to Berlin. Nominally this was a six-week holiday, an opportunity to spend time with his mother's extended family. In reality, it was more of a rescue mission. He wanted to help them leave Germany if he could. To achieve that he was considering marrying one of his second cousins, Irona Bernhard, then nineteen.**



He never wanted to talk about that visit in any detail. I did learn that he'd enjoyed himself: he spent time with Irona and her younger first cousin Margot Grodzinsky, aged 13, as well as their parents and other relatives who lived elsewhere in Germany.

Photos and letters I found after my father's death, locked up in his bureau, gave me a far better sense of that odd holiday. They show how the family welcomed my Dad and celebrated his birthday on 8 August. The cousins swam together in the Berlin lakes and even sneaked into the Olympic pool where Jews were banned. Syd visited an exhibition highlighting Nazi achievements in radio and television. He



*The letter that Margot sent Syd in 1939*

used Yiddish to get around, despite some odd looks.

On 10 August he wrote home to Hackney, saying the journey from Ostend to Berlin took 15 hours. What he didn't say was that, at the German border, a woman passenger advised him to hide the sandwiches his mother had carefully wrapped in a Bonn's matzo bag. Personally, I think that a passport for Solomon Ginsberg would have been the real giveaway.

Sifting through the papers I realised that the visit came about after a long series of letters, starting in 1935. When the first letter arrived my grandmother, Fanny was unimpressed as the German branch of the family was far wealthier than those in the East End. "Why should we help them – they've never helped us?"

But the younger cousins started writing to each other. Irona was learning English and became the main voice of her family, trying to obtain visas for the USA and join other relatives there, with the help of an American cousin, Dorothy Hork. Failing that, the family saw England as a potential safe haven for Irona and Margot – hence my father's 1938 visit.

Irona's letters describe how life became increasingly constrained as she became more and more desperate. "You must marry me!!" she wrote to Syd in December 1938. In early 1939 Margot's father Leo managed to get a visa to England for himself. The family planned

to follow. Margot sent Syd a letter decorated with six photos of herself, smiling. "We will be together!" she wrote. But war intervened.

Thanks to the cousins' work, Irona's family did get visas. They eventually reached Buffalo, via Portugal, in 1943.

Leo was interned and sent to Australia, while his family were sent to the camps. In 1942 Margot and her mother Gertrude died in Theresienstadt, along with her grandparents.

I am now reading the letters properly for the first time. They are more important, I think, than the visit itself. From this distance in time, they give a vivid and upsetting picture of how life was closing in on the Berlin Jews, from the mid-thirties into the War itself.

And while some family members did anything they could, these letters show that others had a very different attitude. The process of finding money, getting affidavits, obtaining visas, could be like snakes and ladders. Though it was life or death for those in Germany, some family members in safe countries were unwilling to help. It's quite shaming.

The papers and the story deserve more recognition. I wonder too about other families' rescue efforts, which perhaps even now remain unknown.

**Francine Berg**

# HOLOCAUST MEMOR

## Where Were They Then?

**My mother was in Auschwitz. My father was in Flossenbürg and Dachau. Both were slave labourers. They returned to the few survivors in their remaining families. They met and married. During their after-war lives, nobody had wanted to know. They carried their burdens in silence. Life was hard. These days they would have been offered help – but not then. Their needs were great.**

They passed away before HMD was inaugurated. Before IWM had opened its exhibition. Before all those films were made. Before the Holocaust became 'fashionable'. No-one had asked, no-one knew or acknowledged what they had endured. Not even their synagogue. They struggled alone until they died. No-one mentioned the Holocaust.

And yet today, the great and the powerful are queuing up to attend commemorations and give their thoughts. What would my parents have thought?

At the HMD ceremony in Yad Vashem, HRH the Prince of Wales stated: "The Holocaust must never be allowed to become simply a fact of history. We must never cease to be appalled, not moved by the testimony of those who lived through it." German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier announced "The perpetrators were human beings. They were Germans. Those who murdered, those who planned and helped in the murdering, the many who silently toed the line: They were Germans.

The industrial mass murder of six million Jews, the worst crime in the history of humanity, it was committed by my countrymen." And Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaimed: "Auschwitz is more than the ultimate symbol of evil, its ultimate symbol of Jewish powerlessness (sic) ..... today we have a voice, a land and shield."

Also present at Yad Vashem were Russian President Putin, USA Vice-President Mike Pence, and kings, presidents and prime ministers from over 30 countries. How did they fit in so many VIPs? Why had they not come so many years ago?

At the UK's national HMD commemoration in London, Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated: "I feel a deep sense of shame that here in Britain in 2020 we seem to be dealing with a resurgence of the virus of antisemitism." And then HRH the Duke of Cambridge read from a letter about his grandmother, Princess Alice, who had saved a Jewish family from the Nazis in 1943.

HRH the Duchess of Cambridge had taken photographs of Holocaust survivors and their families to be shown at a forthcoming exhibition, and commented: "I wanted to make the portraits deeply personal." Her photograph of Theresienstadt survivor Steven Frank and his two young grandchildren graced the Jewish News' front page of its special 80-page HMD edition of 27 January 2020.

London Mayor Sadiq Kahn, attending a ceremony in Krakow, declared that City Hall's £300,000 donation to the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial was partly to address the "rewriting of history". Polish Ambassador to the UK Arkady Rzegocki added to the discussion by stating: "Poland was the war's first victim, the first country to experience the armed aggression of the two ruthless totalitarian regimes, and the first country that fought to defend free Europe."

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte marked the day by stating: "With the last remaining

survivors among us, I apologise on behalf of the government for the actions of the government at the time. Too many people in government institutions at the time simply followed German orders without realising the consequences". And French President Emmanuel Macron marked the Day by inaugurating a renovated memorial wall in Paris naming around 76,000 French Jews deported to Nazi death camps.

So the great and good and powerful all queued up to pay tribute to the victims. Yet, one must ask, how many leaders of these very same countries offered to take in threatened Jews at the Evian Conference back in 1938?

Today in my synagogue it is so different. Fellow-member and survivor of several camps Sam Freiman died very recently. He was one of the 'Boys'. He had been honoured as a survivor for some time, his face even gracing the synagogue's website home page. They had taken the time and trouble to make a DVD of his life and testimony. He had willingly talked about his life to local school children. And now they are publicising a special tribute afternoon to be put on in his honour.

The Synagogue was completely full for its own HMD event involving two survivor-speakers. The local mayor, MPs, councillors, leaders of local faith groups all attended. And the synagogue's separate HMD education programme for visiting school pupils is expanding year on year.

But where were they all back then? How many decades did it take? Yes, the government has now set aside £100 million of public money for a national Holocaust Memorial. But as refugees to this country my parents could not even afford to buy themselves a small fan heater to keep us warm. There are now so many Holocaust-related organisations, all with pretty logos and salaried staff, I could not name them all. But where were they all back then?

**David Wirth**

# MEMORIAL DAY REFLECTIONS

## Education and Commemoration

**There were noticeably more superb events for Holocaust Memorial Day this year than in any previous year. Yet there is fear that the Holocaust will become history with no eyewitnesses able to give testimony. The two main aims are far from achieved: antisemitism is increasing, not decreasing, and “Never Again” is still “Again and Again”**

I have no fear that the Holocaust will be relegated to history. We have excellent teaching/learning material now and it is improving all the time. The 2G network and G2G (generation to generation) already give talks about their parents' stories through their own experience of growing up with survivors. Survivors of the Cambodian, Bosnian, Rwandan and Darfur genocides are already speaking their testimonies, and there is at least one Uyghur survivor of the current identity genocide in China speaking prolifically.

The fear is more likely to be due to denial and political implications. Genocide is still allowed to run its course out of fear of standing up to abusive leaders who know they can get away with mass murder. The current Holocaust narrative is truncated at both ends; genocide prior to the Holocaust and currently active genocides are avoided for political expediency. How can the main aims be fulfilled without pressure on the whole political establishment for the necessary changes in attitude and behaviour to prevent genocide? Resistance, which has been very much under-represented in the Holocaust narrative, perhaps also adds to political fear.

Most, if not all, countries create myths to hide their own shameful history. This

is denial on a massive scale that creates the toxic legacy in which we are trapped today. It is time to work together to create the support and pressure to enable the UN to organise an ‘amnesty’ in which we all acknowledge the truth of our own and each other's shameful histories, in order jointly to aim for a better, more truthful world. A line could then be drawn, after which sovereign immunity would no longer protect abusive leaders being held to account in the International Criminal Court. To quote Rahima Mahmut (a Uyghur) “No oppressor should be able to hide from the public gaze”.

The exclusion of the Ottoman policy of annihilating its Christian and other non-Muslim citizens over the period 1900-1923 is deeply concerning. The Ottoman Genocide is still totally denied by modern Turkey and by those governments who prioritise trade with Turkey over truth, ethics and the security of peoples worldwide.

An Armenian survivor gave his personal testimony at the Wiener Library event at the first HMD in 2001. I was shocked at my ignorance of the Armenian Genocide. It was immediately obvious to me that there was a clear link with the Holocaust. Raphael Lemkin's word ‘genocide’ was coined in relation to the Ottoman policy of ethnic cleansing. Impunity, created by total lack of justice for the Armenians, has been followed by lack of justice, too little and too late, with each genocide, ensuring the steady increase of impunity. Two books by Stefan Ihrig, “Turkey in the Imagination of the Nazis” and “Justifying Genocide” make it very clear that Turkey ‘getting away with genocide’ created impunity for more genocide. Mustafa Kemal was adulated and called “The most brilliant Führer” in the German press. This aroused envy in Weimar Germany to the point of wanting their own ‘Führer’ to overturn the Treaty of Versailles, just as Mustafa Kemal (later Ataturk) had over-ridden the Treaty of Sèvres and created a free modern Turkey. The scene was set for Hitler to become that ‘Führer’.

Since 1948 we have international laws to prevent genocide. We cannot use them effectively because ‘sovereign immunity’ protects genocidal leaders of countries. We need sharper international laws. Myanmar is getting away with mass murder by claiming that there was no intent. If you can't prove intent to murder in domestic law, it becomes the crime of ‘manslaughter’. Failure to prove intent to annihilate a whole people could at least become the crime of ‘failing to protect a minority of citizens’.

Change is not likely to come from the top without ordinary people like you and me, in tens, thousands and millions, ‘Standing Together’ and pledging to do something towards making “Never Again” a reality.

**Ruth Barnett MBE**



Rahima Mahmut from the World Uyghur Congress speaking at the British Board of Deputies' HMD event on 31 January in a House of Commons Committee Room

# SAFE HAVEN

**“Well there’s the farm where the Jewish children lived during the Second World War,” the organiser of my trip to Northern Ireland to speak on Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 said, when I asked about points of interest in the area.**



Eve Kugler and Charlotte Balasz looking at the farm's records

The last thing I expected to learn when I agreed to speak at the Ards and North Down Borough commemoration in January was that this remote community on the eastern shore of Northern Ireland where there is no Jewish presence was a safe haven for hundreds of Kindertransport children during WW2. I wanted to know more.

So now my two-day trip had a dual purpose. On 27 January I flew to Belfast accompanied by AJR member and Holocaust Educational Trust volunteer Charlotte Balasz, who supported me wonderfully during the visit. On landing we were met by borough executive Donna Mackey who looked after us throughout our stay. She drove us to the beautiful Belfast City Hall where we had a quick look at the huge lobby with its walls of marble and art works important to the county's history. Next, I was interviewed by BBC NI. Our two-day visit was also extensively covered by the local press.

The Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration that evening was



Kindertransport memorial at Millisle School

chaired by Ards and Down Mayor Bill Kerry. Three young girls from Millisle primary school who looked far younger than their 11 years read excerpts from *Faraway Home*, Marilyn Taylor's fictional account of the Kindertransport children, my first sign that the Kindertransport had not been forgotten here.

I spoke about me and my family's survival in Germany and France and said we must learn from the past. I asked the audience to join me in the fight against rising antisemitism so that history would not repeat itself. I was overwhelmed by the appreciation and kindness many of the 100 guests expressed to me.

The next morning, following a further Holocaust talk to several hundred high school students in the presence of the Northern Ireland Education minister, we visited the Holocaust Memorial Garden on the grounds of the Millisle Primary School. The garden is dominated by a beautiful sculptured glass Magen David which, according to a plaque, "commemorates the safe haven which the farm and our school offered to hundreds of Jewish refugees from 1939 to 1949."

Inside we were welcomed by head teacher Linda Patterson who explained that early in 1939 members of the Belfast Jewish community purchased a 70-acre farm and with the help of the local community renovated its derelict buildings to shelter Kindertransport children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

From the summer of 1939 until its closure in 1948 life on the farm was modelled on a Kibbutz. Helped by local adults, children grew vegetables and grains. There were also cows and many chickens. Even the youngest children were required to work. The little

ones would pull unwelcome weeds from the soil. Up to 80 children lived on the farm at any one time, first earning a shilling, and later a half crown a week.

Many attended the local school where each was paired with a local pupil to help the Kindertransportees learn English. Mrs. Patterson showed us large ledgers from the 1940s and pointed to the handwritten entries of foreign children registered there.

A change occurred at the farm in 1946 when 39 teenagers, all camp survivors, came to live on the farm. One of many who returned to visit the farm years later, Rachel Levy, told Mrs Patterson she relished the beautiful view the fields provided and said "we started to feel ourselves again."

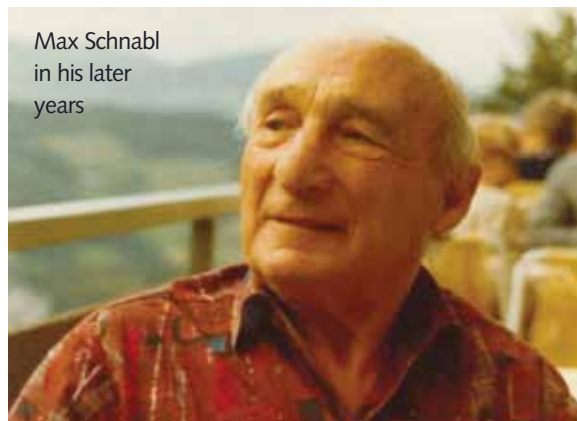
Today the buildings where the children lived are gone and there is no sign on the farm itself where hundreds of Kinder found refuge. But their history is kept alive by the Safe Haven garden, the book *Faraway Home*, the Ards and Down Council's annual HMD commemoration and, especially, by Mrs. Patterson who teaches her Year 7 pupils about the farm and talks to the many visitors who peruse the school registers and visit the garden.

"'Don't Stand By' is a phrase which plays a pivotal role in my life," Mrs. Paterson said. "I take the opportunity every day to keep the legacy of the Millisle farm alive". She will continue to give talks around Northern Ireland after she retires this June "reminding people about the wonderful welcome given to hundreds of Jewish refugees by the Millisle community over 70 years ago."

Eve Kugler

# "HAVE A GOOD DAY"

**Max Otto Schnabl was an Austrian lawyer who, like many AJR members, sacrificed much to bring his family to Britain. His daughter Hedi Schnabl-Argent takes up the story.**



Max Schnabl in his later years

The Insiders/Outsiders programme rightly celebrates the lives of Jewish refugees who came to the UK from Nazi Europe before WW2 and contributed so much to this country.

But 35 years after his death, I celebrate the story of my father who was one of those unsung refugees from Central Europe, a lawyer, who lived two thirds of his life as a loyal British citizen, without complaint about his loss of status and, finally, without bitterness against the people who had caused it.

Doctor Max Otto Schnabl was born in Moravia in 1892, in a small town where Jews and Christians lived alongside each other in almost equal numbers and resolved difficulties by electing "twin mayors", one from each community, who worked amicably together.

Max studied law in Vienna. He played football and chess for Jewish teams and gave lectures on Judaism and Jewish history to fellow students, one of whom was Teddy Kollek, (later the Mayor of Jerusalem).

When Max was called "a dirty Jew" he challenged the offending student to an illegal duel. Both men survived, but my

father's nose was nearly sliced off and had to be sewn back – he bore the scar for the rest of his life.

In WW1 Max willingly joined the Austro-Hungarian army and served briefly as a lieutenant in the cavalry. He was taken prisoner by the Russians in 1916, relieved not to have killed anyone. Conditions in the prison camp were harsh and brutal: Max survived smallpox, learned English from a Berlitz pocketbook, and played chess on a makeshift board with makeshift pieces.

Prisoners were freed during the Russian Revolution in 1917, but had to find their own way home. It took Max eighteen months to return to Austria; he was seriously ill and a third of his stomach had to be removed. He was warned that he would never be able to eat normally again, but I remember a father with a large, healthy appetite.

Back at University, Max met my mother and they married after he qualified. He maintained himself during his studies by working as a parliamentary stenographer and by joining the "claque" at the opera - students who were paid to stand at the back of the stalls to lead the applause.

After the Anschluss my father, the optimist, quickly turned into a realist, and began the long pursuit for guarantors and affidavits needed to gain entry into another country. By day he worked at a law firm and at night he submitted to scrubbing pavements and cleaning public lavatories, but he

would not paint "Jude" on shop windows nor slap the face of a fellow Jew when ordered to do so.

18 months later my mother, father and I arrived in England, complete with visas, guarantees and my father's certificate to prove that he had completed a course to become an English butler. Max took pride in being a perfect butler in the Hertfordshire manor where my mother cooked English food and I was barely tolerated - my keep was deducted from their salary.

My father was interned as an enemy alien but he remained optimistic that the good British people would realise their mistake, and he played a lot of chess while he waited. As soon as possible, he enlisted in the Pioneer Corps. At 49 he was too old for active service, but proud to serve even in a menial capacity, while well aware of the irony of serving on opposing sides in two world wars.

As lawyers cannot practice in England without an English law degree, my father found a job as a clerk with a firm of solicitors and began to study by post. He passed the exam to start on a degree but was already over 50 and had a family to support. So, he gave up all hope of becoming a lawyer again. But he went on playing chess. In time he came to be revered as a kind of "eminence grise", always ready to support and advise young lawyers. The partners did him the honour of referring to him, and addressing him as Doctor Schnabl, which pleased him immensely. He retired after 30 years at the edge of the profession he loved and continued playing chess until he was nearly 92.

His family was with him when he was dying, and just before the end, he raised his head, waved his hand, and said very faintly: "Have a good day".



Max Schnabl during his Cavalry days

# Around the AJR

As explained in the letter from our Chairman and Chief Executive, which appears on page 3, all AJR regional group meetings and social events have been cancelled. This includes the Second Generation conference planned for later this month and the members' holiday to the Cotswolds in May. Bookings for holidays for later this year have also been suspended.

We apologise therefore for the absence of our normal event listings on this page. We will reintroduce our activities and the information about them as soon as the national situation allows.

In the meantime we are delighted to bring you these few photos from events that happened last month. We'd also love to receive any suggestions from AJR members about how to keep ourselves busy and happy while our social lives are restricted.

## FILM CLUB



A sizeable audience appreciated a screening of *Stan & Ollie*, the Laurel & Hardy biopic. One member who particularly enjoyed it was Gordon Spencer of Barnet who, together with his wife Elizabeth, was judged "runner-up" in the Daily Mirror's 1976 national contest to imitate the famous comedy duo.

## BRISTOL

In March AJR's Bristol group enjoyed lunch and a talk by David Mendelsohn. He spoke about his mother's life, and in particular how therapeutic it was for her to be able to write her story and publish it, raising money for charity. AJR member Hazel Rank-Broadley also reported welcoming a new Kindertransport guest.

## GLASGOW



AJR regional co-ordinator Agnes Isaacs reports that there were "smiles all round" at the Glasgow Lunch and Film afternoon.

## LEEDS



From L-R, Peter Kurer, Robin Gilmore, Arek Hersch and Trudy Silman

Peter Kurer talked about how the Quakers saved his life. Peter, originally from Vienna, was among 7,000 Jews brought to England with the help of the Quakers. They helped his father set up a dental practice in south Manchester and obtain guarantees for the rest of his family. Peter and his brother attended a Quaker boarding school.

# CONTACTS

**Susan Harrod**  
Events and Outreach Manager  
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

**Wendy Bott**  
Northern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07908 156 365 wendy@ajr.org.uk

**Agnes Isaacs**  
Northern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07908 156 361 agnes@ajr.org.uk

**Ros Hart**  
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07966 969 951 roshart@ajr.org.uk

**Karen Diamond**  
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07966 631 778  
karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
Susan Harrod  
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

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

## SPRING GROVE



*London's Most Luxurious*  
**RETIREMENT HOME**  
214 Finchley Road  
London NW3

- Entertainment
- Activities
- Stress Free Living
- 24 House Staffing Excellent Cuisine
- Full En-Suite Facilities

**Call for more information or a personal tour**  
**020 8446 2117**  
or **020 7794 4455**  
[enquiries@springdene-care-homes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@springdene-care-homes.co.uk)

## PillarCare

Outstanding live-in and hourly care in your home at flexible, affordable rates.



020 7482 2188 [pillarcare.co.uk](http://pillarcare.co.uk)

## SWITCH ON ELECTRICS

Rewires and all household electrical work

**PHONE PAUL: 020 8200 3518**  
**Mobile: 0795 614 8566**

## [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  
020 8455 9139  
or 07813 803 889  
for more information



**Claims Conference** ועידת התביעות  
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

## ATTENTION HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND SPOUSES

The Claims Conference has negotiated the following liberalizations with the German government.

### Article 2 and CEE Fund

The following Jewish Holocaust survivors, who were persecuted in the open ghettos identified below, for at least three months, may be eligible for a monthly pension from the Article 2 or CEE Fund:

- In 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;
- In Bulgaria, survivors persecuted in Plovdiv, between September 1942 and September 1944;
- In the Netherlands, survivors persecuted in the ghetto in Amsterdam, between September 1941 and September 1943.

**Note:** Jewish Nazi victims from these open ghettos in Romania, Bulgaria and Amsterdam may also be entitled to a pension from the ZRBG (Ghetto Pension). This pension is not administered by the Claims Conference.

The maximum annual income and asset limit for the Article 2 Fund and for social welfare services has been changed. The annual maximum income for eligible recipients is now **£38,410** per annum and the maximum allowable assets held by the recipient has been raised to **£768,350** (excluding the principle residence of the applicant). The German Ministry of Finance has determined that "old-age pensions and pensions on account of reduced earning capacity, occupational accident, occupational illness, or death, or comparable benefits" should not be included in calculating an applicant's income for the purpose of an application to the Article 2 Fund. For more details see <http://www.claimscon.org/what-we-do/compensation/background/article2/comparable-payments/>.

**NOTE:** It is not possible to receive an Article 2 Fund pension in addition to a pension from the BEG.

Applicants who were a fetus during the time that their mother suffered persecution described may also be eligible. Eligibility is dependent on all the criteria of the fund being met and for a full set of criteria see [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org)

### Child Survivor Fund

The Child Survivor Fund will provide those who took part in the Kindertransport a one-time payment amounting to €2,500 per person

Participants of the Kindertransport in this sense are deemed to be Jewish persons who met the following cumulative criteria at the time of the transport:

- o they were under 21 years of age at the time of the transport, unaccompanied by their parents and took part in a transport that was organized by third parties, not organized by the German government, in order to escape potentially threatening persecution by German forces;
- o they were transported from somewhere within the German Reich or from territories that had been annexed or occupied at the time;
- o the transport took place between November 9, 1938 and September 1, 1939 or was approved by the German authorities after November 9, 1938 but before September 1, 1939.

In addition, all pension recipients who were in one of the open ghettos in Romania, Bulgaria or Amsterdam named above and born after January 1, 1928, may be entitled to a one-time payment from the Child Survivor Fund administered by the Claims Conference.

### New Payment to Spouses of deceased Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiaries

Beginning January 1, 2020, the Claims Conference will provide payments to eligible spouses of deceased recipients of the Article 2 and Central and Eastern European (CEE) Funds.

A spouse of an Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary may, upon the death of the Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary, be entitled to receive €513 per month for up to 9 months, paid in three quarterly installments, if the following conditions apply:

1. The spouse is alive as of January 1, 2020 or the date of application, whichever is the latter; and
2. The spouse is alive at the date of the payment; and
3. The spouse was married to the Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary at the time of death of the Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary; and
4. The Article 2/CEE Fund recipient passed away at any point while he or she was receiving a payment from the program.

The spouse of a Holocaust survivor must be alive at the time of each payment.

Other heirs, including children, are not entitled to receive any payment in lieu of the spouse.

To download an application from our website, please go to: [www.claimscon.org/apply](http://www.claimscon.org/apply)

**For more information, contact:**

Claims Conference

Postfach 90 05 43

60445 Frankfurt am Main Deutschland

Tel: +49-69-970-7010

E-mail: [A2-HF-CEE2@claimscon.org](mailto:A2-HF-CEE2@claimscon.org) [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org)

The Claims Conference has an Ombudswoman. To contact the Office of the Ombudswoman, please email [Ombudsman@claimscon.org](mailto:Ombudsman@claimscon.org) or write to The Ombudswoman, PO Box 585, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113

# REVIEWS

## **SURVIVAL AND LOVE: DOUBLE ESCAPE FROM THE NAZIS**

**Ted Bailey**

**Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd**

This fascinating double biography tells the extraordinary story of a couple from different countries and backgrounds who survived the war in the most unimaginably difficult circumstances and later married.

The two protagonists could not have been more different. Lizzy Schwarz was a Czechoslovakian Jew and Jerzy Dyszkiewicz a Polish Roman Catholic officer cadet. But both were repeatedly blessed with extraordinarily lucky escapes. Lizzy survived terrible ordeals in camps and Jerzy was taken prisoner of war, eventually escaped and, after many close shaves, made his way to England.

Lizzy had a carefree, happy childhood with her older sister Kitty in Boskovice in the Moravian highlands. Her parents, Moric and Hilda, were shop owners living in a big house in the main square above the delicatessen. But all changed with Germany's sudden occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. At 13 she was banned from attending the local school, then the family property was commandeered, forcing them to move to the backstreet ghetto.

In March 1942 the Schwarz family was transported to Theresienstadt where her mother's health declined after cruel treatment and she died in June. Tragically Lizzy was left alone in the world after Kitty and later Moric were transported to perish in Auschwitz. In October 1944 she was sent there herself but somehow survived privations and selections before being deemed fit enough to work in Dresden. After the devastating bombing of the city she reached Mauthausen before liberation by the Americans as war ended.

Lizzie thought later she probably survived as she was young and strong

enough to work despite inhuman living conditions and a starvation diet.

Meanwhile Jerzy was captured and became a prisoner of war in Russia but being sent back to Germany probably saved his life in the face of Soviet purges. Geneva Convention conditions were ignored but his chance came working in Aachen near the railway and he boldly escaped with three colleagues. There followed a dangerous and complicated journey of over 2,200 miles through Belgium and France with the help of brave resistance workers. They took the difficult Freedom Trail over the Pyrenees to Spain and finally reached safety in Gibraltar and England.

After the war the couple met through Jerzy's Polish friends. They married in 1955 and had two daughters. Lizzie gradually spoke about her parents and wartime history and they visited Czechoslovakia a few times and Poland once, Jerzy feeling a stranger in his native land. He did not go back to re-visit his escape route but always regretted not making contact with a brave family who helped him in Liège.

Author Ted Bailey came across the basic facts of Lizzy and Jerzy's wartime experiences by sheer chance. Based on recorded interviews, he has pieced together their stories, putting them into an informed historical context. This fairly short book is illustrated by personal photos, maps and a timeline with direct quotes about Jerzy's experiences which help capture the atmosphere of the time.

*Janet Weston*

## **VILLA RUSSO: EINE DEUTSCHE GESCHICHTE**

**By Julia Nelki**  
**Offizin-Verlag**

This absorbing and moving book details the efforts undertaken after 1989 by a family of German-Jewish refugees now resident in Britain to reclaim a property that had been 'aryanised' after 1933 and then, after 1945, taken over by the East German state. Based on the exceptionally diligent research carried out by the author and her father, Wolf Nelki,

it centres on the Villa Russo, built by Moritz Russo at the end of the nineteenth century in the small town of Wernigerode in Sachsen-Anhalt. Julia Nelki's great-uncle Benno Russo and his wife Clara, who ran the family factory adjacent to the splendid villa, were dispossessed by the Nazis, deported and murdered; the property passed to a Nazi. After 1945, it was used by a consumer cooperative and then as a school for young people with special needs.

After 1989, Wolf Nelki, a convinced socialist, was content to leave the property in communal hands; but when the heirs of the former Nazi owner attempted to reclaim it, he launched a counterclaim. Much of the book is taken up with the legal complexities and political obstacles that he and his family then encountered. The tale of dormant prejudice and bureaucratic obstructionism makes for dispiriting reading, though it has a happy ending: thanks to the tireless efforts of the author and her supporters, the villa returned to its rightful ownership and now serves as a musical and cultural centre.

Wolf Nelki was the son of Hermann Nelki and Ernestine Russo. The first part of the book is largely taken up with the family histories of the Ashkenazi Nelkis, German Jews who worked their way up from poverty to prosperity as entrepreneurs and professional men, and the Sephardi Russos, the Ladino-speaking descendants of Spanish Jews who had been forced to flee to the Ottoman Empire after 1492. We learn about the branches of the Nelki family: one went to Hungary and integrated into the Catholic population, another became circus-owners and ended up in Mexico, and a third entered the German aristocracy, marrying into the family of Ernst Heydebrand und von der Lasa, leader of the arch-reactionary Conservative Party before 1918.

There are some slips. All the money raised from the sale of heirless, formerly Jewish property in Germany does not go to Israel;



the Claims Conference, based in New York, distributes that money to many countries, including the UK. Nelki's depiction of West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s sometimes seems unduly negative, for it was during those years that a strong and stable democracy was established there. But overall the book is thoroughly to be recommended. The appearance of this German translation will, one hopes, lead to the publication of the original in English.

*Anthony Grenville*

### MANJA

by Anna Gmeyner

Persephone Books Ltd 2010

The author of this outstanding but little-known novel is Anna Gmeyner, an Austrian refugee, who came to London with her daughter in 1935. Anna's daughter, Eva Ibbotson, who has written the introduction, remembers her mother writing her book on the sofa of their Belsize Park boarding house.

The novel takes place in a German town between 1920 and 1933. It tells the story of five children, four boys and one girl, all born in the same hospital, who become close friends. Their backgrounds are Jewish, half-Jewish and (probably) Christian but Communist. All that is happening politically at that time is reflected in the lives of the children. Manja, a Polish-Jewish refugee, is ironically the most optimistic and binds them all together with her positive attitude until the inevitably tragic climax.

This book will be particularly interesting to anyone who watched the recent BBC series on the rise of Nazism, as it helps to explain how a whole nation of seemingly normal people became so infected with the poison of antisemitism. On the other hand, we learn that Max Hartung, a rich business man – the *Kommerzienrat* of whom everyone is in awe – is really a Jew, married to a Christian woman. With the rise of Nazism he strives to aryanise his family, and forces his son, a sensitive child and one of the group of five children, to attend Hitler Youth activities and learn boxing.

This is a gripping novel, from which we learn much of the lives of ordinary people, rich and poor, and of their reactions to Nazism. The novelty is that we also see it reflected in the lives of thoughtful children. If we want to learn what really happened in Germany at that time, this is the book to read.

*Thea Valman*

### THE ANOINTED

By Michael Arditti

Arcadia Ltd

This is a truly fascinating book. Based on Bible stories from the book of Samuel, the content is delivered through the voices of three of King David's ten wives, with comments from some of the others quoted from time to time.

David is introduced as the young shepherd boy whose music drives away the evil spirit with which King Saul is from time to time afflicted. He is noticed by the king's daughter, Michal, who is immediately enchanted by him. Another person whom David comes across while in the king's service is Michal's brother, Jonathan, who, as anyone familiar with the Bible will know, inspired David to reflect on a love 'passing the love of women', words within the lament he wrote after his beloved friend's death in battle.

What Arditti accomplishes most skilfully, through the women's voices, is the way the modest, kind shepherd boy and later hero on the battlefield, is transformed, firstly through his ambition to succeed Saul as king, and later as king himself, into a conceited, domineering man, convinced of his own righteousness and that he is serving the Lord, rather than the will of men. He is also an inveterate womaniser, with a harem of concubines in addition to his many wives.

Michal is his first wife and three out of the six sections of the book are in her words. While delighted to wed the young man she was so enchanted by, it is not long before she becomes disabused. She is also distressed by her inability to bear any offspring and is not too upset when replaced by other

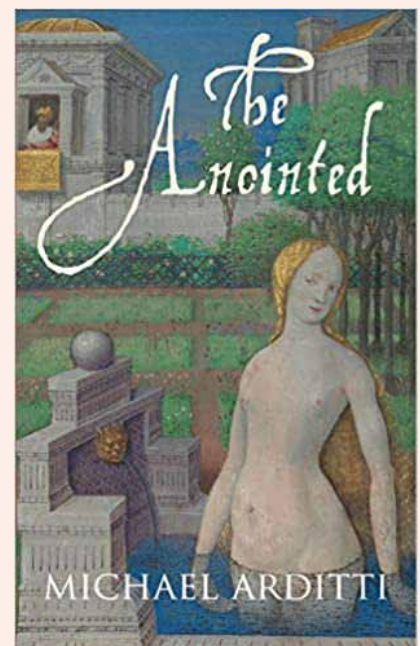
women. She is then forced to marry Paltiel, a man in his sixties much older than herself, but eventually is won over by his kindness, sensitivity and gentleness and is greatly troubled when, at some point later, she is forced to remarry the king.

Abigail, a widow some years older than David, is another of his wives and is faced with the discomfort that, when David arrives, ostensibly to woo her, he seduces her beautiful maidservant Achinoam, whom he impregnates. Later, in the king's household and in the harem, the two women form a close bond. Two of the book's sections are in Abigail's words.

The remaining section is told by Bathsheba, a young woman barely out of her teens who is married to Uriah, a Hittite, who has acquainted himself fully with Israelite law and is a captain in the king's army. When she is forced to marry David, she is greatly distraught and, all the more so, when David forces Uriah to lead his army in another battle in which he is soon killed. Bathsheba clearly enchants the king who has no desire to lose her, and it is her son, Solomon, who eventually accedes to the throne.

Arditti's skilful retelling of biblical content merits a very wide readership and I feel privileged to have had this opportunity to read it.

*Emma Klein*



# OBITUARIES

## FRANK (FRANZ) BECK

Born: 28 December 1930, Vienna.

Died: 3 February 2020, London

**Dr Frank Beck was a British computer scientist who pioneered the application of user-interface hardware including the touchscreen, the computer-controlled knob and the video wall.**

His parents were Friedrich and Edith Beck. At the age of 8, shortly before the outbreak of WW2 he escaped to London with his mother. His father had already fled to France, where he survived for three years before being sent to Auschwitz and killed.

In England, having been on the list for the Kindertransport, Franz was put into hostels with other refugee children, while his mother went into domestic service. Franz anglicised his name to Frank and, like thousands of other children, was evacuated from London during hostilities.

After school he worked as a wireless mechanic in the Royal Air Force, then while studying maths at King's College and Birkbeck College he worked at the GEC research laboratory. His interest in the emerging science of computer programming led to a position at the



Central Electricity Generating Board, performing engineering calculations on their English Electric DEUCE computer.

In 1958 he married Margaret Louise Hammel, (1934–2003). Their sons Simon and Stephen, who were born in 1961 and 1962, married and each had two sons.

In 1962 he was invited to apply for a position as a mathematician at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland, and the family moved there. In 1967 Beck was invited to work at the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago in the United States, and the family moved to La Grange, Illinois.

In 1972 Frank was asked to return to Europe to design and build the SPS control room in the environment of a revolutionary multicomputer control system. In 1973 he and a colleague published a CERN document, outlining the concept for a prototype touchscreen, which can be found in YouTube under the title: The Power of the Touchscreen - How We Invented The World (Discovery Channel), as well as a multi-function computer-configurable knob, both of which found their way onto the consoles of the finished control room.

Beck began post-graduate studies at the Université Louis-Pasteur in Strasbourg, France. His doctoral thesis was presented in 1976. In 1983 he moved back to Illinois for two years to work at the Fermilab in the field of particle physics before returning once more to CERN.

His autobiography 'Grandpa's book', published in 2013, relates the story of his life from childhood in Vienna to his early adulthood in England, via persecution, emigration, evacuation, adventure and a slow return to normality.

He retired in the early 1990s and he and Louise returned to London, where he continued to lecture and study at the U3A. He died of natural causes aged 89. He was interviewed about his life in 2013, which can be found in YouTube under the title: *The last witnesses of the time - Frank (Franz) Beck*.

Frank was a true genius who will be remembered for his scientific contribution of the touchscreen to the world and, on a personal level, for his kindness and generosity.

**Freddy Berdach**

## HENRY JACKSON (HEINZ JOSEF ISAACSOHN)

Born: 9 November 1929, Berlin

Died: 2 February 2020, Manchester

**During the Revolution Henry's mother's family fled Russia for Germany, where she met her husband Oscar and they had their only child, Henry.**

Henry's early childhood was spent



under the Nazi regime. He remembered seeing torchlit Hitler Youth parades and wondering why he could not join in; he also experienced his father being arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen on the night of his ninth birthday on 9 November 1938 – Kristallnacht.

His mother was able to negotiate his father's release from Sachsenhausen partly because the local Gestapo did not think that she was Jewish as a result of her blonde hair and blue eyes. The family left Germany for Amsterdam and

*continued on next page*

arrived in England just before war broke out.

Henry remained painfully aware that millions of others were not as fortunate. His uncle Alfred and aunt Edith were both murdered at Theresienstadt; their son Hansi, of whom he was particularly fond, was murdered at Mauthausen just days before the end of the war.

These experiences shaped the rest of his life. He retained a strong hatred of injustice as well as gratitude to Britain. He left those feelings indelibly printed on subsequent generations – it is no coincidence that his only son has worked for the past two decades at the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court, established as a direct result of the Holocaust and the Nuremberg Tribunal respectively.

Henry loved his schooldays at The Hall School, Hampstead, and at St Paul's School. The school's Hammersmith premises are now a hotel where he

recently celebrated his 90th birthday. During the war they were used by General Montgomery to plan the Normandy landings and to present the final invasion plan to General Eisenhower, Winston Churchill and King George VI on 15 May 1944 – a fact which greatly impressed the young Henry.

He studied accountancy, coming top of the country in his qualifying examinations. Yet, even then, antisemitism played a role. He received no offers of work as 'Henry Isaacsohn', only to obtain many offers when he subsequently changed his name to Henry Jackson.

Drawn to stockbroking, he left his first firm when told he would never be made a partner because he was Jewish. He subsequently enjoyed a stellar career (including as a partner!) at Simon & Coates, Chase Manhattan and Tilney & Co.

Henry was often described as a "gentle

man" in the truest sense. His life was transformed when he met his wife-to-be, Kathrine, in 1968. They found that they had much in common, being from similar backgrounds. They married one year later and in 1970 had one son, Anthony. Henry remained deeply in love with Kathrine, and she with him, for the rest of his life and, although seriously ill in hospital, was still able recently to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary surrounded by his family.

Henry was also an outstanding family man. He and Kathrine developed a large circle of friends, with whom they shared their passions of Judaism, current affairs and the arts. Henry also shared with them his interest in finance, his great sense of humour and wonderful ability as an after-dinner speaker and story-teller. He will be sorely missed by Kathrine, Anthony, his daughter-in-law Torill and granddaughters Evina and Eliana.

**Kathrine Jackson and Anthony Jackson**

## CARING FOR OUR CAREGIVERS

**AJR has launched a new support service especially aimed at helping family carers, i.e. people who care for or assist family members who are Holocaust survivors or refugees.**

Offering both practical assistance and information and emotional support, the service is tailored to individual needs and will help carers understand both their own rights and those of the person they are caring for. For

example, AJR can assist carers in obtaining financial and statutory benefits and also provide training and even alternative therapies to help them cope with challenging situations.

Caryn Bentley is the co-ordinator of AJR's Carer Support Service. She explains: "Some family carers only identify as such if they are providing hands-on, round the clock care for their relative. Yet being a family carer is not always about day to day tasks and practicalities of care. It often includes



Caryn Bentley

coordination of care and other tasks that can take their toll physically and emotionally".

Caryn can be directly contacted on 020 3928 7797 or via [caryn@ajr.org.uk](mailto:caryn@ajr.org.uk).

**WHY NOT CONVERT YOUR OLD CINE FILMS AND PUT THEM ON DVDS FREE OF CHARGE?**

Contact Alf Buechler at [alf@buechler.org](mailto:alf@buechler.org) or tel 020 8554 5635 or 07488 774 414

### JOSEPH PEREIRA

(ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years) is now available for DIY repairs and general maintenance. No job too small, very reasonable rates. Please telephone 07966 887 485.

### Books Bought

**MODERN AND OLD**

**Eric Levene**

020 8364 3554 / 07855387574  
[ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk)

# LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## LOCKDOWN NATION



Nowhere in the world is now free of the Coronavirus, with the reactions to it varying in intensity and severity.

At first the authorities in Israel thought they could keep the virus out, but a group of tourists from South Korea who had visited various holy sites in Israel were found to be infected on their return to Korea. Unfortunately, several classes of middle-school pupils happened to have been visiting those sites just then, and several hundred of them were then placed in isolation in their own homes. Initially, Israelis returning from certain countries in Europe and the Far East were told to remain in isolation in their homes for two weeks following their arrival. Many people cancelled flights to

anywhere and everywhere, and Ben Gurion airport became a virtual desert.

At the recent general election special isolation polling booths were set up in various parts of the country, manned by people in protective suits. Special double envelopes were provided into which the affected individuals were supposed to insert their ballot slips. How they could be removed without risk of infection beats me, but it appears to have been done, to everyone's satisfaction. Whether it has helped stop the spread of the virus or brought about a solution to the current political impasse is debatable.

Initially quarantine was restricted to just those who were on the same flight as someone subsequently found to be infected. But on 9 March the order came that all Israelis who have returned from abroad must remain in isolation at home for a fortnight.

At a recent family celebration to welcome a new baby I declined to kiss

and be kissed by any of my relatives. I felt terrible but explained it by pointing out that I'm in a high-risk group. Henceforth I will agree only to touch elbows.

At two recent concerts we attended we didn't see anyone wearing a mask. At the performance of the *'Barber of Seville'* the reference to someone having been ill was changed to read that he should have been in isolation. That brought forth smiles and chuckles.

We haven't seen fist-fights breaking out in supermarkets over packets of toilet paper, but people do seem to be stocking up on essentials. No one knows how long the situation will last, but functions, sports events, celebrations have been curtailed, and flights to and from Israel more or less stopped, constituting a dreadful blow to the tourist industry, with knock-on effects and economic hardship for many thousands.

What the future holds is anyone's guess.

## LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

**In these stressful and uncertain times, when so many things are outside your control, you need to make sure you look after your own mental health.**

Here are some ideas from Jami, the specialist provider of mental health services in the Jewish community:

- Remember that social distancing does not mean emotional distancing. Establish a network and stay connected. See people online through video chat, or talk on the phone
- Concentrate on areas of your life you can control. Plan a routine for a week at a time including meal plans and shopping lists
- Find activities that will help you relax, such as reading a book, doing a jigsaw or watching a film
- Limit your watching, reading and listening to news or social media if you find it is making you more anxious. Avoid speculation and look up reputable news sources, maybe checking for updates a couple of set times a day
- Get some fresh air – if you're not self-isolating, go for a walk and clear your head. If you are self-isolating, open the windows and let some air in
- Exercise – if you can't get out for a walk, do some exercise inside, maybe even following some type of workout video online
- Create a positive 'to do' list – books/movies/recipes you haven't had a chance to read/watch/try

**If you're looking after other people, having a routine is essential. Set some boundaries so you all have some 'me' time, and remind yourself this won't last forever.**

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

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

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

Telephone 020 8385 3070 e-mail [editorial@ajr.org.uk](mailto:editorial@ajr.org.uk) AssociationofJewishRefugees @TheAJR\_

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)

Printed by FBprinters, Unit 5, St Albans House, St Albans Lane, London NW11 7QB Tel: 020 8458 3220 Email: [info@fbprinters.com](mailto:info@fbprinters.com)

The AJR Journal is printed on 100% recycled material and posted out in fully recyclable plastic mailing envelopes.