

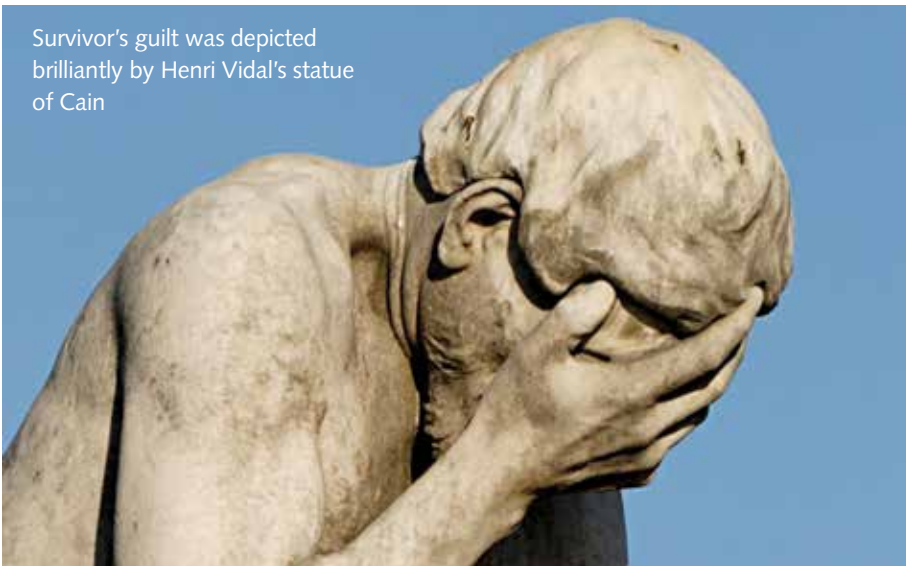


The Guilt of the Survivor

Bertolt Brecht is best known for his plays. But he was also a great poet and wrote one of the best poems ever written about the guilt of the survivor, *I, The Survivor*:

**'I know of course: it's simply luck
That I've survived so many friends.
But last night in a dream
I heard those friends say of me:
"Survival of the fittest"
And I hated myself.'**

Survivor's guilt was depicted brilliantly by Henri Vidal's statue of Cain



It was written in 1942, in exile in America, one of a group of poems about those who had died in Europe. These included *On The Suicide of the Refugee W.B.*, his close friend, Walter Benjamin, who had committed suicide trying to escape from occupied France in September 1940:

'So the future lies in darkness and the forces of right
Are weak. All this was plain to you
When you destroyed a torturable body.'

Then there is his poem, *After the death of my collaborator M.S.* about Margarete Steffin, which begins:

'Since you died, little teacher,
I walk around restlessly, unseeing
In a grey world, stunned,
As if laid off with nothing to occupy
me.'

The guilt of the survivor is one of the
Continued on page 2

REPORTING IN

As is customary for this time of the year, our May issue features our latest Annual Report, summarising the many activities of the AJR over the last calendar year.

Of course 2020 was an extraordinary year for everyone, and our report shows how we rose to the challenges but also highlights the significant impact of the pandemic on our members.

Apart from the report, this issue contains our usual blend of fascinating opinions, reviews and eye witness accounts drawn from our wider community. We hope you enjoy reading them all.

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

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Editorial Assistant Lilian Levy
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Two ways of writing about the Holocaust (cont.)

great subjects of 20th century literature and cinema. Auden's poem, *Musée des Beaux Arts* (1938) is also about suffering, but in Auden's case it is about the indifference of others to someone else's suffering, 'how everything turns away':

About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While someone else is eating or
opening a window or just walking dully
along; ...
In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how
everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the
ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken
cry,
But for him it was not an important
failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs
disappearing into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship
that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out
of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed
calmly on.'

The Polish poet, Czeslaw Milosz, wrote two of his greatest poems, *Campo dei Fiori* and *A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto*, about the bystander, the one who survives. Except he, unlike Auden's ploughman, doesn't look away, but looks on helplessly and that becomes his subject. Milosz wrote *Campo dei Fiori*, about 'the loneliness of the dying', in German-occupied Warsaw in 1943. Perhaps the greatest verse is the third, as he moves from Rome where Giordano Bruno is burned alive in the Camp de Fiori, to 'that beautiful Warsaw Sunday':

'I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel
one clear spring evening
to the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
the salvos from the ghetto wall,
and couples were flying
high in the cloudless sky.'

A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto
ends:

'What will I tell him, I, a Jew of the New
Testament,
Waiting two thousand years for the
second coming of Jesus?
My broken body will deliver me to his
sight
And he will count me among the
helpers of death:
The uncircumcised.'

Nabokov is often thought of as a precious writer, more concerned with style and artifice than feelings or realism. His style is less direct than that of Brecht or Milosz. But his novel, *Pnin* (1957), is one of the most moving novels of the post-war era. *Pnin* is a hapless Russian-born refugee living in America. Late in the novel we discover that *Pnin's* first love, Mira Belochkin, a Jew, was murdered at Buchenwald where Nabokov's own brother Sergey was murdered. Nabokov's pain and *Pnin's* suddenly come together in this extraordinary scene of remembrance:

'One had to forget – because one
could not live with the thought that
this graceful,
fragile, tender young woman with
those eyes, that smile, ... had been
brought in a cattle
car to an extermination camp and
killed by an injection of phenol into the
heart, into
the gentle heart one had heard beating
under one's lips in the dark of the past.'

The Jewish refugee filmmaker, Billy Wilder, directed some great comedies, especially, *The Seven Year Itch* (1956) and *Some Like It Hot* (1960), both starring Marilyn Monroe, but there is a dark side to Wilder's films, echoing his own personal tragedies, scenes of people trapped (*Ace in the Hole*), trying to gas themselves (*The Apartment*) or on the move, fleeing for their lives (*Some Like It Hot*). Immediately after the war, Wilder made a documentary film, *Death Mills*, or *Die Todesmühlen* (1945), which was intended for German audiences to educate them about Nazi atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. Wilder's mother, Eugenia "Gitla" Siedlisker, died in 1943 at Plaszow; his stepfather, Bernard "Berl" Siedlisker, in 1942 at Belzec; and his grandmother, Balbina Baldinger, died in 1943 in the ghetto in Nowy Targ. Despite his sadness, Wilder made many great films, some of them comedies, and yet there are

also many also traces of loss, side by side with the comedy and the greatness.

Vassily Grossman was the author of two of the greatest novels ever written about the Second World War: *Stalingrad* and *Life and Fate*, both only recently translated. Grossman's mother was murdered by the Nazis during the liquidation of the Berdichev Ghetto. He was consumed with guilt for the rest of his life, unable to forgive himself for not rescuing her before the German invasion. Both novels feature a letter to the Jewish physicist Viktor Shtrum, largely based on Grossman himself. The letter is from Shtrum's mother, Anna Semyonovna, but it takes some time before he finally gets to read it. It is passed from hand to hand seven times in *Stalingrad* and we don't read it until we read the sequel, *Life and Fate*. When we do, it is one of the most moving scenes in modern literature. We feel his guilt – and Grossman's.

Alan Isler's best novel was also his first, *The Prince of West End Avenue* (1994), later brilliantly performed as a one-man show by Kerry Shale at the Hampstead Theatre and then revived at JW3. It is part comedy, part tragedy, and tells the story of the production of *Hamlet* in an old people's home in New York. The novel is told in the first person by Otto Korner (formerly Körner), a German refugee, and mixes the story of the production with flashbacks from his early life, in particular, how he was the one who got to survive while others in his family did not, trusting his superior judgment.

It is hard to imagine a more diverse group of figures: Brecht, Auden, Milosz, Nabokov, Wilder, Grossman, Isler. A filmmaker, three poets, three novelists. Most were refugees or, like Auden, in exile. All apart from Grossman spent significant periods in America. Milosz wrote about acts of witness, others about terrible losses they experienced but never witnessed, Grossman's mother, Nabokov's brother, members of Wilder's family, some of Brecht's closest friends. What they all did was find ways of turning their feelings of guilt into extraordinary works of art, some of the greatest films, poems and novels of the 20th century. These speak to many refugees and survivors today, and to their children, and will speak to many generations in the future.

David Herman

HEADING BACK TO SCHOOL

Representatives from the Jewish Museum London, AJR, Holocaust Educational Trust, Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association, Learning from the Righteous and the National Holocaust Centre and Museum met together, over Zoom, in late March 2021 to discuss the roadmap for in person Holocaust Survivor sessions with schools students.

Each organisation spoke about the range of opinions amongst the survivors they work with, and the discussions many have already had about when they would feel comfortable returning. Some survivors are ready and willing to begin as soon as government restrictions allow, others find it safer, and easier for mobility reasons, to continue to do virtual events which they have found very fulfilling.

All organisations reported that schools are not yet booking in-person speaker sessions. Teachers are booking at much shorter notice than before the pandemic and are still booking virtual sessions. Schools appear very aware that there are high risks with the student population who are not yet scheduled to be vaccinated. It is therefore difficult to predict what the situation will be for the summer term, nor for the start of the next academic year. Therefore, while we decided to continue to pause in-person speaker sessions we will all monitor bookings and review the situation together termly. We did recognise that some survivors are unable to share their testimony via Zoom. One suggestion (for organisations with a fixed site) was to invite the survivor to come to our buildings and zoom to a school from there. This would allow their testimony to be shared to a school whilst keeping them physically separated from the students. This is something some organisations have already trialled and which others will begin in the coming months.



School visits, such as this one made by Zigi Shipper in 2019, are an important element of Holocaust education but have now been on hold for over a year

Discussions were also had about the social side of our work with survivors which is hard to replicate over Zoom. The idea of holding summer socials, such as outdoor garden parties, was raised. We will continue to explore possibilities and work together as a group with the aim of organising something safe and fun for as many volunteers/survivors/speakers as possible when restrictions ease over the summer.

STUNNING COINCIDENCE FOR AJR COLLEAGUES

There was both shock and joy within AJR last month when the manager of our *My Story* and *Next Generations* projects, Debra Barnes, realised that one of the Yom HaShoah yellow candles lit by our Head of HR, Karen Markham, had her aunt's name on it – a one in six million chance.

Debra, who has written a novel inspired by her family history called *The Young Survivors*, was stunned to see that Karen had received a yellow candle in memory of her late aunt, Annette Szklarz.

Debra's mother, Paulette, miraculously survived the Holocaust because she had measles when the Gestapo tried to take her, and was later hidden by nuns in a convent. Her twin sister, Annette – who was registered under the name Danielle – was sadly taken from an orphanage in Louveciennes, Paris to Auschwitz in July 1944. She was on the last convoy to leave France.

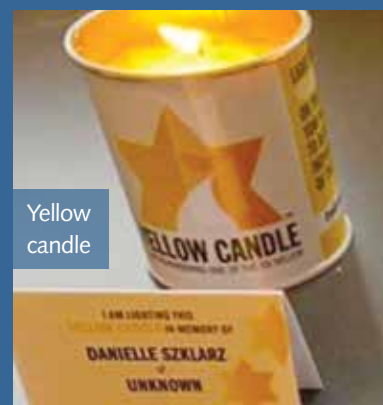
When her colleague Karen posted a photo of her yellow candle on social media on 7 April, stunned Debra realised it was for her aunt.

"It's amazing, there's literally a one in six million chance of this happening. It's so emotional," said Debra. "I've had messages from people saying it's a sign, a 'thank you' for remembering them and telling my family's story through my book."

Karen, whose friendship with Debra pre-dates their time at the AJR, said she was none the wiser about the incredible coincidence before Debra told her. "It sent shivers up my spine and I was thrilled to have had the opportunity to light this candle for her," she said.

Twins Paulette and Annette, the youngest of the five Szklarz children, were born in 1938 in Metz, a French town on the border with Germany. After her miraculous escape, Paulette, aged eight, came to England where her maternal aunt lived.

The coincidence made the national Jewish media and has received hundreds of comments on social media.



Yellow candle

The home in Louveciennes. In the middle of the back row are Annette, 2nd from left, with Paulette to her right



A Hungarian Idol

Katalin Karady would be 110 this year. In the 1940s she was an idol in Hungary. A glamorous fashion icon and perhaps the most famous singer of mainly melancholic songs of her time; she was also a popular, if not a brilliant, film actress. To get a taste of the songs she performed one could do worse than listen to *Les Feuilles Mortes*, by the Hungarian/Jewish composer Joseph Kosma.

She was born into a large family in a very poor part of Budapest. Her father was extremely strict to the seven children: if one misbehaved, he beat all seven.

When she was 17, she married a man 18 years her senior, in order to escape the poverty of her home life. She loved to dress smartly, collecting handbags and jumpers in particular. Her poor husband, unable to cope with her, ended the marriage after three years.

After the divorce a Count financed her travels, (Paris, London and Egypt). Later an influential journalist fell in love with her and encouraged her to join schools for acting and dancing. He also made sure that contracts signed by Karady included 20% for himself.

She acted in several plays, but her dream was to act in films. Her wish was fulfilled when she landed the main role in the film version of a popular erotic novel. By the standards of the time it was daring and her song in it was a long-lasting success. Generally her songs were sung in a deep voice, very nostalgic, full of longing and somehow reflecting the mood prevailing at the time. She acted in twenty films which



Sleeve for Katalin Karady LP, 1979

received mixed reviews, but which were certainly appreciated by the public. In several films she is the sensual heroine, a femme fatale. In others she plays and sings about unrequited love.

In the forties, after Hungary joined the war as an ally of Germany, she refused to play in films favouring the far right but she did visit the army at the Russian front, singing to the soldiers who listened to her in rapture. She made several short films, all with songs about the war, which then became very popular.

Karady was a fashion icon of her day: when she changed her hairstyle thousands of women followed suit.

In 1944, together with her then lover, a high-ranking general in the Hungarian army, she was arrested by the Gestapo. The officer was anti-German and both Karady and the officer were known to have connections to Jews. For three months she was beaten repeatedly, raped and accused of being a spy for England, which she never was. She was just far too popular for the regime and she did not support the Germans.

After being released, she sold all her jewellery to bribe the ruling Arrow Cross fascists to release Jews. She saved a group of Jewish children from being shot into the Danube, looked after them till the end of the war and used her three apartments in Budapest to hide Jews. For her heroism she is now honoured as Righteous Among the Nations in Yad



Katalin Karady

Vashem.

Her lover, who was the spy chief under Horthy, disappeared after the liberation. His fate is not known but he was the saviour of Karady's Jewish librettist: he managed to get him back from a forced labour camp in the Ukraine.

In 1949 her career as a singer and film star ended. She could not emigrate to America, as she was suspected of being a communist, so she went to Brazil. From Brazil she managed to make her way to New York, where she opened a small millinery shop.

When invited back to visit Hungary, in a gesture of defiance she just sent a hat to the people who had invited her. In 1990 she passed away in New York, but a large funeral ceremony was held for her in the Basilica in Budapest.

Her songs are enjoying renewed popularity and her life is still fascinating for a new generation.

Janos Fisher

LETTER FROM ISRAEL BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



MUSICAL ASSOCIATIONS



Of late I have been spending rather a lot (too much) of my time in dentists' surgeries. Some of the time I have been too frazzled and stupefied (stupid?) to say anything, and have passively committed myself, body and soul, to the expert care of the professional in charge of torturing me.

But now, after many months of supine acceptance, I have managed to gather up some courage, and on my latest visit to the dentist who is dealing with the latter stages of my treatment I actually asked him to change the channel playing the awful popular music that was in the background while I underwent a lengthy procedure. I must admit that I have never managed to be so bold while at the hairdresser, but that is another matter altogether.

Like me, this dentist is originally from England, though a generation younger than myself. He told me that he, too, has to have some kind of music in the background while working, mainly to distract him from the noise of the drills he uses. I suggested that his assistant turn the dial on the radio to Israel's classical music station, and was even able to give her its exact location. For

some unknown reason, she was unable to find it (I told her it was FM), but what she did find was *Classic FM*, straight from Blighty.

Relaxed and happy, I reclined in the dental chair as the strains of the second movement of Dvorak's symphony no.9, *From the New World* wafted over me.

"This always reminds me of the Hovis advertisement," the dentist said. Hovis? Admittedly, Dvorak incorporated the strains of the spiritual *Going Home* in that symphony, but luckily for me, I left the UK long before some bright advertising executive had made that particular connection with industrialised bread, thereby ruining that lovely piece of music forever for millions of people.

Or am I being too purist? Instead of regarding the music as something abstract and pure in and of itself, perhaps using Dvorak's music in a commercial has made it part and parcel of the British heritage, along with fish and chips.

And then it dawned on me that so has it ever been. Because our parents took my sisters and myself to see the Walt Disney film, *Fantasia* at the Classic Cinema in Baker Street in the 1950s, whenever I hear Beethoven's symphony no.6, known as the *Pastoral* symphony, I have visions of little winged centaurs cavorting in a magical countryside, sheltering from the rain and the storm, and delighting in the rising sun at the end. The same goes for Ducas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, who was,

of course, Mickey Mouse himself.

There is a segment of the music Tchaikovsky wrote for the *Nutcracker* ballet that was used in a TV commercial for margarine many years ago, when I still lived in England. And although I have attended several performances of the ballet since then, I can never get the words *Treat yourself to bread and Magic/After all, you do deserve the best* out of my head.

Still today, whenever I hear Verdi's *Requiem*, whether in live performance or on the radio, I cannot fail to remember the precise point at which the first side of the first LP had to be turned over on the record-player we had in my parents' home, and to which my father liked to listen every Sunday while he worked at his desk in the next room. I can't remember if the full set consisted of three or four records (remember those?), but it was my job to ensure that the full recording was played to the end.

Who knows? Maybe those bright sparks devising TV commercials have done more to popularise classical music than they realise.

Books Bought

MODERN AND OLD

Eric Levene

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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.

NOT EVERYONE WAS MIDDLE-CLASS

I have just received the latest *AJR Journal* and always enjoy reading the articles and readers' letters.

I am however struck how one-sided the view of western European Jewry is in the *AJR Journal* and elsewhere. One could be forgiven for thinking that all Jews lived in cities and were middle-class, with positions in the professions, academia and the sciences. I for one do not believe this to be the case.

In pre-Hitler Germany, for example, I think the majority of Jews did not live in big cities but in rural surroundings. They were middle-men, agents, cattle dealers, butchers, small shop keepers, shoemakers etc., with little schooling and no academic qualifications. It is true that in Austria most Jews had settled in or near Vienna though most were not influential or wealthy. Many had come in the years 1875 to 1910 from the Old Hungarian Empire which was not particularly industrialised.

I was particularly struck by this one-sidedness when attending a talk on Domestic Visa refugees. The speaker framed her talk with quotes from letters written by middle-class Jewish women thus implying that these were the type of refugees admitted to the UK under the Visa scheme. My own mother came to England on a domestic visa in 1939 from a very poor family in Vienna. She required no pre-emigration training unlike most of the applicants. She doubtless couldn't or didn't want to articulate her experiences of which even I had little knowledge.

Peter Heilbrunn, Amersham

PRO BREXIT/ANTI BREXIT

May I recommend a book to AJR readers who see in Britain's exit from the European Union the grimmest of turns for this country? It is *The Virtue of Nationalism* by Yoram Hazony, an Israeli philosopher, Bible scholar, and political theorist. He is president of the Herzl Institute in Jerusalem. He sets out a convincing case for the concept of the nation state ... like Israel and, what, after an unhappy entanglement with the new Brussels

Empire, Britain is once again.

David Kernek, Bath, Somerset

Baroness Deech's argument (April) that it is best for Jews that Britain has left the EU lacks any political logic. By weakening the EU, it simply plays into the hands of hard right-wing movements – the Front National in France, Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, the Law and Justice Party in Poland, the Orban government in Hungary – whose hostility to Jews runs in close step with their hostility to the EU. The Polish government's deplorable refusal to acknowledge wartime antisemitism in Poland and its refusal to pay compensation to Jews are all of a piece with its attempts to build an exclusively Polish national identity, free from outside, and especially European, 'interference'. In Britain, too, the Brexit campaign has initiated a surge in antisemitic sentiment. One can hardly claim that the current mood of flag-waving, Euro-bashing, Brit-bragging nationalism is one where exposed minorities can feel comfortable and tolerated.

The EU has been given few powers by national governments in the area of race relations. But the EU, as a transnational polity, stands unequivocally against any discrimination on national, ethnic or religious grounds. That is a central part of its *raison d'être*. Baroness Deech cites the exodus of Jews from France. But that has nothing at all to do with the EU. It has everything to do with the twin threats posed to France's Jews by Muslim extremism and the Front National, both of which hate the EU about as much as they hate Jews. Does Baroness Deech really want Abu Hamza and Marine Le Pen as political bedfellows?

Anthony Grenville, London NW6

ARRIVAL IN BRITAIN

In your April issue some interesting statistics were mentioned by Baroness Deech. I would like to add a statistic published recently by the Jewish Policy Research: after interviewing 2,000 Muslims in the UK, 75% had a negative opinion of Jews. This I find not only depressing, but frightening.

Jon Rumney's letter brought back memories

about the British Jewish community's "we don't want these bloody foreigners coming here...". In 1957 I was one of three Hungarian Jews in a refugee camp in Skegness. With the help of the then brilliant Post Office, a letter sent in broken English asking for help from the Chief Rabbi - which was addressed only to "The Chief Rabbi, London" - resulted in us soon being visited by three members of the local Jewish community. We told them we would love to leave the camp and maybe acquire some spare underwear and other necessities. They promised to be in touch in two days, when we would be taken to Leeds, and provided with all that is needed, including lodgings and work. This was in January 1957. Luckily, I am a pretty patient person as I am still waiting for them to contact me.

As a footnote, one of the three of us, who was a bit older than me and my friend, soon managed to cash what his father had deposited before the war. That was the enormous sum of £5000 in Barclays. Not long after somebody saw him with two ladies, one on each arm in Soho. In 1963 I came across him, quite shabbily dressed, in a Hungarian patisserie in Willesden. I took pity on him and invited him for lunch. He duly appeared on Sunday, with a bunch of flowers and some tales that owed more to fantasy than fact. He informed us that he was now working for Interpol. Sizing him up, I made a resolution never to apply for work with that organisation. Regrettably, we never heard from him again.

Janos Fisher

MIXED FEELINGS

I fully understand Peter Phillips' feeling about his country of origin (April). I have visited my "Home Town" Berlin a couple of times after the Wall came down (and Germany elsewhere numerous times on holiday before that) and felt sort of at home, as I still speak quite good "Vorkriegsdeutsch".

I visited my parent's block of flats and "our" allotment nearby in Wilmersdorf, by *Stadtbahn* and *Ungergrundbahn*, stayed in a central hotel near the *KaDeWe*, all old stamping grounds - and loved it all emotionally!

But I feel unhappy about Brexit and am happy to have my British Citizenship that rescued me from the Nazis when the rest of my family perished; so I do not feel tempted to acquire a German Passport, even though things in Germany have changed now with a later generation. That must mean, I tell myself, that I can feel that I do not know where I belong. However, I only have those mixed feelings if I think about it, which is rarely.

Werner Conn, Lytham St. Annes

TO VACCINATE OR NOT TO VACCINATE?

- that is the question. But there is more to it than that: a lot of misunderstandings and controversies are circling around. There are, as yet, no directives from the government to impose a law on the subject. Undoubtedly, this would not be the solution and it would, in any case, not be feasible. International travel, personal, medical, religious, as well as logical reasons, contribute to why we are still on a knife edge, debating the subject.

Assuming that the present pandemic will still be with us for the near future, something else needs to be done to remove the uncertainty of catching the Covid virus; but what? How can we tell whether the person standing next to us on the underground, in the shop, or just passing by, is afflicted by that deadly intruder? As they say, we haven't got a clue!

Perhaps a simple small plaque could be carried around the neck, bearing an image of the wearer's face on one side and a unique number, together with other specific information coincident with the vaccination on the obverse side?

Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx.

AJR member Eva Evans recently celebrated her 97th birthday and was pleased to receive this very personal letter from the German President:

Dear Mrs. Evans,

I warmly congratulate you on the occasion of your birthday and send you greetings from your former home, Berlin.

LOOKING FOR?

OTTO KOMOLY

Otto Komoly, through the Red Cross, set up homes for orphaned children and saved 6,000 in Budapest. He was subsequently killed. As there is little acknowledgment of this, the family would like to commemorate his martyrdom in a book. If you or your relations been affected by his actions please contact:

tomikomoly@gmail.com
T: 01625 531451

KINDERTRANSPORT ESCORTS

British writer/director Dean Marriott, winner of Pears Short Film Fund 2021 at UK Jewish Film, is looking for photographs, or accounts, of Kindertransport escorts who accompanied children between Germany and the UK. He wonders if they were required to wear any specific ID or carry special documentation?

dawmarriott@hotmail.com

EDITH EINHORN

Renée Kornfeld seeks more information regarding her family, including mother Edith Einhorn, born 1930 to Regine and Mendel Einhorn who lived in Vienna's 20th district. In 1939 Edith came via Kindertransport to live with the Howicks family in Coulsdon, Surrey. Mendel went

The circumstances that forced you and your family to leave your home in 1939 brought shame on Germany. The fact that you still choose to talk to pupils in Berlin about your childhood and your family's fate is admirable and fills me with great thankfulness and deep humility. It is important that young people learn how much suffering was wrought upon humanity by racism and antisemitism. Having a survivor like you to speak to them about everything she experienced first-hand is of incalculable value.

Please rest assured that the vast majority of people in Germany today reject, and take a firm stand against, hatred of Jews and nationalism. We will not allow this spectre of the past to again divide people and cause suffering and misery.

to Cyprus, then Palestine; Regine was deported and last heard from in Albania.
ramfeld@aol.com

RUTH FROM SALFORD

Do you know a Ruth (and maybe a Kurt?) who lived in Irlam, Salford, in August 1953? She wrote a postcard in German and sent it to a Hamburg address, which now has Stolpersteine outside, commemorating victims with surnames Breslauer and Meyer-Udewald.

seanmartinkelly@yahoo.co.uk

RIKOWSKI/KAMINSKI

Simon Leo James is looking for the birth certificate of his grandmother Emma Anna Rikowski (née Kaminski) who was born in 1882 in Klein Lensk, *Ostpreußen*. Also any records of his great grandparents Ludwig Kaminski and Anna Kaminski (née Libuda) who probably came from the Klein Lensk/Neidenburg area.

simonleojames@gmail.com

MRS. K. COMMICHAU

James Nicolson seeks information on a Mrs K Commichau, who was listed as a donor to the Thank you Britain fund published in the AJR's March 1965 edition. He wonders if she was related to the Commichau family of Bialystok.

jamesnicolson@me.com

I have learned that your father, Dr. Felix Klopstock, was deported to Sachsenhausen concentration camp after the night of the pogrom in November, 1938. I plan to visit the memorial there this year and mark the anniversary of the pogrom of 9th November. When I do, your father and the humiliation that he and so many others were subjected to there will be on my mind.

In conclusion, I wish you above all good health for the future as well as a birthday that you will be able to celebrate with your family despite the COVID19 pandemic.

Sincerely yours,

Frank-Walter Steinmeier

President of the Federal Republic of Germany

A PLACE IN TIME



Villa Mayer



Child survivors being taught at Weir Courtney, Lingfield in 1946 (The Wiener Holocaust Library)



Some of the 'children of Blankene

A fascinating new project is documenting country houses in Britain and continental Europe that were built or owned by Jewish families. Abigail Green, Professor of Modern European History at the University of Oxford, takes up the story.

Country houses are powerful symbols of national identity, evoking the glamorous world of the landowning aristocracy and its feudal origins. By contrast, the work of the Jewish Country Houses Project focuses on a hitherto unidentified group of country houses in the UK and continental Europe: those owned, renewed and sometimes built by Jews or people of Jewish origin. Some are now museums of international importance, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year; many more have been demolished or repurposed. A few are modern ruins, hovering still between memory and oblivion.

We dreamt up the Jewish Country Houses Project at Waddesdon Manor, one of several Rothschild houses in the Vale of Aylesbury. At first, we simply wanted to contextualise Waddesdon within the broader landscape of British Jewish history. It soon became clear that Britain was only one element in a much larger picture: all over Europe, we began to identify palaces, villas and country houses that had once been Jewish homes.

From a heritage point of view this was exciting because institutions like the National Trust and its French equivalent, the Centre des Monuments Nationaux, are always

constructed along national lines but (as we have discovered) keen to try and work across borders. And so the idea of creating a pan-European Jewish "Palaces, Villas and Country Houses" route within the umbrella *European Routes of Jewish Heritage* [<http://europeanroutes.jewishheritage.org/>] was born. We began working on this dimension of the project in earnest in May 2019, when we held a conference at Villa Kerylos on the French Riviera.

Kerylos is the re-creation of an ancient Greek Villa that is now celebrated as the most beautiful house in France. Built for Théodore Reinach (1860-1928) in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair, this is a house imbricated with the history of European Jews, and the antisemitism they encountered. Like the Rothschilds, the Reinachs acted as a lightning rod for political antisemitism in France. Théodore's uncle had committed suicide after being implicated in the infamous Panama scandal – an affair that helped to launch the career of the notorious antisemite, Edouard Drumont. Théodore's elder brother Joseph was a prominent republican politician. Another brother, Salomon, was a scholar keenly engaged with a number of international Jewish causes. Théodore combined his passion for ancient history with a career in law and politics. Collectively, the three brothers came to symbolise for many the place of Jews at the heart of a rotten French political establishment. Yet Théodore remained proud of his Jewish identity, as the stars of David integrated into the mosaic library floor at Kerylos attest.

Needless to say, this house had a Holocaust story. Almost all the Reinachs' descendants and their extended Jewish family were

murdered by the Nazis, a fate explored in different ways by Adrienne Goetz's novel *Villa of Delirium* [<https://newvesselpress.com/books/villa-of-delirium/>], and by James McAuley's new book, *The House of Fragile Things* [<https://yalebooks.co.uk/display.asp?k=9780300233377>]. Given what we knew about the house, it was surprising to discover that none of the documentation produced for visitors mentions the Jewishness of its owners. And this, it transpired, was closely connected to French Holocaust history. "You cannot put the word *Jew* in a pamphlet in France!" the property administrator explained patiently to an American-Jewish historian. "It would be like returning to 1941."

As we explored the European dimension of our project, we came to see that the persecution, expropriation and genocide of the Nazi era was central to the history of such houses in a way that simply wasn't true in Britain. Sometimes this story had been integrated into the museum narrative; often it hadn't.

In Berlin's Wannsee, the fate of Max Liebermann and his wife under the Nazis is recognised as part of the Villa Liebermann story [<http://www.liebermann-villa.de/en/start.html>], while the dispossession and dispersion of the Tugendhat and Stiasni families is understood as an important dimension of the history of the modernist villas these Jewish textile magnates built in Brno [www.gotobrnno.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/what-is-brno-4-villas.pdf]. But there is, as yet, little mention of the Jewish Cahen d'Anvers family in displays at the Château de Champs just outside Paris, nor at the Château de Seneffe in Belgium – once home to the

THE COUNTRY



Waddesdon Manor, viewed from the north



The Jewish Country House conference group outside Villa Kerylos, May 2019

German-Jewish Philipppsons and later the seat of the Nazi occupation of Belgium.

None of this was very surprising. More intriguing, however, were the stories of Holocaust rescue and Jewish renewal we stumbled upon as we began to map the history of European Jewish country houses in more detail.

Jaclyn Granick, an expert in the history of Jewish philanthropy, was excited to discover that the parents of a friend of hers had met as Displaced Persons at the White House in Blankanese – a villa that belonged to the German-Jewish Warburg family, who reclaimed it after the war and gave the house over for the use of youth Holocaust survivors. An article in the *Yiddish Forward* drew her attention to the existence of a second such property in Italy: Villa Mayer, in Abbiate Guazzone. Astorre Mayer was an Italian Jewish industrialist and philanthropist, who returned to Milan in the immediate aftermath of the war, where he became involved in refugee assistance. We established that the Mayers had owned two villas in Abbiate: they used one, and they set up the second for use by the Aliyah Beth organisation of Jewish refugees/Displaced persons who were making their way illegally to Palestine. Between 1945 and 1947, thousands of Jewish refugees passed through the villa (now renamed Kibbutz Torah ve Avodah) for different amounts of time. Marriages were celebrated with the same gold watch, which passed from couple to couple, and around 100 babies were born. For many, the villa and its beautiful rose garden represented the first experience of a return to life after the trauma of the Holocaust.

Then Tom Stammers, another member of our research team had a chance encounter with an elderly man at Nuremberg Airport. It transpired that Roland K. was born in France and had spent the war as a small Jewish child hiding with a Catholic family in the countryside; afterwards, he was given refuge at the Château de la Guette, where he was educated in a typical French village school, learnt about Judaism and played with other Jewish children in the grounds of this Rothschild mansion.

These stories, and others like them, suggested a pattern – one that seems to have been replicated on both sides of the Channel. My aunt Alice had married into the Gestetner family, and I knew from my cousins that their grandparents Sigmund and Henry Gestetner had established a Zionist training kibbutz on their country estate in Bosham: most were young British-born Jews, but some had come over with the Kindertransport, including Steven Mendelsson, who told his life story to the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. This was at about the same time that Sir Benjamin Drage opened up his country house at Weir Courtney in Lingfield, Surrey, to child survivors of the Holocaust, which provided the seed for the better known refugee children's home at Lingfield House. And of course the Rothschilds of Waddesdon were well known for their role in organising and funding the Kindertransport, and in providing shelter in the village to a group of Kinder known as the Cedar Boys and Girls. Even refugee schools like Stootley Rough and Bunce Court in Kent could be seen as part of this story, since Stootley Rough occupied a house donated by a daughter of the Leon family, while Bunce Court can be understood as the re-creation

of a pioneering Jewish school established by Anna Essinger, a German Jew, in Schloss Herrlingen – the house in which Field Marshall Rommel would later commit suicide.

We suspect this is just the tip of the iceberg, and would love to hear from members of the AJR or their families who can tell us more about what life was like in the Jewish country houses that became places of refuge. We will be presenting the broader project to the AJR, and hope to run a second session focusing on Holocaust rescue in the autumn.

Want to know more?

Professor Abigail Green will be talking more about this fascinating subject in her AJR Zoom Talk on Thursday 6 May at 2pm.

You can also read more about and contact the Jewish Country Houses project via <https://jch.history.ox.ac.uk/#/> and follow the project on twitter @JCHJewishHouses

And although National Trust properties like Waddesdon and Nymans are currently closed due to COVID, you can enjoy this virtual exhibition about the unexpected Jewish past of Strawberry Hill anytime at <https://www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/the-unexpected-jewish-past-of-strawberry-hill-house/>

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

She survived Auschwitz, escaped a Nazi death march and was involved in Israel's war of independence. While recovering from a war wound she began to carve an olive branch. It was a symbolic first step in the creative journey of sculptor Naomi Blake. Perhaps inevitably her work, perfectly conceived in simple yet powerful shapes, is literally moulded from her Holocaust experience.

This summer the **Royal Society of Sculptors** features Blake's work on its sculpture terrace as part of its celebration of pioneering women. The olive branch story captured the Society's imagination. The work on display conveys something of the woman who survived and pioneered a unique way of translating suffering into a universal theme. The Society chose *Memorial to the Holocaust*, 1999, *Man Against The Odds III*, 1986, and *Sanctuary*, 1985, all loaned by Blake's children, Jonathan Blake and Anita Peleg. The Holocaust imagery is perfectly expressed within each of the three sculptures. They show figures struggling against an insurmountable obelisk, or hunched beneath a towering form and a tiny figure holding up massive hands in protest.

Naomi Blake's work can be seen as intensely feminine. In her art book, *Naomi Blake*, edited by Anita Peleg, the shapes are strong and curvilinear, often involving a circle or deep oval in which the outline of a mother and child can be seen, faceless, or semi figurative, but with an enduring quality of love. Or sometimes the hands alone will speak. For instance, her bronze *Memorial to the Six Million* consists of two hands encircled by barbed wire; the power of love is embodied through these hands, not suggesting they are breaking free, but are spiritually linked despite being enchained.

Her four bronzes, *Leah*, *Rebecca*, *Rachel*

Man Against the Odds and, in the foreground, *Sanctuary*, by Naomi Blake (1985/86)



and *Sarah* all have bowed heads, as though the matriarchs are foreshadowing the fate of the Jews. Her mother and child works are highly symbolic in that they assert a womanly power and healing quality. This is particularly marked in *Sanctuary*, (bronze resin) in which the mother figure becomes an entirely abstract shape looming tenderly over a smaller figure perched beneath.

There is great sadness in these powerful works. Yet, as the RSS points out, they also symbolise hope and optimism in the face of adversity. Her children explain: *Our mother's work is a subconscious expression of her experiences, through abstract and semi figurative forms. Many of her pieces often contain a figure, often protected but later standing free.*"

Last month (April) the family was also showing 100 Blake sculptures at the late artist's home prior to its sale.

Art in the time of lockdown has been a problem for all of us. But how to make art *out of lockdown*? It is something that has challenged the **National Portrait Gallery**. One year ago the Gallery launched a community project with the Duchess of Cambridge to create a collective portrait of the UK during lockdown. On May 7 the fruits of this enterprise will be published by NPG in **Hold Still**, a book of photographic portraits from the online exhibition of that name last September, 2020,

With an introduction from The Duchess of Cambridge, the new publication will include 100 portraits selected for that exhibition from 31,598 submissions. Focussed on three core themes – *Helpers and Heroes*, *Your New Normal* and *Acts of Kindness* –

the images convey a mixture of lockdown emotions from humour and grief, creativity and kindness, tragedy and hope. The net proceeds from the sale of the book will support the work of the National Portrait Gallery and Mind, the mental health charity.

The photographs were selected by a panel of judges including The Duchess of Cambridge, Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Lemn Sissay MBE, writer and poet, Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer for England and photographer Maryam Wahid. Each photo has an accompanying story of how it came to be taken. There are virtual birthday parties, handmade rainbows and community clapping to NHS staff, keyworkers and people dealing with illness, isolation and loss.

Naomi Blake's sculptures can be viewed until June 6 on the sculpture terrace, Royal Society of Sculptors, Dora House, 108 Old Brompton Road, South Kensington, London SW7 3R.

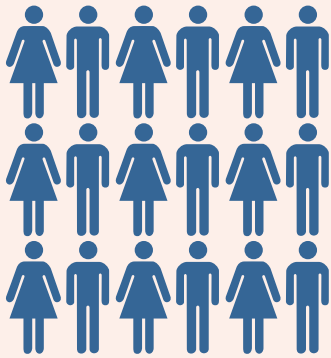
Hold Still will be available on the NPG Gallery online shop and in bookstores from 7 May.

ERRATUM: *In the April issue we erroneously stated that the artist Frank Auerbach turned 90 in March. His birthday was, in fact, on 29th April.*

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AJR
MEMBERS



452
MEMBERS
AGED 90+



853
2ND & 3RD
GENERATION
MEMBERS

300+

AJR
VOLUNTEERS
OF WHOM

- 1,200** BIRTHDAY PHONECALLS MADE
- 360** CARE PACKAGES SENT
- 425** MEMBERS CALLED FORTNIGHTLY
- 110** MEMBERS GIVEN COMPUTER HELP SUPPORT
- 92** UNDER 40
- 101** OVER 70
- 31** HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR 10 YEARS OR MORE

53

AJR STAFF



220+

ZOOM EVENTS
WITH AN AVERAGE AUDIENCE
OF OVER 70 PEOPLE

1,465

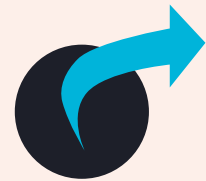
PEOPLE RECEIVING OUR
WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER

1,993

TWITTER FOLLOWERS



£4,303,093
TOTAL INCOME



£6,418,694
TOTAL
EXPENDITURE



£4,752,291
DIRECTLY GRANTED
TO MEMBERS FOR
HOMECARE AND
OTHER SUPPORT
SERVICES



£23,867,982
RESERVES CARRIED
FORWARD

2020 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This past year has been one of the most challenging ever, not least for you, our members. The way we work and connect with you changed considerably but we remain contactable and ready to deliver our services.

SOCIAL WORK

Most critically, our Social Work team made many changes to ensure that we continue to meet your needs. For most of 2020 our colleagues worked from home but made good use of technology to keep in touch with members. When restrictions allowed, we met with members in their gardens, or even on the doorsteps with those of our clients who could safely be seen in an outside area. We helped ensure that members received their weekly shop if they do not have family support. We also made regular deliveries of PPE. Above all, we were able to continue disbursing our Self-Aid to support our most vulnerable members, together with almost £10m of funds received from the Claims Conference, to which we again thank on behalf of survivors and refugees around the world.

VOLUNTEERS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

With the onset of the pandemic, our Volunteers department began looking at a variety of ways in which we could use our 300+ volunteers to continue to connect with and support our members.

Beginning immediately we went into lockdown, we ensured that every first generation member received a "check in" phone call and then, if requested, a regular call from a member of the Telephone Befrienders team. All members over 80 also received a call on their birthday. A pen pal project was also set up, initially with students from Habonim regularly writing and connecting with our members. Meanwhile our Computer Help team helped members get the most out of their tablets and computers, including accessing the array of AJR Zoom events.

This past year has been especially hard for

those who suffer with dementia, for whom the lack of face to face connections is especially challenging. Wherever possible volunteers maintained regular contact with their clients. The team also started regular dementia-friendly Zoom events, including, poetry, and crafts and keep fit.

The Carers Support service provided ongoing support to over thirty AJR members who are carers for a family member. Other carers have benefitted from small group support sessions and from our three-session online programme on emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Our annual 'thank you volunteers' event also had to take place via Zoom so we were delighted that Lord Eric Pickles and Judge Robert Rinder were able to join us and give thanks and make it extra special.

AJR has continued to be an important presence in the organisation and delivery of both the national Holocaust Memorial Day and Yom HaShoah commemorations across the country.

MY STORY

AJR's life book testimony was greatly impacted by the pandemic; visits were impossible which halted the progress of many of the books, and three out of the four project coordinators were put on furlough. However, other books benefitted from the volunteered services of experienced communicators who were able to help produce a number of books in record time. Seven new *My Story* books were added to the collection during 2020 and the AJR *My Story* website had 2,846 visitors. This project has now come to an end in order to concentrate our resources on Refugee Voices.

REFUGEE VOICES

The AJR Refugee Voices Archive reached both old and new audiences with its wonderful digital content. This included a number of new interviews, conducted via Zoom or phone. We also held a series of live online conversations with, among others, Selma van de Perre, Gabriel Josipovici, Dr Rebecca Clifford, Jackie Young, Alisa Jaffa and Hella Pick CBE.

Testimony-based films were created for a number of AJR, IHRA and other events while our special Refugee Voices HMD event featured Lord Pickles, ambassador Michaela Kuechler and honoured members Kurt Marx, Eva Clarke and Ann & Bob Kirk.

Online exhibitions, dedicated microsites and stronger social media presence contributed to a marked increase in traffic from private individuals, researchers and organisations.

EVENTS & OUTREACH

We started 2020 with a full calendar of events including a five-day trip to the Cotswolds, the annual holiday to Eastbourne, outings to stately homes and places of interest, plus our regular Outreach Meetings around the UK. Unfortunately, all these events had to be cancelled due to the pandemic and our HMD event in January at Belsize Square Synagogue, attended by over 200 members, proved to be our last major physical event. At the beginning of March it became obvious we could not continue meeting in person so we spent the best part of two weeks cancelling every item and arranging for return of deposits.

From the middle of March we set up our Zoom Programme and subsequently ran over 200 events online during the rest of the year. These ranged from small social groups to large events featuring high profile figures, ambassadors, parliamentarians, authors and national treasures such as Sir David Attenborough. We ran at least one Zoom event per day from Monday to Thursday. The outreach team has worked incredibly hard to arrange an array of interesting and varied events whilst coping with the demands of working from home.

The Zoom programme has proved extremely popular and has allowed us to engage with many members around the UK who had never before been able to participate in our events programme, as well as reaching audiences overseas. We will therefore be continuing with the Zoom programme for the foreseeable future, alongside any actual events that may take place once prevailing social distancing guidelines are relaxed.

2020 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

EDUCATIONAL GRANTS & PROJECTS

During 2020, AJR supported a number of educational and remembrance organisations across the UK as they worked to adapt their offerings in response to the global pandemic.

Our grant funding helped the Holocaust Educational Trust convert its annual residential teacher CPD course to an online event and we enabled schools in Scotland to participate in the Vision Schools programme once their teaching had moved online.

We assisted the National Holocaust Centre and Museum to make its Kindertransport-themed app *The Journey* widely available and create guidance materials for students learning remotely. Meanwhile, the Wiener Holocaust Library, Jewish Museum London and the Holocaust Education and Learning Centre at the University of Huddersfield (all these institutions being supported by us) each hosted very well-received online events, maintaining engagement with their core audiences even while their physical spaces were shuttered. Despite some understandable delays, building works continued at the Imperial War Museum; Manchester Jewish Museum and the Scottish Jewish Archive Centre – all of which we are supporting – with the aim of opening to the public in 2021.

Additionally, we promoted educational best practice by hosting *Teaching & Learning about the Holocaust in the UK*, a three-part online symposium to mark the launch of the IHRA's new Recommendations for Teaching & Learning About the Holocaust. We also finished production of our first-of-its-kind podcast series, *Kindertransport: Remembering & Rethinking*. This 10-part audio documentary makes use of testimony from our own Refugee Voices archive as well as expert commentary.

NEXT GENERATIONS

After cancelling the two-day Next (Second) Generation conference planned for April 2020, a number of the sessions were held via Zoom during the year, on

subjects such as trauma, remembrance and identity. A special interest group was set up in September and a new committee meets monthly to ensure the needs and interests of our 2nd and 3rd generation members are addressed, to promote membership to others, and to liaise with other groups of descendants.

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

At the start of lockdown we launched a weekly e-newsletter for all members with an email address who have signed the Data Protection Form. Last month we produced our First Anniversary Edition – having produced 51 issues throughout the year (we took a week off over Christmas). The distribution list is now over 1,450, with many recipients commenting how much they enjoy the variety of topics and events.

Susan Harrod produces the e-newsletter each week and thanks are also due to Jo Briggs who assisted during the first few months with her expertise in editing the monthly *Journal*.

PR & SOCIAL MEDIA

We currently have 1,993 Twitter followers, 1,515 Facebook followers and 274 subscribers on YouTube. Our most watched YouTube recording, *In Conversation with Miriam Margolyes*, was viewed 7,759 times. In January, Debra Barnes was guest editor of a commemorative issue of *The Jewish News* for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Other press coverage included New Year's and Queen's Birthday Honours for AJR members and staff; our annual HMD event at Belsize Square Synagogue, unveiling an AJR blue plaque at the British Embassy in Berlin and, increasingly, mentions for well-loved members who sadly passed away.

AJR JOURNAL

The *AJR Journal* celebrated its 75th anniversary with a special commemorative issue in January, wrapped in a reprint of the outer four pages from the original January 1946 issue. Its contents included articles from first and second generation members about growing old and growing up with the *Journal* as well as nostalgic looks at other memories from 1946.

The *Journal* continues to attract a wide and varied readership, and its *Letters* and *Looking for* pages regularly feature postings from different countries across the globe. A new feature for this year is our *Next Generations* column, mirroring the activities of the AJR's new special interest group for this rapidly growing sector of our community.

ORGANISATION AND STAFF

The Social Work team said a sad farewell to Christine Brazier who retired to pursue her love of walking the hills of England. Her replacement, Sara Dietz, joined us in February to help cover the Manchester and Liverpool areas. The Volunteers team welcomed Julia Baker, who is running the Dementia Programme in the London area, and the Finance team welcomed Lancine Johnson.

Sadly, several departments were affected by a cut in hours due to the pandemic. The *My Story* project is being brought to a close and we have reduced the hours in the Outreach team due to being unable to hold physical meetings. Reluctantly we said farewell to Sharon Mail, Keith Rowe, Wendy Bott and Janine Kohan, all of whom we thank for their contributions during their time at AJR.

For a short period of time in the summer of 2020, while restrictions eased, we saw a return to the office, which has been modified to comply with social distancing. We hope to see a full and permanent return in 2021.

My thanks go to all those members, volunteers and my fellow Trustees who helped steer us through the devastating impact of the pandemic. It is in times of crisis that true leaders emerge and step up and I am enormously grateful to our wonderful staff, so capably led by Michael Newman and the senior managers, for ensuring the ongoing safety of colleagues and members alike, but also that we so seamlessly adapted in the most challenging of circumstances.

Andrew Kaufman MBE
Chairman

2020 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

As I write this we have just celebrated Pesach and once again the experience has been different to years gone by.

We have all felt the effects of our very own modern day plague – Covid 19 - over the last year. We thankfully are starting to come out of lockdown and can hope to look forward to life beginning to return to some form of normality. Having become treasurer in the autumn of 2020 I would first like to thank and pay tribute to my predecessor, David Rothenberg, for his stewardship and many years of service to the AJR over more than a quarter of a century.

Notwithstanding the impact of the pandemic, the delivery of financial support to our members and the wider Umbrella Group, which we lead, has continued unabated with very little delay. Welfare payments for care and other emergency services funded from all sources increased by nearly £500k (16%) to £3.6m, of which the AJR itself contributed £0.9m in Self-Aid payments to our most vulnerable members. As always, we extend gratitude to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany for providing the balance, and for their continued support, and congratulate them on their great success in the negotiations with the governments of Germany and Austria in the provision of funds for these activities. Their funding to the entire Umbrella Group increased by £1.7m. Over the year

221,000 hours of care were funded for AJR members and 380,000 hours to survivors and refugees through other Umbrella Group agencies.

The Trustees of the AJR remain committed to ensuring the historical memory of the Holocaust and its impact is preserved through general education as well as in ways that are personal to our members. Further grants to external bodies commemorating and memorialising the Holocaust were given.

Whilst legacy income fell back in 2020 we remain grateful to the foresight and generosity of former members whose bequests supported the organisation and enabled us to deliver both our services and our mission. I echo the message and encourage our members to remember that legacies provide a vital income source.

The volatility of the global financial markets due to Covid-19 meant investment gains were very significantly down at £0.2m compared to £2.8m in 2019. At the end of 2020, net assets had fallen by £1.9m to £23.9m. The Trustees continue to take regular steps to ensure the organisation has sufficient liquid resources to maintain our vital services. Our reserves remain strong to enable us to ensure that these services can continue uninterrupted for the foreseeable future.

I offer my sincerest thanks to the finance team, who are continuing to manage the finance function in most unusual circumstances. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank David Kaye who has passionately and diligently led the finance team for the last 10 years and wish him the very best for his retirement and to welcome his successor, Adam Daniels.

Frank Harding
Treasurer

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2020 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

FINANCE REPORT

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)
Summary Income and Expenditure Accounts
Year ended 31st December 2020

NB all figures are subject to audit

	2020		2019	
	£	£	£	£
Income:				
Claims Conference, Six Point & Other Grants	3,486,014		2,754,804	
Subscriptions/Donations	296,922		113,572	
Investment income	355,659		580,829	
Other Income	3,326		19,439	
		4,141,920		3,468,644
Legacies		161,173		210,589
Total Income		4,303,093		3,679,233
Less outgoings:				
Self-Aid, Homecare and Emergency Grants	3,646,109		3,152,488	
Social Services and other member services	1,106,182		1,260,123	
AJR Journal	84,542		88,059	
Other organisations	92,246		445,561	
Internal Educational Initiatives	258,295		261,328	
Administration/Depreciation	1,231,320		1,399,248	
		6,418,694		6,606,808
Net outgoing resources for the year		-2,115,602		-2,927,575
Surplus/-Deficiency on realised and unrealised investments		181,527		2,788,984
Net movement in funds		-1,934,074		-138,591

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)
Summary Balance Sheet
Year ended 31st December 2020

	2020		2019	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets and Investments		18,894,090		21,835,252
Current assets	6,525,570		6,533,915	
Current liabilities	1,551,678		2,567,114	
Net current assets		4,973,892		3,966,801
Net assets		23,867,982		25,802,054
Reserves brought forward		25,802,056		25,940,645
Net movement in funds for the year		-1,934,074		-138,591
Reserves Carried Forward		23,867,982		25,802,054

BETRAYED BY *BRUNDIBAR*

The March issue of the AJR Journal featured a recently discovered poster that Janine Casillas had found in her late father's personal effects. Painted in 1995, the poster commemorates the children's opera *Brundibar*, which was performed at Theresienstadt by child inmates during the War. Here Frank Bright, who spent fifteen months in the ghetto between 13 July 1943 to 12 October 1944, shares some insights.

Theresienstadt was a ghetto. By no stretch of the imagination can it be called a KZ or concentration camp. In the ghetto the young could survive, in a KZ the elderly or young women with small children could not, and only very few of the younger ones did. I spent fifteen months in that ghetto and the last seven months of the war in a KZ, with Auschwitz as the first station. I know whereof I speak. I was in Theresienstadt when three transports of 7,500 men, women and children were sent to Auschwitz to make it look less overcrowded for the impending visit by the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); only those parts of the ghetto through which the delegates were to pass were cleaned up, the fronts of the houses, built in the 1780s, painted and a bandstand was built in front of the *Kommandatur*. I remember the tune frequently played: a march by Sousa, an American naval officer, but the Germans were too ignorant to realise that. It was *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, Karel Ančerl was the conductor.

In the ghetto there were bedbugs, outbreaks of typhus and polio and there were also clinics and a children's hospital where I spent six weeks. There was a shortage of medicines and only paper bandages. Many died of hunger.

Terezín was rather a small ghetto, unlike

Łódź and Warsaw. One can call all three "transit camps to death further east" but not KZs. Terezín received a total of 139,517 inmates, a word I use to distinguish them from KZ prisoners, of whom 33,521 (24%) died of hunger. 87,063 men, women and children were sent East, of whom just 232 out of 42,004 survived (a death rate of 99.45%) to places like Sobibor and Treblinka between 09.01.1942 and 22.10.42 and 2,865 people survived out of 44,959 sent exclusively to Auschwitz between 26.10.42 and 28.10.44 (a death rate of 93.6%). All of the 17,515 who remained in the ghetto until its liberation by the Russians on 8 May 1945, survived. They would not have done so had it been a KZ. Terezín is less significant in overall Holocaust terms and has received prominence due to the large number of inmates who remained there throughout its existence and could describe it after it had emerged from behind the Iron Curtain some 40 years later. The very young who remained in the ghetto didn't appreciate that they lived a charmed life, protected by the *Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders), from most of the hardships and concerns of the other inmates, and even received a clandestine education.

We had placed great hopes on the visit of the Swiss Red Cross, hoping it would exert its influence for more food to be provided and would put a stop to the dreaded transports to the East. We were to be very disappointed. Dr. Maurice Rossel, the ICRC's delegate, did not speak to a single inmate, followed the cleaned-up route, along which an SS-officer disguised as a chauffeur, drove him, followed word for word the script the SS had prepared for him and behaved with an astonishing gullibility. He sent a glowing report on ghetto conditions to the German Foreign Office, stating, inter alia, that the ghetto was a final destination, that nobody had been sent east, although by then some 68,000 people had been deported. This undermined Vrba's report. (Vrba and Wetzler had managed to escape from Auschwitz and had reported on its true purpose). Dr. Rossel also reported that the inmates received more and better food than people outside the ghetto and all were as happy as can be. The German Foreign Office made the most of this windfall by accusing the West of *Greuelpropaganda* (spreading of falsehood).



The original poster from Terezin for *Brundibar*



1995 *Brundibar* commemorative poster

Deportations were restarted soon after the ICRC visit and included the children who had played in every performance of *Brundibar* and whose smiling photos Dr. Rossel had taken and submitted as evidence of their (short-lived) happiness. There was never any question that Jewish children would not be killed and of the 5,237 aged 15 years only 245 (4.7%) saw liberation. That was a matter of German policy and had nothing to do with Rossel's visit.

As to how to solve the 1995 commemorative poster's mystery meaning, all I can say is that at least the original poster showed children and thus gives a clue.



NEXT GENERATIONS

The Association of Jewish Refugees

NEXT GENERATION VOICES

Watching the online HMD and Yom Hashoah ceremonies this year I was struck by how second and third generation members are now telling their families' stories. Having recently lost both my mother, who survived the war in hiding in Slovakia, and my father, who survived six concentration camps in Poland, I also feel a responsibility to them.

The AJR Refugee Voices Archive has been collecting testimonies from survivors and refugees for 18 years. Now that almost half of the AJR membership is second or third generation it seems timely to start interviewing these 'next generations'.

Under the auspices of AJR's new special interest group Next Generations, chaired by Danny Kalman, we are conducting ten pilot interviews. The first interviewee was actor Ed Skrein, whose grandparents came from Vienna, who explained how their history has affected his life and beliefs, helping him "understand the long term importance of caring for others and not being afraid by otherness".

It was clearly important for Ed to chronicle and reflect on his grandparents' story and we will give all our the interviewees the space to discuss the fate of their parents or grandparents, while at the same time documenting the process of their own engagement (or non-engagement) with their particular family history.

I feel that many second generation members will welcome this opportunity, especially those who have had to confront their family history in some way by dealing with the documents, photographs, and other objects left behind by their parents. We will document the multiple facets of 'post-memory' (a wonderful term coined by the academic Marianne Hirsch) of the next generations of the survivors and refugees who came to Britain.

A few weeks ago, at the British Library's National Sound Archive, I came across 25 interviews recorded in the early 1990s with 'Second Generation Holocaust Survivors'. It will be interesting to compare these accounts to our new interviews, given that so much in our political and memorial landscape has changed in the intervening 30+ years.

Dr Bea Lewkowicz

Director, AJR Refugee Voices Archive

MY HERITAGE

Ernie Hunter, Chair of the Northern Holocaust Education Group, considers some key questions about his family background.

Who within your family was a Holocaust survivor or refugee?

In 1933 my mother, geb. Fanny Höchstetter, was already a German senior civil servant at the age of 31, despite being Jewish and female. She was "retired" in 1933 because she was Jewish! She confronted the Nazi regime before finally fleeing in August 1939. My father, Anton Hundsorfer, a member of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany), had to flee in 1933, leaving his five year old daughter behind in the care of her grandparents. My parents met in 1940 in Llangollen, Wales, where they also got married.

How old were you when you learned about your heritage?

Although it has been a background factor since my birth, my parents did not like talking about their experiences. They wanted to live a forward looking life.

How has it affected you personally?

They taught me to be positive and not to hate.

What is the most important message you want to pass on to your own children?

I am proud of both my parents' attempts to confront the Nazi regime. This taught me not to be a bystander. By telling their stories I hope that we will all be motivated to tackle racial and other discrimination and help confront, in our own ways, the genocides going on today.

The Northern Holocaust Education Group (NHEG) was founded in recognition that schools and organisations will shortly wish to resume face-to-face Holocaust enrichment sessions but the first generation of Holocaust Survivors will not be able to tell their stories in person forever. The NHEG is setting up a local network of speakers across the North (including North Wales, Cheshire and from Liverpool through to Manchester, Leeds and Hull) to deliver engaging sessions, thereby allowing future generations to continue to experience the life stories of victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution in a way that is relevant to the issues of the present day. The group works in partnership with the Greater Manchester Representative Council, Local Authorities, G2G and others and would be delighted to welcome new speakers.

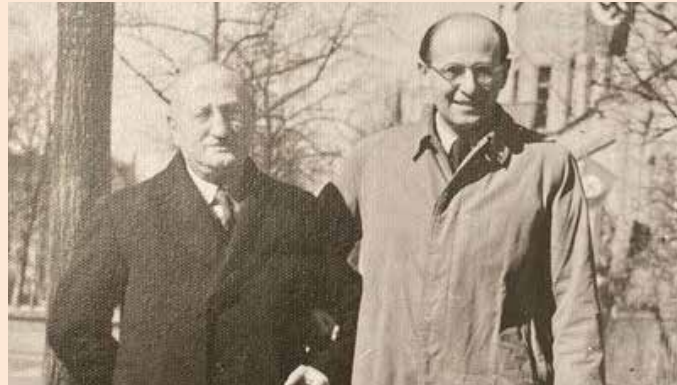
www.northernholocausteducationgroup.org.uk



Family Hundsorfer in Manchester in 1946. Ernie is in his dad's arms

BLOCH-ED BY CZECH MATE

Brexit has spurred Danby Bloch, a 75-year-old director of a financial services company who lives near Oxford, to find out if his family can become Czech citizens. Unexpectedly for him, the country's 'Beneš Decrees' are thwarting him.



Danby Bloch's father Rudi and grandfather Karl meeting in Berlin at the height of the Munich crisis.

His father Rudolf, a well-respected scientist who grew up in prosperous northern Bohemia, fled to England via Holland when he lost his academic post in Germany in 1933. He started working for the Palestine Potash Company (later to become the Dead Sea Works and now part of Israel Chemicals), first in London and then, at the start of the war, in Palestine. While in England, Rudi met and married Mary, his English wife, who joined him in Palestine in 1939. Rudi remained in Palestine after the war, but Mary returned home with their elder son; Danby, their younger son, was born in England. Rudi got a British Palestine passport in 1945 and became an Israeli, with the founding of the state.

Rudi's father and step-mother remained in Czechoslovakia, despite the mounting danger and his pleas for them to move somewhere safer. His arguments were unsuccessful – something he regretted for

the rest of his life - and his parents stayed in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia until 1941, when they were deported and murdered in the Lodź ghetto in Poland.

Rudi had a long and successful career and life in Israel as R&D director of the Dead Sea Works, then as director of the Negev Institute for Arid Zone Research in Beer Sheva. He was also a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at the Weizmann Institute, and was awarded the Weizmann Prize and the Israel State Prize for Science. He died in 1985.

Fast forward to the post-Brexit world, and Rudi's son Danby Bloch is seeking Czech citizenship. He told the radio station *Deutschlandfunk* that, given his age, he was acting primarily on behalf of his children and grandchildren. The Czech provincial authorities dealing with his application had, however, turned down his request. The stumbling block would appear to be

the postwar decrees enacted by Edvard Beneš, Czechoslovakia's president in the mid-1930s and 1940s. Dealing with the country's German and other minorities, one of them deprived the German-speaking community, most of whom had supported Hitler, of their Czech citizenship and forced them to emigrate.

Rudolf Bloch was obviously not among them. Like other Jews in the country, however, his family had been registered before the war as primarily German-speakers. Unless they appealed, German-speakers lost their Czech citizenship; in the circumstances of 1945, it seems Danby's father did not get around to doing that. The Czech authorities are now trying to make up their minds what to do about Danby Bloch's application. His father's German-speaking identity lumps him in with the German and Nazi-sympathising majority of *Sudetenlanders* – his clear and obvious Jewish identity says otherwise.

The Czechs are understandably torn in their attitude to the Beneš decrees. The wholesale ethnic cleansing of millions of people in 1945 is now a cause of some embarrassment in modern Europe. But, for all kinds of reasons, they don't want the Germans back, Danby told me.

The Czech government recently changed the law to make it easier for citizens who fled the country to regain Czech citizenship. But the amendment, say observers, is aimed at those who fled after Stalin swallowed up the country in 1948, not at Jewish refugees from Hitler.

Martin Mauthner

NEXT GENERATION EVENTS

G2G Presents: Surviving is Thriving - Lessons from Rwanda

Eric Murangwa Eugene MBE will describe how he survived the Tutsi Genocide in 1994. Book via via <https://www.generation2generation.org.uk/news/events/> 10 May at 7pm

Second Generation Network: Truus' Children

A chance to watch the UK premier of a new documentary about Kindertransport organiser Truus Wijsmuller and/or join a discussion with its directors. Book via https://truus-children_tickets.eventbrite.co.uk and <https://truus-children-talk.eventbrite.co.uk> 17 May at 6.30pm (talk only)

THE GOOD FRANCKENSTEIN

While serving as Austria's inter-war ambassador in London, George, Baron von und zu Franckenstein became a Nazi opponent and helped refugees. To find out more, Martin Mauthner spoke to Timothy Schmalz, who recently completed a PhD at Cambridge University on British-Austrian relations and is now planning further research on this important diplomatic figure.

Tim, do you have a 'Habsburg' background; what made you so interested in inter-war relations between London and Vienna.

Only tangentially: my maternal great-grandmother emigrated at the turn of the century from a small village outside Košice, in present-day Slovakia, to the United States, where I was raised.

Although I have long-standing scholarly links to, and cultural appreciation for Austria, I was drawn to my doctoral project on Anglo-Austrian diplomatic backchannels in the 1930s through the memoirs of Sir Walford Selby, Britain's minister in Vienna between 1933 and late 1937. Selby saw the maintenance of Austria's autonomy as key to peace and stability in Europe, and his policy recommendations to London, insisting on the need for British support of beleaguered Austria, sharply diverged from the 'appeasement policy' narrative, with which we are so familiar in this country.

You're about to embark on a research project involving the baron. How do you explain his lengthy tenure, from 1920 to 1938?

You are right to single out Franckenstein's long stint; eighteen years is an extraordinarily lengthy period for a diplomat to spend at one post. Diplomats are often rotated with relative frequency in order to keep their sensibilities fresh and to prevent them from 'going native' - of falling into the trap of their environments



Timothy Schmalz

and wavering in their duties. But, as I suggest, keeping Franckenstein – a senior and well-respected diplomat (as well as of noble stock) – in London allowed the Austrian Foreign Ministry to punch above its weight.

When the Austro-Hungarian monarchy collapsed in the wake of the First World War, the newly founded Austrian state was small, weak, isolated in terms of international relations, economically depressed, and politically unstable. Britain was a crucial partner in the reconstruction of Austria in the interwar period and, increasingly, became Austria's strongest diplomatic bulwark against mounting German antagonism. With his extensive professional and personal network of political, social, and noble elites, as a result of his lengthy term in London, Franckenstein was the diplomat best suited to stand up for Austria in Britain.

What did his 'soft diplomacy' involve?

Franckenstein realised that in the British imagination 'Austria' was synonymous with 'culture'. Through a great variety of events, which included immersive, expansive exhibitions displaying all facets of Austria's rich cultural heritage, such as classical music, paintings, and porcelain, and star-studded concerts and historically-themed costume balls at his Legation on Belgrave Square, Franckenstein became an entrepreneur of staging nostalgia for a romanticised Habsburg past, in an attempt to win British support for Austria.

What do we know about his activities in aid of Austrian refugees? What are the gaps you hope to fill?

Presently, not much. That being said,



George, Baron von und zu Franckenstein

I have found material in the Austrian State Archives in Vienna which places Franckenstein at the centre of transnational networks that facilitated the rescue of Austrians persecuted by the Nazis on racial and/or political grounds. My next project will examine how diplomats were crucial intermediaries between Austrian refugee scholars and potential host universities in Britain. After the Anschluss, Franckenstein was active in a number of Austrian refugee and assistance organisations, and I hope my research will shed further light on his efforts.

How do you assess his counterpart in Vienna, Sir Walford Selby?

Selby was an ardent campaigner for an independent Austria and, until his death in 1965, remained steadfast in his conviction that his views from Vienna were in Britain's best interests, even if the Foreign Office preferred a more conciliatory policy. From his subsequent post in Lisbon, he remained an advocate for Austria and facilitated the transit of many Austrian refugees – Otto von Habsburg amongst them.

Tim would be grateful to hear from any AJR readers who might have personal information on this diplomat or the Austrian legation. He 'went native' - marrying an English woman and becoming Sir George, a British citizen - before dying in an aeroplane crash.

REVIEWS

WORLDS APART – THE JOURNEYS OF MY JEWISH FAMILY IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPE

Nadia Ragozhina
SilverWood Books

This moving book tells the intriguing saga of two brothers who lived in Poland 100 years ago and moved to seek a better life. Adolphe prospered in Switzerland in the watch-making industry while his younger brother Marcus – inspired by his communist beliefs – headed east to Moscow. Although they never saw each other again, their families were reunited in modern times.

Author Nadia Ragozhina tells their moving story. The patriarchs both stayed in their new countries where they raised their families, leading contrasting lives of wealth in Switzerland and suffering under Soviet repression. She focuses on their journeys and those of their daughters and granddaughters and how they were affected in very different ways by twentieth century history.

Adolphe flourished and had two daughters, Eva and Genia, later becoming a philanthropist. During the war he played a key role in helping Jews find a safe passage to a neutral country. Meanwhile in Russia, Marcus was arrested and exiled. Here the story centres on his daughter Anna and the paranoid regime which she experienced. The women are quite complex characters, marrying and re-marrying, often to very difficult men and enduring great hardship but making the best of the hand they are dealt.

Jewish persecution is a central theme. Eva and her small daughter Anita, with great difficulty, made it back home from Belgium to Geneva during the war. But the fate of both her husband and her lover and his family was very tragic and poignantly told. Genia lived in Tel Aviv meanwhile, and Palestine's political situation, as well as the sunny climate which her little daughter Ariane enjoyed and later missed, is well described. The decline of the Swiss

watch factory is another thread.

Increasing restrictions in Russia after WW1 and under Stalin's brutal regime are quite chillingly narrated. It also included housing difficulties, food shortage with queues, and unpopular communal living in a society closed from the west. It is interesting to read how people actually lived despite their continual daily struggles.

But eventually things opened up under Gorbachev, glasnost and perestroika and with the start of the new century Nadia's parents moved to London. Here, as Anna's granddaughter, she decided to try and find her Swiss family, facilitated by electronic media. It meant cousins Genia, Anna and their descendants could finally come together to share their stories. Genia died the year after her 100th birthday in 2014, having at last met everyone. Sadly Eva had passed away before she could do so. Anna is now 98.

Nadia has a refreshing perspective exploring people's feelings and actions, writing in a thoughtful and open-minded style with a light touch. She eloquently evokes the atmosphere of different countries over a century, doing an excellent job tracing the family peopled by extremely strong women. The lovely black and white pictures really bring the characters to life.

Janet Weston

THE JEWS OF DENMARK IN THE HOLOCAUST

Silvia Goldbaum Tarabini Fracapane,
Routledge

In April 1940 German troops invaded Denmark. Germany and Denmark were never formally at war and no Nazi regime was put in place. Even more extraordinary, Jews were not forced to wear the yellow star until 30 April 1943.

Denmark had a tiny Jewish population of 5,600. There were a few arrests between 1940-43 and then in October 1943 was the *Judenaktion* which led to the deportation of 470 Danish Jews to Theresienstadt.

Even when they were deported, Denmark's Jews had an astonishingly high

survival rate. 89% survived the ghetto. First, they were only there for eighteen months, from October 1943 until April 1945 when they were released, three weeks before the end of the war. They arrived in much better health than east European Jews who were already starved and ill in the ghettos before reaching the camps. But, crucially, the Danish Jews were exempt from the transits to Auschwitz and the other death camps.

Of course, conditions at Theresienstadt were not easy. The living quarters crawled with bedbugs, fleas and lice. Food was terrible. 'One day's food,' writes Fracapane, 'consisted of barely one litre of liquids ... and about four or five black or rotten potatoes.' In the winter the potatoes were sometimes frozen. Hygiene was poor and disease was rife. Relatively straightforward diseases or infections easily led to complications and the elderly were especially vulnerable. But there was a hospital and medical care was available.

These are some of the best parts of Silvia Fracapane's superbly researched account. Her book is 'based on a study of written and oral sources from 146 named Danish Theresienstadt survivors'. These fall into four groups: eyewitness accounts (diaries, notebooks and notes) written in the ghetto; early post-war testimonies; the testimony of child survivors after the first radio and TV programmes in the 1960s; and witnesses interviewed since the 1990s.

As a result, the book is an interesting mix of statistics, especially the two appendices at the end, and personal testimony. Fracapane has done her research well. There are more than thirty pages of references and over two thousand footnotes. The fourteen chapters cover a fascinating range of subjects, from housing and everyday life to the infamous visit to Theresienstadt by the international delegation on 23 June 1944, and liberation.

Perhaps the one weak part of the book is the ending. The period after the war is covered in just nine pages, a rushed account of complex issues like compensation, contacting relatives, justice or rather the lack of justice (one

An essential *Handbook*

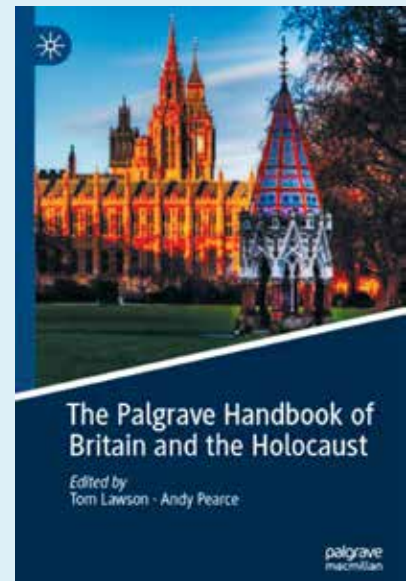
The March issue of the *AJR Journal* carried an opinion piece by Anthony Grenville, who wrote that *AJR* readers 'are likely to be disappointed' in the just published *Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust* edited by Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce. Here Tony Kushner explains why he strongly believes that our readers will find all the 23 chapters of the *Handbook* engaging and relevant.

I will declare an interest: I am, like Anthony, a fellow contributor, though one whose chapter is especially critiqued by him. Mine is a study of what impact the Holocaust has had on antisemitism in Britain. There are many assumptions and generalisations in this area and I wanted to try them out with a specific case study: how Jacob Harris, a Jewish triple murderer of German origin, who in 1734 committed his crimes in rural Sussex (near the village of Ditchling), has been remembered subsequently. It is, by nature, a detailed account, but according to Anthony Grenville 'none of it comes from Jewish refugee sources'. In fact, some do: in relation to the film maker Luke Holland, deeply influenced by his Viennese Jewish mother, and the refugee psychologists Anna Freud and

her collaborators, Gertrud and Sophie Dann. I also reference Dorothy Bohm, who briefly went to an eccentric school in Ditchling as a young refugee and later became a great photographer, and Honni Schwenk, who went to the same village as a domestic servant. All of these show how local studies and refugee history intersect in intriguing ways.

I use my own chapter to show that it is simply not the case, as Anthony argues, that in all the fifteen chapters that deal with the postwar period 'the refugees [from Nazism] were completely absent'. In fact, they appear throughout – take for example James Jordan's excellent contribution on the *BBC*, which includes programmes about refugees and by refugees (fictional and documentary), or Barry Langford's authoritative survey of *British Cinema and the Holocaust* and Sue Vice's similarly magisterial overview of British literature, amongst others. These are in addition to the three chapters that solely focus on the Jewish refugees of the 1930s, including a fine chapter by Anthony Grenville himself which provides an overview of the subject.

What worries me most is that readers of this *Journal* may be put off a superb volume that continues many of the broad themes and specific controversies that were raised by *AJR Information* from its first issue in 1946. In the late 1980s I was researching and writing a book that explored British and American responses to the Holocaust. My intention was to end in 1945 but the publisher, Blackwell, rightly asked me to take the story into the



post-war decades. Writing in a vacuum, the places I looked first for narrative were three refugee-inspired journals – *AJR Information*, the *Wiener Library Bulletin* and later the *Jewish Quarterly*. They were not only concerned with the place of the Jewish refugee in British society, but the wider field of what we now call 'Holocaust studies'. The sophisticated and varied articles in the *Handbook* are true heirs to these journals, reflecting a maturity enabled by a variety of sources and approaches that have become available and are brilliantly executed in this volume. I would thus urge *AJR Journal* readers to get hold of the volume and make up their own minds. You will not be disappointed.

Tony Kushner
Parkes Institute,
University of Southampton

page). How did survivors cope with their experience? How were they welcomed back? How hard was it to fit into Danish society after their return? These are huge questions. Much of the book presents Denmark in a good light. Few Danish Jews were deported, hardly any died. But there are a few hints at the end of a darker story still to be told.

David Herman

NEW BOOK

ONE-WAY TICKET FROM WESTERBORK

Jonathan Gardiner
Amsterdam Publishers

Of a total of 105,000 Jews who were transported from Westerbork, only 5% survived: the highest percentage of a

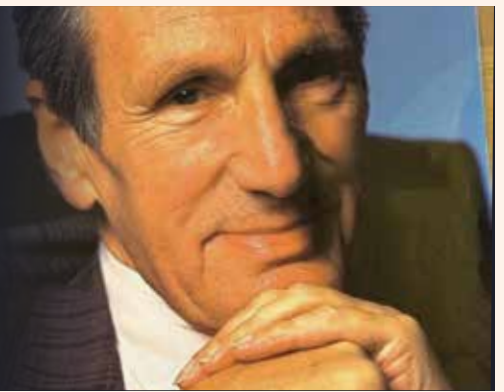
country's Jews to die in the Nazi Reich. This book attempts to restore the victims' humanity, especially that of the young children, one only a few hours old. It is an indictment against the Kommandant Gemmecker, who claimed he knew nothing of the camps in the east, yet entertained Eichmann with an evening of "The best Cabaret in Europe" at his camp. The book corrects misconceptions and presents new material for the reader.

OBITUARIES

VICTOR ROSS

Born: 1 October 1919, Vienna

Died: 19 March 2021, London



Recognised as the ‘grandfather’ of the Direct Mail industry, Victor Ross was a source of inspiration to many younger people within and outside the industry as well as being an oft-published writer.

Here at the AJR he will be most remembered as the founder of the Thank You Britain Fund in the ‘60s and for his countless witty and insightful columns over the decades in this *Journal*, including his eloquent account of *Growing old with the AJR Journal* for our 75th anniversary issue this January.

The son of Victor and Eva Marie Rosenfeld was practically an only child, his three elder siblings sadly dying either before or not many years after his birth. The family lived in the Hietzing district of Vienna where Victor senior practised law, although his career was precarious thanks to being identified with the Austrian left. Eva Marie dedicated her life to modern education and the care of others, founding a school with Dorothy Burlingham in 1927, supported by Anna Freud, and then taking up a post in the psycho-analytic sanatorium at Schloss Tegel in Berlin.

At the beginning of 1936 Eva Marie travelled to London to escape Nazi persecution. Seventeen-year old Victor, who had been living with her in Berlin and had also studied in Paris, arrived in April 1936, while his father remained in Vienna until the Anschluss.

The family settled into lodgings around Swiss Cottage and Victor studied Economics at LSE. War broke out and just before his finals he was interned and subsequently deported to Canada, where

conditions were harsh. He was allowed to return to join the British Army, serving in Burma and the East. He rose to become Major Ross, having naturalised his name and nationality.

In 1945 he married Romola Wallace, who had trained as a nurse but spent most of the war touring with ENSA. Victor remained in Burma until his demob in 1947, by which time their first son David had been born. Adrian followed in 1948 and the family moved from north London to Forest Hill, SE23.

Victor’s father – who was separated from his mother – had established (with Walter Herz) a small advertising and design studio, where Victor cut his teeth before securing a job in the marketing department of Unilever to help *Can you tell Stork from butter?* and *Happy Surfday* become household phrases. In 1963 he joined Readers Digest, eventually rising to become UK CEO and Chairman from 1972-1984. He also played a major role in the company’s European operations, travelling widely throughout Europe and the USA.

Meanwhile he and Romola had separated in 1953 and the boys came to live with him the following year. After renting a flat in Kilburn he became financially stable enough to buy a house in Golders Green and employ a housekeeper. In the early 1970s he married his second wife, Hildegard Peiser, becoming step-father to her own three children.

After Victor’s retirement the couple bought a lovely house in Kent with a library to accommodate his large and ever-growing book collection. The marriage was very happy, although Hilde suffered a stroke which affected her health for a number of years. After her death in 2008 Victor returned to London, where he lived in Maida Vale until his death.

Victor had a deep love of theatre and performance, and of music and comedy. He believed that by blending the arts and commerce he had found his *métier* in publishing, and was also a fearsome bridge player and keen fisherman. A secular Jew, he aspired to become an English gentleman, which meant perfecting English manners, language and conventions. Indeed these were the subjects of many of his articles for the *AJR Journal* and of his book: *Basic British*, published in 1956.

In 1963 Victor came up with the idea that the Jewish refugees from central Europe should make a public gesture of thanks to their adopted homeland. AJR, whose chairman had been thinking along the same lines, embraced the idea and Victor became co-chairman of the organising committee. The Thank You Britain Fund successfully raised over £96,000 (equivalent to well over £1m in today’s money) for research fellowships and lectures under the auspices of the British Academy, and is considered a major highlight of our community’s assimilation into British life.

Victor is survived by his five children David, Adrian, Nicola, Jonathan and Lilli, seven grandchildren, and four great-grand children

Jo Briggs



Lord Robens accepting a cheque for £90,000 from Sir Hans Krebs on behalf of the Thank You Britain Fund. Looking on are (from L-R) Dr W. Rosenstock, Mr. Victor Ross, Mr. W. Behr and, on the extreme right, Sir Mortimer Wheeler.



The AJR Outreach team was very sad to learn of the passing of Judy Benton just a few days after her 100th birthday which we were honoured to celebrate on Zoom with other Kinder.

Judy arrived in the UK on the Kindertransport on 26 July 1939 after a life-changing 24 hours. It was a seemingly ordinary day when 17 year old Judy returned home in Meissen, Germany. As soon as she arrived she knew something was wrong: the front door was wide open and her parents and sister were gone. A neighbour told her that the Gestapo had taken them and would soon return for her.

Judy took just minutes to pack a small case, grab her papers and some money and head to nearby Dresden synagogue. Staff there told her that a Kindertransport train was leaving that night from Leipzig. Judy had no ticket and none of the official 'movement' paperwork but recognised this was her best chance of escape.

Leipzig station was teeming with distraught mothers and screaming children. One lady thrust her tiny youngster at Judy, begging her to care for it on the journey. This gave Judy the idea for a daring plan. She ran to a nearby 'party shop' which she knew sold fancy dress. Selecting a white apron and hat with a red cross, she quickly changed and returned to the station where she took charge of some youngsters with the intention of passing herself off as their nursemaid, banking on the idea that the German SS soldiers would respect her uniform. It was a nerve-racking journey but she successfully made it through each checkpoint to arrive safely in London. Judy spoke about her experiences throughout her life and her gratitude at making it to the UK.

Judy had two children: Ruth, who lives in London, and David, who lives in the USA. She adored her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and will be sorely missed by them as their "Grandma Dudu". She will be fondly remembered by friends and family as a smiling, elegant lady who always had time to chat with everyone she met throughout her long life.

Susan Harrod



Ernest G. Kolman, Kindertransport survivor, died at the age of ninety-four. His mother had named him Ernest because he was born in earnest times. Mr. Kolman had vivid memories of his childhood in Nazi Germany. In 1936, his family moved from the small market town of Wesel to Cologne, in the hope that a larger city would make them less vulnerable as Jews. It didn't.

Mr. Kolman was hidden in a cupboard by an upstairs non-Jewish neighbour, while the Roonstrasse synagogue across the street burned. Shortly thereafter, his entire school was transported to London. As he left Cologne railway station, he had a strong feeling that he would never see his parents again. He was right. After the war, through the Red Cross, he discovered they had been murdered in the ghetto at Riga although, miraculously his sister Margaret had survived.

Having flown as a cadet with the USAF 329th Bomb Squad, Ernest had the satisfaction of flying as a tail gunner over Europe on V.E. Day. His logbook, map and photograph in flying gear were later displayed in the German Historical Museum.

In 1946, as a fluent German speaker, he joined the American Third Army and the once persecuted refugee returned as a conqueror. There he met his beloved wife, Eva, who was also a refugee from Nazi Germany and to whom he was devoted for sixty-eight years. Her loss was a poleaxe blow.

After the war, as a highly skilled sign writer, he built his business from nothing, starting with a ladder and a bicycle, which he peddled around London, looking for work.

He remained healthy and active until the very end, travelling and teaching. He was often a guest of the City of Wesel which made him an honorary citizen, its greatest honour.

He leaves two children, Timothy Kolman and Patricia Scott, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, with twins on the way. He will be interred in the United States, in the family plot, next to his wife.

Timothy Kolman

ZOOMS AHEAD

Details of all meetings and the links to join will appear in the e-newsletter each Monday.

Tuesday 4 May @ 2pm	Tony Zendle - Jews & Music: a fun journey exploring different genres and the Jewish connection https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81904072388
Wednesday 5 May @ 2pm	Herbie Goldberg - The work of Ernest Bloch: one of the greatest Swiss composers https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87655564995
Thursday 6 May @ 2pm	Prof Abigail Green - Jewish Country Houses https://www.eventbrite.com/e/jewish-country-houses-collections-and-national-memory-tickets-149876836653
Monday 10 May @ 10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89739698433
Monday 10 May @ 2pm	An audience with the TV presenter and antiques expert Natasha Raskin https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81352463355
Tuesday 11 May @ 2pm	Jonathan Bergwerk – The Life of Golda Meir https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82830336380
Wednesday 12 May @ 2pm	AJR Book Discussion (no speaker): <i>The Forgotten Seamstress</i> by Liz Trenow https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82819636628
Wednesday 12 May @ 6pm	Professor David Nasaw - Europe's Displaced Persons https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ajr-book-club-with-david-nasaw-author-of-the-last-million-tickets-144877236715 [eventbrite.com]
Thursday 13 May @ 6pm	The voyage of the SS St Louis (an anniversary event) https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ss-st-louis-anniversary-event-tickets-149837364591
Wednesday 19 May @ 6pm	Dr Gregory Chamitoff, NASA – My missions to the International Space Station https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-jewish-astronaut-who-is-out-of-this-world-tickets-150041769973
Monday 24 May @ 10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83127132888
Tuesday 25 May @ 2pm	A virtual tour of the Jewish Museum, with Emma Crew https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84071008065
Wednesday 26 May @ 2pm	Rabbi Jeff Berger - Biblical Art Work (part 3) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85129055511
Thursday 27 May @ 2pm	Elkan Levy – The Road to Emancipation for British Jewry (part 3) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89563201778

Kinder contact project

The Kinder Contact Project is now a regular fixture in our online events diary, meeting via Zoom once a month, always on a Thursday afternoon at 3.30pm. Details are in the e-newsletter or you can email Susan Harrod at susan@ajr.org.uk for details of the next meeting.

We divide into small discussion groups, each group led by a member of the Kindertransport Committee. It's an opportunity for Kinder to speak about their shared history and enjoy the opportunity to socialise in lieu of regular meetings and Kinder lunches. The past has taught us to "make the best of every situation" and during the last few months these online meetings have proved very popular with Kinder.

Kindly note that these meetings are only open to Kinder, their children and grandchildren. We would be happy to connect members to each other who are not Kinder or their descendants through our AJR Next Generations project.

Sir Erich Reich

Chair, AJR Kindertransport Special Interests Group

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