



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Every aspect of British life

The literary critic George Steiner once said, “When you come to a house as a guest, you must try and leave the house a little nicer than you found it.” This mirrors the impact that Jewish Refugees have had on modern British culture, as this article – the first in a four-part series that helps mark the AJR’s 80th anniversary year – explains.



The 1960 film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, directed by the Czech-born Karel Reisz, is widely acclaimed as one of the best films depicting Britain's 'Angry Young Men'

George Steiner was himself a Jewish refugee, forced to flee Paris in 1940. He was one of only two Jewish children from his school who survived the war.

You could say this is just what two generations of Jewish refugees did when they came to Britain. They left the house a little nicer than they found it – a lot nicer, actually. Their impact on British culture from the 1930s onwards was astonishing.

Thinkers like Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper, Wittgenstein and Gombrich, George Steiner and Jacob Bronowski, writers like Koestler, Canetti and Stoppard, historians like Lewis Namier, E.J. Hobsbawm and G.R. Elton, film-makers like Korda, Pressburger and Karel Reisz, musicians like Stephane Grappelli and the Amadeus Quartet, psychologists like Freud, Klein and Eysenck, scientists like Hermann Bondi and Max Perutz, Rudolf Peierls and Ludwig  
*Continued on page 2*

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

We wish all our readers Shana Tovah and well over the fast. May it be a good new year for you all.

Because so many of the yom tovim fall on weekdays our regular Zoom programme looks a little thinner this month but we are looking forward to seeing many of you during our very special online tea party on 12 September. during when we will be celebrating 80 years of the AJR.

Meanwhile we have lots of interesting articles to keep you entertained and as always would welcome any feedback.

News.....	3
80 Trees for 80 Years.....	4
Letter from Israel.....	5
Letters to the Editor & Looking For .....	6-7
Art Notes.....	8
The Gestapo's Who's Who of anti-Nazis .....	9
Decades of Anglo-Austrian Co-operation ..	10
Major Museums revamp .....	11
Picture These.....	12
The majestic Messels.....	13
The role of rescue organisations .....	14
The secret Jewish commandos .....	15
Reviews.....	16-17
Obituaries .....	18-19
Events .....	20

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

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## Every aspect of British life (cont.)

Guttman, and Hans Krebs, Max Born and Ernst Chain.

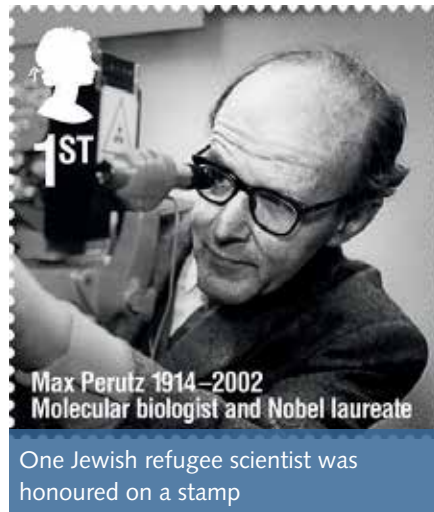
Then there are the books. Books like *The Story of Art*, *The Road to Serfdom*, *The Open Society and its Enemies* and *Darkness at Noon*, *Born Free* (by Joy Adamson, born as Joy-Friederike Gessner) and *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, E.J. Hobsbawm's four-volume history of modern Europe and Radzinowicz's five-volume *History of English Criminal Law*, Pevsner's 46-volume *Buildings of England* series and Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*.

In science they revolutionised physics and biology, physiology and medicine. Bondi wrote about the 'steady-state' theory of the universe while Leslie Brent's work with Medawar, on immunological tolerance, was the basis of transplantation biology. Fritsch and Peierls worked out how much uranium it took to make an atomic bomb and Chain was one of the scientists who discovered penicillin. Key moments in the three great scientific stories of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – the making of the atomic bomb, the revolution in molecular biology and the discovery of penicillin – happened in Britain. In each case refugees were key figures.

There are the films produced by Sir Alexander Korda (including *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, *The Thief of Bagdad*, *The Third Man* and that quintessential piece of Englishness, *The Winslow Boy*), and the films of Pressburger (*The Red Shoes*, *Black Narcissus* and *Colonel Blimp*) and Karel Reisz (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*).

Refugees founded the Edinburgh Festival and Wolfson College in Oxford, the Warburg Institute and Glyndebourne, Thames and Hudson and the Ballet Rambert. They ran world-famous labs and built some of the landmarks of 20<sup>th</sup> century British architecture. And they transformed our everyday world: Fritz Landauer's shop-fronts for Boots and Burtons and Jan Tschichold's logo for Penguin Books, Vicky's newspaper cartoons of 'Supermac' and Hans Schlegler's advertisements for MacFisheries.

They revolutionised psychoanalysis and art history, music teaching and publishing, physics and art. They changed the way we think about Englishness and they re-wrote the British past, from GR Elton's revolution in



Tudor government to the 18<sup>th</sup> century high politics of Namier and the 19<sup>th</sup> century social history of Hobsbawm. They opened British eyes to European culture and ideas, and they played a crucial role in the Cold War. The impact, on almost every aspect of British life, was enormous. The migration is a major chapter in British 20<sup>th</sup> century culture.

At the beginning of her book *The Other Way Round*, Judith Kerr describes a walk through wartime London. Anna (based on Kerr herself) is a Jewish schoolgirl from Germany, the daughter of Alfred Kerr, once the best-known drama critic in Weimar Germany. Kerr had been one of the first to leave Hitler's Germany, and after some time in Switzerland and then Paris, he and his family had come to live in London in 1935.

It is March 1940. Anna is staying with an American family in west London and she sets off to visit her parents who are staying in a shabby-genteel hotel (in the book she calls it, appropriately enough, the Hotel Continental) in Bloomsbury. She realises she has lost the four-pence for her bus fare, so she has to walk all the way.

To follow that route sixty years on is a reminder of the achievements of the two generations of European refugees who came to Britain in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both of the scale of the achievement and its enormous range and diversity.

In 1940, Anna started off up Holland Park Avenue towards Notting Hill Gate. The BBC had not yet set up home in west London. But after the war, in a cluster of buildings and studios near the bottom end of Holland Park Avenue, Jacob Bronowski's series, *The Ascent of Man*, was made, the first *Face To Face* interviews were recorded in the early Sixties with opening credits drawn

by the artist, Felix Topolski, and Andrew Sachs, a child refugee, played Manuel, the incompetent waiter, in the BBC series, *Fawlty Towers*.

Only a few hundred yards away from Holland Park Avenue, but in the other direction, was St. Paul's School in West Kensington. Schoolboys there, between the wars, included Isaiah Berlin, Leonard Schapiro and the five Ignatieff brothers, all refugees from the Russian Revolution, and the historians, Karl Leyser and Werner E. Mosse, and the art historian Martin Kauffmann, refugees from Nazism.

Here, at St. Paul's, one of Berlin's teachers wrote in his school report: 'he is sometimes inclined to write about ultimates, instead of addressing himself to the question in hand.'

Setting off up Holland Park Avenue, Anna would have gone past the home in Campden Hill Gardens of Dame Marie Rambert, the Polish-born founder of the Ballet Rambert, and reaching Notting Hill Gate, she would have been within yards of the home of Lucien Freud, one of the greatest refugee artists, born in Berlin.

Nearby is Kensington High Street, where the Polish designer, Barbara Hulanicki, started Biba, one of the most famous fashion clothes stores in Sixties London.

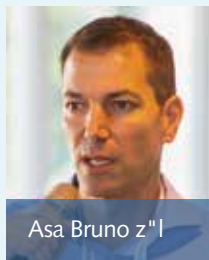
Then along past Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park to Marble Arch, where Hugo Gryn was Rabbi at the West London Synagogue for thirty-two years (1964-96). There in his elegant 1930s office, his daughter Naomi, while boxing up his books and belongings, came across 'a worn orange foolscap folder. Inside was the handwritten manuscript of a book my father had begun in October 1951'. Written in recently acquired English, it was his attempt to record what had happened to him and his family during the Holocaust. This manuscript was later published as *Chasing Shadows*.

A few streets over is Gloucester Place, where the Institute of Psychoanalysis used to be based, and where, during the war, Melanie Klein from Budapest and Anna Freud from Vienna, and their followers, fought bitterly over Freud's legacy. These debates, known as 'The Controversial Discussions', dominated psychoanalysis in Britain for a generation after the war and helped make London a world centre of psychoanalysis.

**David Herman**

# Bittersweet moment for Westminster

**AJR is delighted that the national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, next to Parliament, is finally going ahead, but mourns the loss of the architect who designed it.**



Asa Bruno z"l



Artist's impression

Construction will start later this year on the project in Victoria Tower Gardens. Planning permission was granted on 29 July - nine days after Asa Bruno, the Israeli director of

London's Ron Arad Architects, tragically passed away from cancer.

Asa was a good friend to the AJR (see his interview in our May 2019 issue).

His legacy will be the creation of a lasting monument to those who perished in the Holocaust as well as those who found refuge in this country.

## LUXEMBOURG FUND

The Claims Conference has announced a new €1 million fund to provide one-time cash payments to Luxembourg Holocaust survivors who were persecuted by the Nazi regime or their allies at any time from January 1933 to May 1945 **AND** currently meet one of the following three criteria:

1. Currently living in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg;
2. Persecuted in Luxembourg by the Nazi regime or their allies and currently living outside the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg;
3. Persecuted outside Luxembourg by the Nazi regime or their allies but stayed in the Grand Duchy of

Luxembourg at any time from January 1933 to May 1945.

An applicant must also be alive at the time of submitting the application (heirs are not eligible).

More information at <https://www.claimscon.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Luxembourg-Fund-English.pdf>

## SHOCKING STATISTICS

Latest figures from the CST show that in the first six months of this year a record total of 1,308 anti-Jewish hate incidents was reported from across the UK. This is a 49% increase on the 875 antisemitic incidents recorded during the first half of 2020, and is such a large total that it is higher than every full-year incident total prior to 2016.

The full report can be seen on <https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/2/d/Incidents%20Report%20Jan-Jun%202021%20EMBARGO.pdf>

## Erratum

In our *Necessary but Impossible* article (August) the dates under Jean Améry's photograph should have been 1912-1978.

## MAZELTOV

To Deborah Lipstadt, who has been nominated by President Biden as his Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism with the rank of Ambassador for the U.S. Department of State and the

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom:

To AJR Trustee Anthony Spiro who was recently presented with his OBE – see photo below.



# 80 TREES FOR 80 YEARS

**As we announced in our 80th anniversary issue in July, this winter the AJR will be planting 80 native oak trees around Britain in honour of people and places that symbolise the enormous contribution of Jewish refugees.**

As well as helping to mark the heritage of members, this exciting and high profile project – which has caught the imagination of dozens of communities around the UK - will enable the AJR to give back to and create a living legacy within the country that became our home.

Each of our 80 trees is being planted in a location that is significant in some way to Jewish refugees. The full list will be published in the October issue and in the meantime here are a few examples of places that have recently signed up.

## EAST LoTHIAN

Whittingehame House is the birthplace and former home of Lord Balfour, famous among other things as architect of the state of Israel. In the late 1930s Balfour's nephew Viscount Traprain offered Whittingehame as a school for refugee Jewish children. The Whittingehame Farm School was a non-profit making organisation which trained the children in a range of agricultural skills which would be useful to both their British hosts and potentially to Jewish Palestine. Between January 1939 to September 1941 nearly 400 children were trained there.



## MID-WALES

The tiny Welsh town of Llanwrtyd Wells provided sanctuary for over 130 children when the Czech School was set up in the Abernant Hotel. AJR member and former pupil Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines remembers it as one of the happiest times of her life: "At that time people in Llanwrtyd Wells hadn't had foreigners but we were welcomed. After arriving we put a concert on and sang the Welsh national anthem, in Welsh, and from that moment they adopted us."



## BEDFORDSHIRE

In September 1939, as part of the government organised evacuation of children from London, a party of 500 Jewish children and staff from the Jewish Secondary School in Amhurst Park were evacuated to the central Bedfordshire district of Shefford. Many of these children were refugees who had recently arrived in Britain from Germany and Austria and did not speak English.



## SHROPSHIRE

In 1940 Prees Heath Common near Whitchurch – now a beautiful nature reserve and butterfly sanctuary – became an internment camp for approximately 1000 so-called enemy aliens who had come to this country as refugees to

escape the Nazi regime. Conditions were primitive but games and music and sports were encouraged. Among those interned here were Norbert Brainin and Peter Schidlof, who met at Prees Heath for the first time and who later formed the Amadeus String Quartet with Siegmund Nissel and Martin Lovett.



## MERSEYSIDE

Another large internment camp was set up at Huyton, on the outskirts of Liverpool, in an estate of empty council houses. The camp was secured with high barbed wire fencing and reportedly allocated 12 internees to each house, although overcrowding was common. It is close to the South Liverpool suburb of Mossley Hill where our tree will be planted in the grounds of Stapely Care Home, which has many Jewish residents.



**If you would like to support this wonderful project, for example by sponsoring one of the AJR time capsules that will be buried next to each tree or by making a general donation, please email [80trees@ajr.org.uk](mailto:80trees@ajr.org.uk) or click on the 'Donate' button on [www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk) or call the AJR office.**

# LETTER FROM ISRAEL BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## ONLY IN ISRAEL



With its unique mix of people from all over the world, most of them with Jewish roots, Israel's population

comprises a wide range of cultures, traditions and even genetic composition.

The juxtaposition of so many people from so many different backgrounds has given rise to some unexpected friendships, relationships, combinations and unions. The idea that this could happen 'only in Israel' came to me as I was participating in an event to celebrate the fiftieth wedding anniversary of friends. The husband was brought from Yemen to Israel as an infant, the wife is a former 'new immigrant' from the USA. They met in Jerusalem, fell in love, got married and, lo and behold, their marriage has lasted for fifty years. Their drastically different cultural backgrounds weren't an obstacle to their marriage and don't seem to have got in the way of its endurance. I know that people from different ethnic backgrounds get married all the time all over the world, but this is the one I'm familiar with.

When new neighbours moved in to the house next door we wondered who and what they might be. On becoming acquainted with them we realised that these were in fact neighbours from heaven. Both husband and wife are

translators, which is exactly the profession I have been working in most of my adult life. They are literate, well-read, cultured and pleasant (and don't have a dog – unlike the three neighbours opposite whose five hounds bark all day and most of the night). In addition their son, Ariel (same name as my son, but much younger), is a gifted pianist and did very well at the recent Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition. As inveterate music-lovers, we were happy to be able to hear him practising on their Steinway grand piano at the other side of our shared wall. Having completed his studies in Israel and London, Ariel is now living in London and embarking on his professional career.

The young technician who came to our house a few weeks ago to attend to some malfunctioning equipment had to check something in our basement. When he saw our table-tennis table there he challenged my 81-year-old husband to a game, and was amazed and impressed at being thoroughly trounced. Upon completing his assignment he gave us his phone number and told us to call him directly whenever we had a technical problem and not to bother calling the company. The only reward he required would be a repeat game of table tennis. Only in Israel!

During the Corona pandemic, when people were told not to go out and about, and before the vaccinations had been developed, we opted to order our groceries from the local grocery store. We would phone the owner with our shopping list, and half an hour later he would be

at our door with the best-quality items as well as fruit and veg (and priced somewhat higher than the supermarket). This friendly personal interaction lasted throughout those long, dreary months of isolation, but eventually we got our jabs and life began to return to its normal routine, where we could venture out and go to the supermarket once more. After a few weeks had passed, we had a phone call from the owner of the grocery store inquiring after our health and indicating that he would like to see us in his store from time to time. We got the hint, and now try to make a point of going there as well as to the supermarket.

Most Thursday evenings my husband goes to one of Jerusalem's major bakeries to buy freshly-baked Challot for the Sabbath. He likes to be sure that the loaves are really fresh and that they have not been touched by the hands of other customers. So he has got into the habit of phoning the bakery ahead of time to make sure that the Challot are out of the oven and ready when he comes. By now the serving staff recognise his voice on the phone, tell him when to come, that they have put some aside for him, or that he should go and get some groceries first. I doubt that one would find that level of intimacy and concern anywhere else in the world.

I might be wrong, but these and other examples give me hope for the future of the Jewish people and humankind in general.

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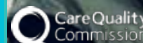
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# Letters to the Editor

To submit a letter please email [editorial@ajr.org.uk](mailto:editorial@ajr.org.uk). Please note that 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.

## INTERMENT

**Note from Editor: It is with great regret that we learnt of the death of AJR member Rudi Leavor BEM. This letter was received from his sister shortly before he died; his obituary appears on page 18.**

I am writing on behalf of my brother, Rudi Leavor, who is currently in hospital. He specially asked me to say that he thought all the articles in the July issue of the *AJR Journal* were excellent.

However, with reference to internment camps he also wanted to mention the Amadeus String Quartet who first met on the Isle of Man and in Shropshire internment camps. He also said that the hugely popular Rawicz and Landauer piano duo were interned on the Isle of Man after many years of performing together.

It is encouraging for his family that Rudi can take an interest in a subject outside the hospital. The only thing he reads and is engaged with is the *AJR Journal*, having cancelled his newspapers. He also sends heartfelt thanks to the many people who sent "get well" messages.

Yours in gratitude, *Rudi Leavor, Bradford*  
(via his sister, *Mrs. Winnie Fleming, London, NW11*)

## AMERICAN COMPLICITY

Your article about Frank Sinatra (July) stated that in 1942 information about crimes by the Nazis came to America.

However, the Allies (including America) knew what was going on MUCH earlier. Companies like Ford, Chrysler, GM, Coca-Cola all had German subsidiaries which sent back reports to their US parent company of their use of slave labour and what they were doing for the war effort. It was only when they were nationalised in 1942, when the US joined the war, that the reports stopped.

Some companies were even more complicit. IBM had helped Germany conduct the census in the early 30s (which is why Hitler had such good knowledge

of population numbers) by recording all the information on punched cards. They used Dehomag tabulating machines to sort them. (Dehomag was a wholly-owned subsidiary of IBM). In 1942 they moved all their operations to neutral Switzerland so they could continue to maintain the tabulating machines. Every concentration camp had a Dehomag machine, generating numbers to be tattooed onto the labourers/prisoners.

*Steve Karneinsky, London NW3*

## AJR@80: DR. RICHARD ENGEL

Our grandparents Richard and Alice Engel helped many other refugees and when our grandfather died an obituary was published in *AJR Information* (January 1964). The following month a response to the obituary said, inter alia: The high professional standard of Richard Engel was matched by his great humanity. He was one of the greatest friends and protectors of those many Jewish refugees who arrived in this country without any means or connections. When the AJR came into existence it was a matter of course for him to assist in building up the Association without, however, diminishing his personal efforts to help where help was needed.

*Patricia van den Brink, Herne, Germany and Diane O'Shea, Hertfordshire*

## BIT OF A BUSINESS

**Note from Editor: Thank you to all the readers who wrote in response to David Herman's celebration of Jewish refugee entrepreneurs (*Bit of a Business*, August). Unfortunately we don't have space to share your letters in full, but here is a precis:**

**Dr Anna Nyburg** told us about her own book *The Clothes on our Backs: How Refugees from Nazism Revitalised the British Fashion Trade*, the paperback version of which comes out this October. She also shared plans for a 2023 conference and book planned by the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies on *The Refugees from Nazism to Britain: Innovation in Engineering and Industry*.

**Mrs A. Rosney** wrote how during the war her father worked for ELECTRO-METHODS, a small munitions sub-contractor in Hendon run by Erwin Mainzer from Stuttgart, who employed several refugees. Her father told her about a colleague who was particularly well-spoken and extremely chatty with everyone. One day, while eating their packed lunches in the little kitchen, this colleague 'accidentally' knocked another colleague's lunch box at which point all the sandwiches fell out, as did a tiny camera. It turned out that the owner of the lunch box was a German spy posing as a Jewish refugee and the well-spoken colleague was a counter-espionage officer.

**Maureen Foulkes-Hajdu** told us about her late father Ernest Foulkes (né Ernst Fuch) who received one of the very first Queen's Awards to Industry for Export Achievement in 1966. He sold his company, MSE Centrifuges, to Fisons in 1972, and established The Foulkes Foundation to support post-doctoral scientists.

**Steve Karneinsky's** father Rudy Kennedy helped several companies with their defence systems before setting up his own medical electronics company which was eventually bought by Roche.

## SHANGHAI'S LITTLE VIENNA

My father, Martin Meyer, was born in Berlin in 1906 and in his teens and early twenties drifted away from Judaism and into the Social Democratic Party.

While at Buchenwald he was whipped for helping an old Jewish inmate to carry rocks in the quarries. Marks of whipping were seen as signs of disobedience, which in turn prevented his release. However, one of the camp staff had also been a Social Democrat pre 1933 and he smuggled my father into the sunray equipment to help heal his whipping scars. He was released from Buchenwald in July 1939.

He secured travel papers to Shanghai and was en route there at Kitchener Camp when war was declared, making travel to Shanghai impossible. My father married another

# LOOKING FOR?

## KINDERTRANSPORT DIARIES

Monja Stahlberger, PhD candidate in Exile Studies at London University, is looking for diaries written during the 1930s and 1940s by children who came via Kindertransport.

[monja.stahlberger@postgrad.sas.ac.uk](mailto:monja.stahlberger@postgrad.sas.ac.uk)



## KÖRÖSI RELATIVES

Trudy Platt seeks relatives of her late father, Viktor Körösi, born 15 October 1898 in Budapest, to Wilhelm and Johanna (née Fischer) Körösi. Viktor lived in Vienna and Linz, and escaped to UK in November 1938 with wife Grete and children, Trudy and George. He had three siblings: Gisela, Valerie and Rudolph.

[t.platt6@btinternet.com](mailto:t.platt6@btinternet.com)

## THEO DAVID HEINEMAN (or SPERBER)

Hannah Sperber of Denver, Colorado, is looking for Theo David Heineman (or Sperber) born 1925 in Karlsruhe. He was Bar Mitzvah in 1938 in Karlsruhe and left on a Kindertransport in 1938 or 1939. His mother was Johanna Sperber (née Heineman). His father was Philip Sperber from Galicia.

[naturefan33@gmail.com](mailto:naturefan33@gmail.com)

## TRACING RUDOLF

Martin Berliner hopes to trace the Rudolf who sent this photo to his late father. On the reverse is written: *Refugee Camp 1, 16-anis-Noir, St.Paniz, Que. May, 11<sup>th</sup>, 1942*

*Dear Gustav,  
I wish that you will always value the good things - truth, tolerance, and justice to others – more than anything else.*

*The good are always the happier ones, even when they have little money, but a free conscience values higher than all the money in the world. If you try to live better than others live, you will also be more content.*

*Sincerely yours, Rudolf.  
[martin@martinberliner.com](mailto:martin@martinberliner.com)*

Jewish refugee from Berlin, I made my appearance and we became another British family. To stop me feeling badly done to, I have only to think of the alternative.  
*Stephen Meyer, Craven Arms, Shropshire*

## DRIVING LICENCES

I have been concerned for some time that one's driving licence contains one's place of birth, in my case Munich. I feel that there is no reason for this and that it is discriminatory towards naturalised British citizens. There might have been some excuse while we were part of the EC, but this no longer applies. Are any of your other members concerned about this?

*Hannah Gummers, Backbarrow, Cumbria*

**Note from Editor: We understand that this matter is being reviewed by the DVLA.**

## PERHAPS TOO ORIENTAL?

In his letter (August) Peter Phillips asked about my source for a quotation from Anthony Eden when he said that a wartime report from Isaiah Berlin suffered from "perhaps a too generous Oriental flavour." The source is Michael Ignatieff's biography of Berlin, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (Chatto & Windus, 1998, p125). Berlin had mixed feelings about Eden (see his letters about the Suez Crisis in Volume Two of Berlin's *Enlightening: Letters 1946-1960* (2009), edited by Henry Hardy and Jennifer Holmes).  
*David Herman, London SW13*

## SURVIVOR OR REFUGEE?

One of my granddaughters was learning about the Holocaust and asked me: "Were you a survivor, grandpa?" Was I? I think I was. I had to flee Vienna aged 3 in 1939, albeit with my parents. The Nazis persecuted me, together with my family. I survived the Nazi terror. Surely that makes me a "survivor". But, "no", say others. The only Holocaust survivors were those who had survived the concentration camps and, perhaps, those who came to England on the Kindertransport.

I find the comparison made between the children who came on the Kindertransport

and those who came with their parents understandable but not in the case of defining who was and who was not a Holocaust survivor. I am interested in what your readers think. Is a better definition "refugee"? Please don't accuse me of being pedantic. To my granddaughter, the answer is important. Come to think of it, we are, after all, the "Association of Jewish Refugees", not the "Association of Jewish Survivors".

*Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts*

## OUR BELOVED DAY-CENTRE-THAT-WAS

In our wonderful 80th birthday edition (July) there was not a single mention of our former Day Centre, not even in Anthony Grenville's article on the history of the AJR and the services offered to members over the years.

The Paul Balint Day Centre was set up in the late 1980s through the generosity of the

Balint family who purchased a building for the AJR in Cleve Road in West Hampstead and we also owe much to the farsightedness of Ludwig Spiro who proposed the idea and was a huge supporter.

The Day Centre was run for many years by the late Sylvia Matus who loved all the members who flocked in vast numbers, receiving the most delicious continental food six days a week, including Sunday tea and supper. It was a miracle to behold, watching our members (with Berliners and the Viennese choosing to sit at separate tables) wolfing down their schnitzels and apfelstrudel, just like in the olden days. I took over from Sylvia after her retirement and it was a real privilege to serve our members in this way. I also reinstated the AJR Meals on Wheels service from our relatively small kitchen which at its peak produced 26,000 kosher meals a year.

*Susie Kaufman, London NW3*

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

**“Not nice or polite but true”, Paula Rego told *The Observer* about her series of abortion paintings. Like other aspects of her work now presented in a retrospective at Tate Britain, Rego is visceral, imaginative, often grotesque, both a realist and a magical realist. Scattered imagery from opera, fairy tales, literature, and folklore litter her work. They take the form of miniature humans and animals so graphic that you might shrink from them, but the work of this Portuguese narrative painter tells the truth about hidden violence in society, often directed against women.**

The artist in  
her studio  
by Paula  
Rego



I can never forget her painting from the late 1980s, in which she cradles her husband, then suffering from multiple sclerosis, in her lap; her legs earthy, strong, staunch and muscular, showing what she has become in the course of marriage. And then I recall her painting of a bride, a cadaverous old woman half leaning against the white tulle and lace of her wedding dress, her feet distorted with bunions. And you look closer and it's not an old woman at all, but a young bride whose womanly fate is etched into the features of old age. In work from this period, we see woman as victim, but a victim who becomes empowered. Because she has to. The husband may be present but he has virtually vanished.

The show represents 60 years of Rego's work, claimed by Tate to be the largest and most comprehensive staged in Britain. The artist was born in Lisbon in 1935 under the repressive Salazar dictatorship. Her views were guided by her fiercely anti-fascist parents and her early work demonstrates both fear and political challenge. *Interrogation*, painted when she was 15, shows a young girl, barefoot on a chair, hiding her face from two faceless, rough male figures around her, whose clenched hands resemble instruments of torture, while her own hands claw at herself in terror. It is a brutal, if innocent work from a young girl who has already grasped the message of power and subjugation.

Rego did not remain permanently in Portugal. She came to London and studied at the Slade, dividing her time between

both countries. But what did remain was the injustice for women and the poverty of workers under Salazar's 48-year dictatorship. While she feels a Londoner today, "Portugal, with its ghosts of her childhood, is in her soul," her son Nick Willing, told the BBC.

From the 1960s Rego expressed these ghosts by making surrealist dolls and collages, blending fine art and popular culture. She used them as models for her roving imagination which would take her into the dark side of nursery rhymes, art and literature. Having undergone analysis, Jungian therapy is also reflected. You read a Rego painting like a book; multi-layered and dramatic. The solid figures underpin the essential, homespun power of women despite their political frailty. They are dreamscapes, in which you, the viewer, must determine who is the real protagonist.

Occasionally Rego will demonstrate a romantic side, such as in her painting inspired by Thomas Hardy's novel, *Return of the Native*. A young woman in blue lies among twigs and shrubbery while small figures and animals menace her. Another is *The Cadet and His Sister*, in which a young kneeling girl in red ties the shoes of her brother, whose face is winsomely pointed into a distance between two white walls looking onto a disappearing path, narrowly bordered by fir trees. The girl's handbag lies on the ground, and beside the man is a cockerel, symbol of Portugal. She is trying to give him home comforts, but he is already far away, anxiously awaiting his

future. In *The Little Soldier*, a taut-faced girl plucks a dead swan, while a tiny soldier bottom right, rifle slung over his shoulder, wanders off, mourned, perhaps by an equally miniscule woman in a headscarf. Swans represent grace, love and beauty in mythology, so perhaps this is a farewell. The imagery is subtle. We are left to ask the question.

But much of Rego's works reflect the stuff of nightmare. She chooses Jean Genet's play, *The Maids*, to illustrate his story of two maids murdering their employer and her daughter, and yet you almost overlook the child's killing, which is hidden in plain sight. Her brilliance as an artist is that she indicates violence while looking away from it. *The Little Murderess* features a child intent on strangling someone – dog, bird, child, we will never know. Nothing is off-limits; trafficking of girls, FGM, and her inspired portraits of women in the Abortion series used in the campaign to legalise abortion in Portugal. But for me, Rego's personal story of nursing her sick husband, is the most intense and personal, offering a true picture of sturdy womanhood, anguish and all.

**Paula Rego: Tate Britain until October 24**

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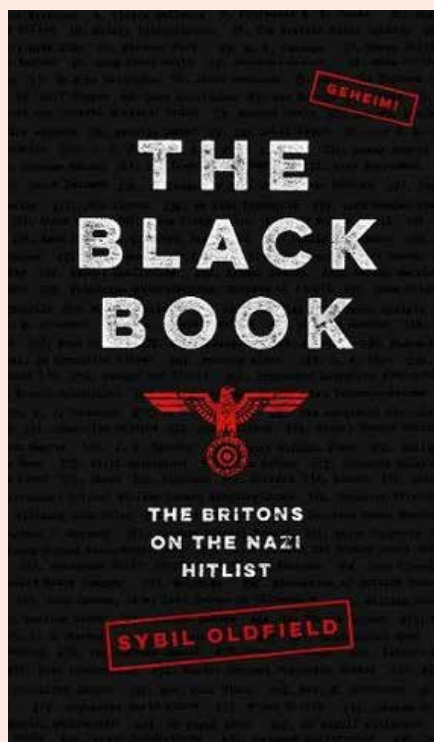


# The Gestapo's *Who's Who* of anti-Nazis

Sybil Oldfield was at an exhibition about Virginia Woolf in London's National Portrait Gallery when her curiosity was aroused by a facsimile page from a Nazi document. It indicated that the writer and her husband Leonard were on a secret list of 'Britons most wanted for arrest by the Gestapo'.

That is how Oldfield, German on her mother's side, came to write a book about the roughly 2,600 people - more than half were refugees - the Nazis classified as *deutschfeindlich* – enemy of Germany - and presumed to be living in Britain. Their list was not altogether accurate: some, such as the scholar of English literature Lascelles Abercrombie, had died, while others, including the singer Paul Robeson and the writer Stefan Zweig, had crossed the Atlantic.

Berlin had drawn up similar secret lists for other countries, such as France and Poland. In each case, they comprised the people and organisations likely to resist Nazi occupation, and formed part of Hitler's preparations for invasion and surrender. In the case of the unoccupied UK, the documents would have been used only on the Channel Islands.



To produce these lists the Nazis scanned local newspapers and other publications for evidence of anti-Nazi sentiment. Virginia Woolf's book *A Room of One's Own* would definitely have been combed, for example. Other famous names on the list included Aldous Huxley, Noël Coward and H. G. Wells, who protested against a meeting that British fascists planned to hold in the Royal Albert Hall.

The British government, meanwhile, had its own list of pro-Nazis, and figures such as Sir Oswald Mosley would find themselves incarcerated after the war began.

Oldfield, Emeritus Reader in English at Sussex University and a researcher for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, is not the first scholar to furrow in this field. The 'Black Book', as it came to be known, is a rare, pocket-sized document - one copy is held by the Imperial War Museum - that has been well publicised in recent years.

However Oldfield has added a valuable and detailed work of reference, using in part earlier issues of the *AJR Journal*. She brings home the range of named individuals slated for arrest: from passport officials who issued visas, dissident churchmen and atheist philosophers to East End activists, refugees, aristocrats and prominent Conservatives. "Why resurrect the contribution of British anti-Nazism ...now?" she asks. Her answer is a clear warning: "...nationalistic, xenophobic, militaristic and misogynistic populism... have resurfaced in Britain today. A dormant quasi-fascism is being resurrected that yet again demonises the outsider - whether migrant or Muslim or East European or Jewish."

***The Black Book: The Britons on the Nazi Hitlist* by Sybil Oldfield was published in October 2020 by Profile Books.**

**Martin Mauthner**

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# DECADES OF ANGLO-AUSTRIAN CO-OPERATION

We are delighted to share this lovely article from Dame Janet Ritterman, chairman of The Anglo-Austrian Society, sent on the occasion of AJR's 80th anniversary.

Like the AJR, the Anglo-Austrian Society (AAS), which marked its own 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, was formed during WW2, by refugees – in the case of the AAS, from Austria. Its aims were to 'spread understanding of the importance of Austrian democracy for peace and progress; to promote closer contact between British and Austrian democrats; to further cultural relations between Britain and Austria; and to promote in the liberated Austrian Republic knowledge and understanding of British democratic ideas and institutions'. These aims were reflected in its original title: for the first three years of its existence, the Society was known as the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society.

Almost from the outset, musical activities became a defining feature. In 1946 the Anglo-Austrian Music Society, which had been founded in 1942 by the Austrian refugee musician Ferdinand Rauter, became affiliated with the newer Anglo-Austrian Society and thereafter administered jointly. In the immediate post-war period many of the Society's efforts were directed towards providing relief to Austrians

in general and to Austrian children in particular. This endeavour took a variety of forms, but concerts were certainly key. The first of the concerts whose posters are reproduced here took place in 1943, the second in 1948. As the line of text below the date on each poster indicates, these (and similar fundraising events) were organised to raise money for relief work in Austria, much of this focused on children. During this period funding was also raised to bring parties of Austrian children to Britain for short breaks.

Initiatives to promote closer contact between Austria and Britain continued for many years. In addition to The Vienna State Opera, which performed at Covent Garden in 1947, and further visits by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, The Vienna Boys Choir visited almost every year from 1950 to 2000. Many Austrian musicians who were to become internationally renowned gave some of their early concerts in London under the auspices of the Society.

Regular visits by the Spanish Riding School, which took place not only in London, were also organised. Travel to Austria organised by the Society and exchanges for Austrian and British school pupils remain vivid memories for some older members. Both also featured prominently in the Society's programme for almost forty years, until



Poster for a 1943 concert at the Royal Albert Hall

changing requirements for each made it no longer appropriate for the Society to be providing these. And although the Anglo-Austrian Music Society no longer arranges concerts in the way that it once did, the Anglo-Austrian Society has not forgotten the Music Society's vital contribution to the cultural life of post-war Britain and to the achievement of the Anglo-Austrian Society's overarching aim, of promoting cross-cultural links between the people of the United Kingdom and Austria by developing knowledge of Austria, its people and its culture.

However, the aim which underpinned all of these earlier activities – that of promoting cross-cultural links between Britain and Austria - is what the Anglo-Austrian Society still seeks to fulfil. This it does through publications and events for members: in non-pandemic times, regional *Stammtisch* get-togethers are a particular favourite; more recently we have established a Virtual *Stammtisch* as well, where Austrians and British members meet and chat online. From a fund called the Otto Harpner Fund the Society provides grants to support visits from the UK to Austria (or vice-versa), some of which support the work of researchers. This fund was established to commemorate the work and achievements of Otto Harpner, who served as the first Secretary of the Anglo-Austrian Society and the Anglo-Austrian Music Society, between 1946 and his death in 1959. The legacy that he helped to create is one of which the Anglo-Austrian Society and its current members, can remain proud.



Dame Janet Ritterman



Poster for a 1948 concert at the Royal Albert Hall

# Major museums revamp

Two important institutions dedicated to preserving the history of British Jews – the Manchester Jewish Museum and the Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre – have both reopened to the public after extensive renovations supported by the AJR’s educational grants programme. Critically, each centre has created new content to help educate about the Holocaust, Jewish refugees and British responses to Nazism.

The Manchester Jewish Museum’s reopening comes after almost a decade of planning and two years of closure. Situated in one of the city’s most multicultural areas, Cheetham Hill, the new museum explores universal experiences of journeys, communities and identities from the perspective of Manchester’s Jewish history. Its Grade II listed synagogue building has been fully renovated and restored to serve both as a living artefact of an authentic Spanish and Portuguese synagogue and as a stunning cultural space in which the museum will programme live events throughout the year.



PHOTO: JOEL CHESTER FILDES

Manchester Jewish Museum at night

A major new extension sits alongside the original synagogue, doubling the size of the museum, and containing a brand-new gallery, vegetarian kosher-style café, shop and collection store. A generous atrium links the two buildings, helping to take visitors on a journey through Manchester’s Jewish history and the journeys that brought Jewish people to the city, right through to the city’s present-day communities. The new museum is also fully accessible, with lift access and hearing induction loops throughout.

Two hundred miles north of Manchester is the new Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre. Located within the beautiful Garnethill Synagogue, the centre will enable new audiences to view unique archive collections and learn about aspects of Scottish Jewish history and culture. Visitors will discover the history and the experiences of Jewish people in Scotland over 200 years and learn how the development of Scotland has been impacted by Jewish immigration.

The AJR’s contribution is part of a £500,000 investment programme which has resulted in a modern and welcoming centre with new interpretative displays, a study room housing a specialist reference library, digital research resources and a school visit facility. Major building restoration and renovation work in the lower level of the synagogue has improved public access to underused spaces. New displays now reveal the

history of Glasgow’s Jewish community, and explore the period from 1933 to the 1950s when Scotland responded to events in Nazi Germany and took in a number of refugees.

Visiting school students will be working with interactive learning kits, based on Holocaust-era refugee collections held in the centre’s Archives. These resources follow the experiences of refugees [Dorrit Sim (née Oppenheim), Ernst Marchand and Hilda Goldwag] who fled from Nazi Germany and occupied Europe, and found a safe haven in Scotland before the outbreak of WW2. Students will be able to reflect on wider issues of citizenship, democracy, persecution and belonging, through the refugees’ experiences.

“The AJR aims to promote world class Holocaust-related educational programmes that benefit all regions of the country,” said Alex Maws, AJR’s Head of Educational Grants and Projects. “When visitors see our name listed on a wall of donors, this indicates much more than just a financial contribution – it is a sign of a real partnership between the AJR and that institution, through which we help to ensure that the experiences of our members and their families are never forgotten. We are thrilled to see both of these projects come to fruition after years of tireless efforts by our funding partners, yet we also know that this is just the beginning of many more years of important educational work still to come.”



Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre, front page of welcome leaflet

# PICTURE THESE

**AJR member Janos Fisher has conducted extensive research into the large number of Hungarian photographers who were of Jewish origin; here he gives a brief history of just a few of them.**

**Robert Capa** (né Endre Friedman in 1913, Budapest) is remembered as maybe the greatest war photographer ever. An adventurer, a charmer, a warm and generous man. His friends included Hemingway, Gary Cooper, Gene Kelly, John Steinbeck.

At 17 he left Budapest, first for Berlin and then Paris where he met the love of his life, Gerda Taro. He took the name Capa, meaning shark in Hungarian, as it had been his nickname in school. He was soon selling his photos to prestigious magazines. With John Steinbeck he went to Russia, with John Huston to Italy, but probably his best pictures were taken in the Spanish Civil War. *The Falling Soldier* is iconic. Tragedy struck in Spain, as a reversing tank killed Gerda Taro.

During WW2 he reported from North Africa, Italy, Omaha Beach on D Day, witnessed the liberation of Paris, the Battle of the Bulge and was in Israel in 1948. In 1954, when he was with the French in Indo-China, he jumped off his vehicle to take pictures, landed on a mine and died.



*The Falling Soldier* by Robert Capa, 1936

His lasting achievement is the founding of Magnum, an association which enables photographers to have control over their pictures. Magnum still exists today and a centre is named after Capa in Budapest.

Quite a contrast to Capa is **Andre Kertesz** (born Andor Kertesz in 1894, Budapest). Like so many Jewish artists from Hungary, he emigrated to Paris. Here he achieved critical success and in 1933 he published a collection entitled *Distortions*: nude figures posing with their reflections caught in distorting mirrors.

To escape Europe, he and his wife emigrated to America in 1936. Having just about managed to learn French, he struggled with another new language. Eventually a contract with *House and Garden* gave him financial security, but he was not able to work on subjects he preferred. Until the end of his life he felt unrecognised, but is now considered hugely important.

**Martin Munkacsi** (born Mark Marmelstein in 1896, Transylvania). By the age of 17 he was writing for various newspapers, specialising in sport. One day, on a tram after a football match, he witnessed an altercation which ended in the death of one of the men. In the court case, his photo proved

that the murder was in self defence, and Munkacsi's fame was assured.

He settled in Berlin in 1927, working for the largest news corporation, photographing sports and fashion, as well as ordinary people. On assignment for a German paper he photographed Hitler's inner circle, despite being Jewish and a foreigner. In 1934 he left for America. Here he worked for *Harper's Bazaar* taking portraits of Leslie Howard, Katherine Hepburn, Jean Harlow, Louis Armstrong and many other celebrities. His most famous photograph is *Three Boys at Lake Tanganyika*. He specialised in subjects that featured motion; it is said he was the father of sports photography.

**Imre Kinszki** (born 1901, in Budapest). By 1919 Kinszki had published articles in several magazines. He wanted to go to university but the anti-Jewish quota system made this impossible. His photos appeared in many publications, such as the *National Geographic* magazine, though his subjects were not revolutionary: they were his family and the part of Budapest where he lived. What was new were the light and shadows in his pictures.

By 1930, realising the danger to Jews, he and his family converted but nonetheless he was considered Jewish and was sent to a concentration camp. He was last heard of in 1945 on a march to Sachsenhausen, but he never made it to the camp.



*Melancholic Tulip* by Andre Kertesz, 1939



*Three Boys at Lake Tanganyika* by Martin Munkacsi, 1930

# The majestic Messels

*From Refugees to Royalty* is a newly published history of the Messels, a German-Jewish family who came to Britain in the nineteenth century and prospered. The author is John Hilary, an honorary professor of international relations and himself a member of the Messel family. He answered Martin Mauthner's questions about the book, which is admirably produced, with superb illustrations.

*John, can you explain the book's title?*

Yes, the title reflects an astonishing irony at the heart of the Messel family history. Back in 1763, the earliest members of the family were expelled from their home in north-west Germany by an anti-Jewish edict of King George III, in his role as Elector of Hanover. Two hundred years later, the wheel came full circle when Anne Messel's son Tony Armstrong Jones married Princess Margaret, four times great-granddaughter of that same George III. Their son David Linley, a direct descendant of the refugee Messels, was born fifth in line to the British throne.

*There have been many books about German Jews who did well in Britain, and elsewhere. What makes your family special?*

It's really the cultural contribution they have made. Ludwig Messel bought the country estate of Nymans in West Sussex, now one of the National Trust's most popular properties, and turned it into a hotbed of horticultural experimentation. His son Leonard was a connoisseur whose world-class collection of ornamental fans is now on permanent display at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Leonard's son Oliver Messel rose to become the most famous stage designer of the mid-twentieth century, inspiring subsequent generations to follow in his artistic footsteps. The women of the family were just as creative: Muriel Messel wrote the pioneering book on Nymans, Anne Messel founded the

Victorian Society together with John Betjeman in 1957, while Victoria Messel is a botanical painter today.

*You briefly describe the fate of the Messels who were still living in Hitler's Germany. What happened to them?*

My mother's cousin Irene was the youngest daughter of the celebrated architect Alfred Messel, and she was the last member of the family still living in Germany at the time of Hitler's rise to power. Despite being brought up as Christians, both Irene and her husband Wolfgang were identified as 'full Jews' under the Nazis' 1935 Nuremberg Laws and were thus under growing threat of persecution. The English Messels acted as sponsors to bring them and their two children over to this country, just four months before the outbreak of the Second World War, so they escaped the horrors that befell so many other families, including Wolfgang's own. Irene used to come and have dinner with us in London, vividly describing her life in Berlin during the Weimar years. Listening to her was like having a personal window onto twentieth-century history.

*I imagine few AJR readers will know about the German-Jewish refugees who ended up in Colombia. Tell us about the member of your family who helped them.*

My mother's uncle Rudolph Messel was a socialist who used his inherited wealth in the service of many left-wing and pacifist causes. One of these was a settlement for refugees from the Nazis that had been set up as a self-supporting agricultural colony in the mountains of Colombia. Rudolph Messel travelled out to the settlement and wrote up the experience in his book, *Refuge in the Andes*. The colony did not survive into the long term, but it served its purpose as one of many temporary havens around the world for Jewish refugees fleeing European fascism.

*Looking at the family tree, one might conclude that the Messels have completely discarded their Judaism over the decades. Is it of any relevance to the present generation?*



Rudolph Messels in Columbia, where he supported an agricultural settlement for Jewish refugees

The Messels' Jewish heritage is of particular interest today, and my book explores the family's relationship with Judaism in its various contexts down the years. Nymans is actually part of the Jewish Country Houses project that was described by Abigail Green in the May 2021 issue of the *AJR Journal*. While the Messels assimilated into British society within a single generation, including becoming practising members of the Church of England, our Jewish roots are still celebrated as an important part of the family identity.

**From Refugees to Royalty: The Remarkable Story of the Messel Family of Nymans** is published by Peter Owen and available from all good booksellers, price £25. Readers of the *AJR Journal* who would like to receive a copy for £20, including UK postage and packing, can order directly from the website: [fromrefugeestoroyalty.com](http://fromrefugeestoroyalty.com).

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# THE ROLE OF RESCUE ORGANISATIONS

**Naomi Levy has been researching the history of her mother, Leah Goodman, from Poland to Britain. She had a complex journey which took in Slovakia, Hungary, Prague and Aix-les-Bains and which involved many different rescue organisations.**

Here she gives a summary of these organisations and how they were able to help:

## In Poland

**Akiba and the Jewish Fighting Organisation** (underground name, ZOB). Akiba was a Jewish youth movement active in Krakow pre-war. Their mission was the dissemination of accurate information for the Jewish community and their bulletins featured news heard illegally on the radio and through their couriers who travelled all over the area ruled by the General Government.

The bulletins were distributed with official mail of the Jewish Social Self-help. In autumn 1942, Akiba was joined by other Jewish youth groups and together they set up the ZOB in Krakow. In addition to the newspaper, the ZOB produced leaflets warning Jews that 'resettlement' meant death. They also produced counterfeit Aryan documents including work certificates for Jews to work in German factories, which were safer places to be when the deportations began.

**The Council to Aid the Jews** (underground name, Zegota) was established in 1942 by the Polish underground in Warsaw. It comprised socialists, Catholics and democrats. They received funding from the Government-in-exile and Jewish organisations in the West. Zegota was also in contact with the Jewish underground operating on the Aryan side, mostly in Warsaw.

The Krakow branch of Zegota was set up on 12 March 1943, on the eve of the liquidation of the ghetto. When they began their operations, they had few members and they had little by way of financial resources and organisational structures. With the help of other underground groups, they provided emergency aid, false documents and places to hide. Within a few months, Krakow's Zegota was able to create an efficient network of liaisons, couriers, agents and contact premises.

## In Slovakia

**The Working Group** (WG) was set up against the background of a compliant Slovak equivalent of the Judenrat, called the Jewish Central Office, during the period of deportations from Slovakia in 1942.

The WG sought to stop the deportations through political means. By the autumn of 1942 they realised Jews were dying in Poland in large numbers and sought to rescue individuals. From February 1943, they began helping those Jews who had fled from Poland into Slovakia to get to Hungary, where it was thought to be safer.

**Jewish Youth Movements:** Hashomer Hatsair, Bnei Akiva, Beitar and Makabi Hatsair. Their focus was escape routes from Poland and Slovakia into Hungary via false papers, funds and guides.

**The Jewish community of Kezmarok**, a small town close to the Polish/Slovak border and the Tatra Mountains in north eastern Slovakia. The town was a major station on the escape routes from Poland to Slovakia, Hungary and Palestine. About 2,200 Jews were helped by the Jewish community.

## In Hungary

**The Jewish Relief and Rescue Committee** (JRRC), and the Jewish community and youth movements, were all involved in assisting the refugees with their ongoing travels and finding them accommodation. The JRRC also worked with the Jewish Agency to bring Jewish



Naomi's mother Leah

refugees to Palestine.

## In Prague and Aix-les-Bains post-war

**The Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** (JDC) had a \$10 million programme and in 1946 an office in Prague provided nutrition and medical care, established and maintained orphanages, homes for the elderly and kosher kitchens, and provided emigration assistance.

**Vaad Hatzala** established in November 1939 by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis in the United States initially to rescue Rabbis and Yeshiva students in Eastern Europe. In 1944 it expanded its efforts to rescue and help rehabilitate all Jews. They had offices in Germany and an office in Paris, where they worked on emigration and transportation. They also established children's homes in Aix-les-Bains, Strasbourg, Schirmeck, Barbizon and Fublaines for the thousands of Jewish children who had been orphaned.

**Rescue Children Inc** was a charity set up by a New York lawyer and a Vaad Hatzala committee member in 1946, for the purpose of raising funds to support the Vaad Hatzala homes in Europe. They did so through a national foster-child and adoption programme.

**A longer version of this article was first printed in May 2021 in *Second Generation Voices* which is published by the Second Generation Network.**

# DISCUSSING OUR BRAVE COMMANDOS

During Jewish Book Week the AJR hosted a fascinating conversation between the historian Helen Fry and Leah Garrett, author of an excellent new book about X Troop, the secret Jewish commandos of WW2. Janet Weston reports.



Leah Garrett, author of X TROOP

Dr Fry's great knowledge was apparent, as she herself has written extensively about the war; she has particular expertise on the 10,000 Germans and Austrians who fought for Britain and she congratulated Leah on her work.

Leah told how she carried out lengthy research to discover the stories of these incredibly brave commandos. The majority had come on the Kindertransport or with religious missions and played a crucial part in defeating the Nazi regime which had oppressed them personally. This top-secret band of brothers was chosen because of their intelligence, language skills and initiative. Above all, their incredible bravery helped defeat the enemy.

They had left family and friends behind in their home countries before the war. The majority faced internment either on the Isle of Man or in horrific conditions in Canada or Australia. But in 1942, with the shadow of the Third Reich across the entire European continent, Churchill and his chief of staff came up with a new plan for a special commando unit of Jewish refugees. Known as X Troop – X being the algebraic symbol for unknown – their story is told for the first time in Leah Garrett's book. Many had lost their families, homes – everything – and in the crucial final battles with Nazis would stop at nothing to defeat them.

To hide their true identity and to protect them if captured, they adopted English names which most kept for the rest of their lives. They also had to invent excuses – such as having a German nanny – to explain away their accents.

They were led by two remarkable men, Bryan Hilton-Jones and George Lane, a well-connected Hungarian refugee.

George was married to entomologist Miriam Rothschild. Incredibly, his life was spared after being captured in France and having tea with Field Marshall Rommel. Bryan was incredibly capable and himself severely injured in battle. He rigorously trained the men in his native Wales, in the coastal village of Aberdovey, to prepare them for the gruelling missions ahead. They were schooled in counter-intelligence and advanced combat which they continued learning in Scotland and elsewhere in preparation for their later daring successes in France, Sicily, mainland Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania, The Netherlands and Belgium. They played a crucial part in the D-Day landings and liberating Holland and Germany, including helping concentration camp victims. Some were later involved in the denazification process, playing a vital part in gathering information for the Nuremberg war trials. The commandos' linguistic skills proved invaluable both in listening to the enemy and negotiating surrender. According to the X Troop war diary, 87 men served in the unit, 22 were killed in action and another 22 seriously injured. Some had simply called them a suicide squad.

In her book Leah discusses various members but focuses on three men, Colin Anson, Peter Masters and Manfred Gans. Colin landed with Commando forces in Sicily. After recovering in Egypt from a serious head wound, he returned to Corfu which he almost single-handedly liberated. But he had the decency to avoid taking revenge on the man who fatally betrayed his father. Leah paid tribute to Helen's earlier biography on him. Peter fought in Normandy on D-Day with Bicycle Troop and helped save Special Service Brigade Commander Lord Lovat's life and fought his way through France. Selected for officer

training after the Rhine assault, he wrote an excellent autobiographical account. Manfred landed at Normandy, fought his way through France receiving a rare battlefield commission after his part in the Walcheren operation in Holland. As war ended he commandeered a jeep and drove across occupied Europe, dramatically rescuing his parents from Theresienstadt. It is a very moving and uplifting story.

Leah spent much time with the descendants of these men and had the good fortune to be able to interview two living X Troopers who have sadly since died. Her book is rife with human interest stories and is illustrated with evocative contemporary pictures.

**X TROOP: The Secret Jewish Commandos who helped defeat the Nazis by Leah Garrett is published by Chatto & Windus**

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# REVIEWS

## GESCHICHTSSCHREIBUNG IN DER EMIGRATION: DEUTSCHSPRACHIGE HISTORIKER UND HISTORIKERINNEN IN GROßBRITANNIEN

Birte Meinschien  
De Gruyter

This study of the refugee historians who fled to Britain from Germany and Austria after 1933 is a model of comprehensive research and will surely become the standard work in its field. It is a credit to its author, whose doctoral dissertation it is, and to the German Historical Institute London, under whose auspices it was published.

Birte Meinschien has traced the careers of some 67 refugee historians, dividing them into three groups: the older generation, whose university careers were already well advanced when they were forced to emigrate; the middle generation, whose professional advance was interrupted at an early stage and resumed in Britain; and the younger generation, who studied at British universities before entering academic life. This division greatly helps to clarify the differing experiences of refugee historians who took positions at British universities at different stages of their careers, a procedure not always followed by earlier studies.

Meinschien gives a detailed account of the historians' professional development, from the university education received by some in Germany or Austria down to that of those who attended British universities, not forgetting the trauma inflicted on them all by forced emigration, and with a wealth of information about the positions they held, their teaching and research interests, and their post-war relationships with their native countries. We learn about highly distinguished figures like the two historians who attained the rank of Regius Professor, Geoffrey Elton (Ehrenberg) at Cambridge and Prague-born Henry Mayr-Harting at Oxford; Francis Carsten, Masaryk Professor at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London;

or Peter Pulzer, Gladstone Professor of Government at All Souls College, Oxford. It is also a pleasure to read about scholars such as Dorothea Oschinsky, whose expertise in the field of archival history transformed that branch of historical study in Britain, or Arnold Paucker, director of the Leo Baeck Institute in London and a contributor to this journal.

Among certain British scholars it is almost taboo to celebrate the success of any group of refugees; any mention of their contribution to British society is dismissed as a false 'success story' designed to conceal the hostile reception that was supposedly the regular lot of the refugees from Nazism in Britain.

Meinschien, a German scholar, is fortunately free from the fads and fashions of British academia. She does not gloss over the hardships and obstacles faced by the historians, especially the women, as they sought to gain a foothold in British academic life. Instead, she reaches a sensible balance, on the basis of exhaustive research, that also demonstrates the successful integration of most of her subjects into British society and the warm feelings that they entertained towards Britain. She convincingly refutes the 'Narrativ des Misserfolges' (narrative of failure) propounded by some earlier studies, as well as Marion Berghahn's ill-founded assertion that Britain provided 'a home but not a homeland' for the refugees from Nazism. This book may not be a light read, but it is a mine of information.  
*Anthony Grenville*

## CHOSEN – LOST AND FOUND BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

Giles Fraser  
Allen Lane

Oswald Rufeisen was a Polish Jew later known as Father Daniel after his conversion to Christianity. He was able to pass as a non-Jew when the Nazis invaded Poland. Soon after his brother headed to Palestine, but Oswald himself was unable to procure a visa. He got a job with the police as a translator and there learned of the Nazis' plans to liquidate the Mir ghetto. He managed to

communicate with the ghetto leadership and helped them get some weapons. Although many of the ghetto's Jews were murdered by the Nazis, at least 200 were able to escape. After the war many of them made their way to Palestine.

Giles Fraser's book emphasises the Jewishness of Jesus and many of his disciples and explores the close connection between the two religions throughout many centuries, until a rejection of Judaism, leading to a great deal of antisemitism, invaded much of Christian thought. Money was a prime factor. Fraser upbraids his co-religionists for their antisemitic tropes referring to Jewish bankers, and their division of world into the pure and the impure, with the Jews singled out as 'dirty and unclean'. This, he points out, was the language of the Holocaust.

Fraser also brings up *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, by the Czech novelist, Milan Kundera in which a prominent concept is 'kitsch', generally perceived as an expression of bad taste but held by Kundera as premised on exclusion, intending to portray a world of purity and moral decency.

Fraser links this to Nazi propaganda films showing beautiful, healthy children skiing down the Bavarian Alps and designating a world that has been purified. In contrast, as he cites from Kundera, are the ghettos and concentration camps used by the Nazis to exemplify ethnic cleansing.

*Chosen* is in many ways a personal memoir for Fraser, based on his experiences after resigning from his position as Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral at the time of the *Occupy* movement in 2011. With his first marriage at an end and in a state of great depression, he travelled to Liverpool to be interviewed for a job and discovered a portrait at the Princes Road Synagogue of his great-grandfather's brother, the Reverend Samuel Friedeberg, who had officiated at the synagogue for over forty years. This connected him more to his patrilineal Jewish roots and was an inspiration.

The book is highly readable and is dedicated to Susie Orbach, the therapist who helped to cure his depression and to



his second wife, Lynn, an Israeli Jewess, who 'chose' him and pulled him 'back from the edge'.

Emma Klein

**WORKING FOR THE WAR EFFORT:  
GERMAN-SPEAKING REFUGEES IN  
BRITISH PROPAGANDA DURING THE  
SECOND WORLD WAR**

**Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove  
Valentine Michell**

Who better to join the battle against the Nazis through propaganda than the German-speaking refugees to Britain? The vast majority of them were, after all, Jewish and desperate to help defeat the Nazi menace which had robbed, tortured or murdered their families and was now waging war on their host country. Moreover, the refugees had the skills and knowledge to equip them for the task: fluent German, familiarity with Nazi tactics and jargon, as well as their own media and other skills, whether acquired professionally before emigration or learned in the field in Britain.

*Working for the War Effort* sets out the organisations and individuals who made up the wartime propaganda machinery. Of the organisations, the Ministry of Information, housed in the slightly sinister-looking Senate House in London, oversaw several departments. These included The Crown Film Unit and the German-language newspaper *Die Zeitung*, aimed at the refugees in Britain and other host countries. Outside the MoI, there was for example the *BBC German service*, a radio platform for German-speaking actors like Martin Miller. Messages broadcast from these organisations formed part of so-called white propaganda, concentrating on revealing the truth about the Nazi enemy and their activities. Black propaganda posed as genuinely German, containing 'information' which contradicted the bulletins emanating from sources overseen by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. Here, the skills and familiarity with German printing of refugee graphic designers and typographers such as Hans Schleger and Elisabeth Friedländer were crucial. Stories of the

disruption to the NS war machine caused by these broadcasts and printed matter make for fascinating reading.

Individual contributions too are in some cases impressive: who could not be moved by the account of Irmgard Litten? Despite the trauma of her experiences before she fled to Britain, she embarked on an exhausting lecture tour of Britain to let people know the truth of life under the Nazis, at some cost to her health.

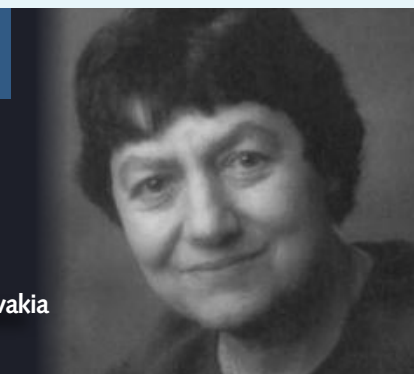
There was also the colourful and unlikely anti-Nazi, the Prussian René Halkett, who put his acting talents to good use in the 'black' radio broadcasts.

Most moving was the section on refugees engaged in the re-education of prisoners of war. These refugees rose to the challenge of extolling the virtues of democracy and tolerance even to SS officers, with dignity and intelligence.  
Anna Nyburg

## TRIBUTE TO GERDA MAYER

Gerda Mayer, as featured in the January 1993 issue of the *AJR Information*

**Born: 9 June 1927, Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia  
Died: 15 July 2021, Chingford, London**



*It is with great regret that we learned of the death of the refugee poet Gerda Mayer. In tribute, here is an extract from an article written in 1993 for AJR Information by its editor, the late Richard Grunberger.*

Poets, wrote Shelley, are the world's law-givers, only the world doesn't know it. What Shelley himself didn't know was that some poets – Jew baiters like Pound and Elliot – are not fit for parliament, or even mixed company. One searches in vain for the trauma that might excuse, or even explain, their outpourings of bile.

By contrast, poets who have every justification for feeling embittered – orphans of the Holocaust – speak in quite different cadences; their tone is elegiac and wistful. One such who attracts attention through the intensity rather than the clamour of her voice is Gerda Mayer.

Karlsbad-born Gerda owes her life to the humanitarian efforts of Nicholas

Winton's co-worker Trevor Chadwick. Aged 11 on arrival in England, she passed through a series of boarding schools before finally, and happily, ending up at Stootley Rough School near Haslemere.

Next, equipped with minimal secretarial skills, she worked for the United Palestine Appeal. There followed marriage to a fellow refugee, though without total immersion in domesticity. Gerda helped her husband with office work, composed poetry and caught up on her education. After graduating in English and Art History from Bedford College, she became research assistant to Professor Pevsner, but feeling unfulfilled, returned to writing poetry.

To date a staggering 200 of Gerda's poems are in print in different collections of her own, as well as in anthologies and magazines; a newly published school text book by Oxford University Press, for example, features her alongside Blake, D. H. Lawrence and Roger McGough. She is also a regular on the poetry reading circuit; her fondest memory is of appearing in Aldeburgh alongside Stephen Spender and being transmitted by the BBC.

# OBITUARIES

## RUDI LEAVOR BEM

Born: 31 May 1926, Berlin  
Died: 27 July 2021, Bradford



**The son of a successful dentist in Berlin and his dentist wife Luise, Rudi Leavor attended a non-Jewish primary school followed by a Jewish secondary school where he excelled in English and Music.**

A family decision was taken in 1937 to leave Berlin for England when fleeing Germany was still permitted. Other members of the family did not have the same foresight and they died tragic deaths at the hands of the Nazi regime.

Rudi's father was allowed to settle anywhere in Britain except London or Manchester; Bradford was chosen by sticking a metaphorical pin in a map at random and they set up home in Shipley,

Rudi continued his schooling at Bradford Grammar school and then studied dentistry at Leeds University. He met his wife to be, Marianne at a chance meeting in London. Long-distance romance flourished into marriage in 1955 and they settled in Bradford where they lived for nearly 60 years. They had 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls, all still residing in the Bradford district with their own extended families.

Soon after arriving in England, Rudi became a very active member of the Bradford Reform Synagogue, performing many key roles within the Synagogue for over 70 years, including that of Chairman for the last 25 years as well as receiving the accolade of Life President. Rudi helped to secure a grant from the National Lottery for £75,000 made available for essential repairs to the building.

Rudi joined and later conducted the Synagogue choir and became director of music for all services. Rudi's greatest love was singing: he was a member of the Leeds Philharmonic Choir for 50 years only recently giving up at the age of 94. Performances included concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London as well as many other cities in the UK and in Europe.

As well as singing, Rudi was a very ambitious composer having written many pieces of music of which he and his family were most proud. His many compositions were performed extensively, culminating in his "masterpiece"

composition ENOSH being performed locally and in London, twice with full symphony orchestra and mixed amateur and professional singers in front of live audiences.

Rudi's greatest achievement was the developing of close interfaith relationships with the Christian and Muslim hierarchy, thus putting the Bradford Synagogue and his work on a truly international stage. His work made headlines around the World. One of the most controversial decisions was maybe that of co-opting a Muslim on to the Synagogue Council.

Rudi worked hard to ensure that the horrors of the Holocaust are not forgotten. He donated to the Berlin Jewish Museum the priceless Sefer Torah specially handwritten for his father's Bar Mitzvah and subsequently used by himself and his two sons. He gave lectures and seminars to groups of young people visiting the Museum as well as to his former school.

His many accolades included being awarded the British Empire Medal in 2017 in recognition of his interfaith work. He welcomed HRH The Duke of Wessex to the Synagogue in recognition of Rudi's interfaith work and of his work as a volunteer as the Jewish Chaplain to the three Bradford Hospitals. Until as recently as 2019, Rudi was invited to perform and sing the Jewish Mourning Prayer at various local cities: Bradford, Halifax, Leeds, Huddersfield and Wakefield on their Holocaust Memorial days. His proudest call-up was to sing at the National Memorial Service at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in 2013.

Above all, Rudi is remembered as the patriarch of a large close family, a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather and for raising four children who are high achievers in life.

His recently published memoirs will be his enduring legacy to ensure all the good he did in his life will be eternally remembered.

**Rudi believed in the importance of the HSFA and its cross-cultural and interfaith work and his family invites readers to support the continuation of this work by visiting [www.holocaustlearning.org.uk](http://www.holocaustlearning.org.uk) and clicking on 'Donate'.**



## GEORGE LOBLE, MBE JP (formerly Günter Löbl)

Born: 9 June 1927, Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia

Died: 15 July 2021, Chingford, London

### To survive the rise of Nazi persecution, George's parents arranged for him to travel unaccompanied to stay with a family in the East End of London.

In March 1939 George arrived in England, speaking virtually no English, with 10 shillings in his pocket. His two older brothers had already left, William (Wilhelm) the eldest to the USA in 1935 and Ronnie (Rudi) to England in 1939.

Fortunately, his immediate family were reunited in England and his father Fritz and uncle Robert, began to look at ways of re-establishing the family electrical engineering business. With financial assistance from the Board of Trade to set up a business in an area of high unemployment, the Löbl family moved to Gateshead and opened Loblite Limited on Team Valley Trading Estate, where there were several other newly established manufacturing businesses owned by Jewish refugees.

Not long after war was declared, the adult males in George's family were interned at Huyton Camp near Liverpool. In order to make ends meet, 13-year-old George worked on a farm while his mother scrubbed floors at a school.

In 1941, George became an engineering apprentice at Sigmund Pumps (GB) Limited which proved a most valuable foundation to George's career. After qualifying, the company sent him to London where he held various positions in estimating and sales. He made lifelong friendships with other young refugees and met and fell in love with Eve Heinemann. They married in 1953 and had a strong, loving and happy marriage for over 66 years.

Following his father's death in 1956, George and his best friend and older brother, Ronnie, took over at Loblite, adding many new lines. Their drawing office created innovative designs for lighting fittings, adaptors, cable reels and a range of ferrules for paint brushes.

Very sadly, Eve was diagnosed with the first of two significant brain tumours in 1963, requiring major surgery and leaving her with speech aphasia. At the same time, George's brother Ronnie, was suffering from Multiple Sclerosis and tragically passed away in February 1965. These were setbacks which George coped with while bringing up his two children, running

Loblite and contributing to a number of charities and voluntary organisations.

Eve and George were among the founding members of the Newcastle Reform Synagogue and were integral to the establishment and growth of this fledgling Reform community. George eventually became Honorary Life President. His dignified but dogged leadership earned respect locally and nationally within the Jewish and secular communities.

In 1967, George became a Magistrate in Gateshead and Chairman of the Youth Court, until he was obliged to retire at 70 years of age.

George was invited to become a Trustee of the Women's Cancer Detection Society at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Gateshead and in due course he became Chairman. This charity introduced cervical screening and later breast screening for women at a time when the NHS did not offer routine testing. George led a successful application to the National Lottery Charities Fund which enabled the purchase of expensive and critical equipment, saving many lives on Tyneside.

One of the highlights of George's life was when he was awarded an MBE in recognition of his charitable work. He was thrilled to have this honour bestowed by Her Majesty the Queen in person.

George never forgot a single detail of the rising antisemitism he experienced in Bamberg during his childhood. These turbulent, formative years motivated him to teach about the Holocaust and antisemitism throughout his life and to publish an autobiography which can be downloaded free at [www.TheBoyFromBamberg.com](http://www.TheBoyFromBamberg.com)

George led an extremely active and fulfilling life, but despite his business and charitable commitments, he always had time for his family and friends. He was totally devoted to Eve until she passed away in June 2019. He showed great interest in everyone he knew and enjoyed the company of others right to the end of his life. He is sorely missed by his children, Monica and Peter, his family and his many friends.

*Monica Stern and Peter Lobl*

## ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Wednesday 1 September @2pm	Katherine McAlpine, Director of the Brunel Museum - Isambard Kingdom Brunel: One of the Greatest Figures of the Industrial Revolution <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86737040985">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86737040985</a>
Thursday 2 September @10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88967465972">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88967465972</a>
Thursday 2 September @2pm	Jeremy Angel - The History of Angel Costumiers <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81034356821">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81034356821</a>
Monday 13 September @10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82900315371">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82900315371</a>
Tuesday 14 September @2pm	Tony Zandle - Jews & Jazz Part 2 <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85203885546">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85203885546</a>
Wednesday 15 September 10.30am	AJR Book Discussion (no speaker) - <i>Hamnet</i> by Maggie O'Farrell <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84859397185">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84859397185</a>
Monday 27 September @10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81572912998">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81572912998</a>

## Special anniversary book offer

Anthony Grenville's *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1945* is the only scholarly study to recount the history of our group of refugees from 1933 until well into the post-war period. Relying on refugee sources, it tells the story from the refugees' perspective, charting the course of their experience as they settled in Britain.

Available at £10.00 – please contact  
[Melanie@ajr.org.uk](mailto:Melanie@ajr.org.uk) or 020 8385 3092



## AJR ARCHIVES

We were delighted recently to receive a package of papers containing reports of AJR Board meetings from the 1970s providing a fascinating insight into the operations of the AJR from the era. With the recent interest in ensuring that historically important papers find a good home, we would like to appeal to any readers to also send us any AJR Board papers and circulars from the early days of the AJR.



The AJR in partnership with Chelsea Foundation is delighted to announce our  
**International Forum: Connecting Next Generations**

Sunday 3 October 2021 - online only

Monday 4 October 2021 - online and in person at Chelsea FC's Stamford Bridge, London

Topics including identity, trauma, legacy, memorialisation, literature and more

For more information and to book see

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ajrs-international-forum-connecting-next-generations-tickets-166905154811>

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