



An imbalance of plaques

At the beginning of May two special occasions celebrated the life of one of Britain's greatest 20th century political philosophers, Sir Isaiah Berlin. The first was the unveiling of a new blue plaque at his family's first London home in Kensington, where he spent a "golden childhood". The second was the unveiling of a Black Plaque placed by the Heath and Hampstead Society outside the house in NW3 where Isaiah's parents moved in 1928 when he went to Oxford.



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Marking the achievements of Isaiah Berlin at his Kensington home. From L to R: Mark Pottle, the Berlin Fellow at Wolfson College Oxford, Isaiah's stepson, Peter Halban and Berlin's literary editor, Henry Hardy.

There is something quintessentially English about the English Heritage blue plaque scheme. There is a blue plaque to Alfred Edmeades Bestall, the illustrator of Rupert Bear, in Surbiton, where the Berlins first lived in Britain, one to GK Chesterton in W14, a stone's throw from Berlin's first London home, and blue plaques for Constable, Darwin and Dickens in the borough of Camden where the Berlins spent their later years.

But there is another story. Blue plaques adorn the former homes of numerous famous refugees, including Sir Karl Popper, the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein and the artist Oskar Kokoschka.

The history of these blue plaques tells us something else. Not just the number of refugees they commemorate but the concentration in particular
Continued on page 2

HAPPY JUBILEE

As Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth celebrates her Platinum Jubilee it is nice to know that there are now AJR trees all over the country featuring the Queen's Green Canopy distinctive logo. See photos of the latest plantings on page 14.

We will also be talking about the Jubilee on 14 June with the celebrated composer Debbie Wiseman (page 9).

We hope you have the opportunity to celebrate the Jubilee with your own friends and family and would love to receive any photographs.

News.....	3
Supporting Education.....	4
Letter from Israel.....	5
Letters to the Editor and Looking For.....	6-7
Art Notes.....	8
An afternoon with the Royal composer.....	9
Remembering the girls.....	10
Wolf Suschitzky's lucky break.....	11
Austrian fund dissolved.....	12
What a death.....	13
Trees for Yom HaShoah.....	14
A bright day in Brent.....	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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An imbalance of plaques (cont.)

places. Hampstead, of course. Anna and Sigmund Freud at 20 Maresfield Gardens, (now the Freud Museum), Ernst Gombrich, John Heartfield, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner and famous figures from the Bauhaus like Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy who all lived at Lawn Road Flats and that's not even including the black plaques of the Heath and Hampstead Society.

Then there is Marylebone, where there's a blue plaque to Emeric Pressburger and his long-time collaborator, Michael Powell (though Pressburger lived in Hampstead) and another to the cartoonist, 'Vicky'; Kensington and Chelsea, where residents included the great German photographer Bill Brandt, the physicist and inventor of holography Dennis Gabor and the dancer Dame Marie Rambert. There's a plaque to Dame Lucy Rie in Paddington, and one in Wimbledon, once home to Sir Ernst Chain, one of the discoverers of penicillin, and another in Putney, home to the former Czech president, Edvard Beneš.

But the real epicentre is the area from Marylebone to St. John's Wood and Hampstead, home to so many Jewish refugees from central Europe in the 1930s and '40s. Perhaps the interesting contrast here is with the Jewish East End, home to the sons of Jewish immigrants like the artist Mark Gertler, the artist and poet Isaac Rosenberg and the writer Israel Zangwill, all born between the 1860s-90s, but not to any of the blue plaque refugees.

It is not just the geographical range that is interesting. There is also the range of achievements which have been recognised, from potters, screenwriters and choreographers to scientists and philosophers. We find the same range in the AJR's own plaque scheme with memorials to prominent Jewish émigrés ranging from Rabbi Leo Baeck and figures from the arts like the opera impresario Sir Rudolf Bing, the artist Milein Cosman and the music critic and broadcaster Hans Keller to distinguished medical scientists like Ernst Chain and Sir Ludwig Guttman.

Then there are those who are missing

from the English Heritage blue plaque scheme. The blue plaque scheme, so well researched and admirable in many ways, reinforces a troubling bias in the historiography of Jewish refugees from central and east Europe. The focus of so much of the historical research has been on German-speaking refugees – from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia – rather than east European refugees from Galicia, the Baltic republics, Ukraine and Belarus. Great cultural centres like Budapest, Prague and Warsaw are largely ignored.

This isn't simply a geographical point. Central European refugees who became part of the British cultural establishment often received blue plaques. What one might call the Outsiders - the Left, expressionist artists, Yiddish poets and rabbis, often the unknown and forgotten – tend to be under-represented. There are no plaques commemorating the great architect Berthold Lubetkin, the film and theatre director Karel Reisz from Ostravia in Czechoslovakia, the Polish artists Jankel Adler and Henryk Gotlib, Yiddish poets like Itzik Manger and AN Stencl, the great Jewish scholar Chimen Abramsky born in Minsk, the former Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits from Königsberg, Rabbi Leo Baeck from Posen (now in Poland) and Rabbi Hugo Gryn from Berehovo in Ruthenia.

This isn't just about blue plaques. There is a worrying fault-line which runs through the historiography of European refugees which bears an uncanny resemblance to the Iron Curtain. There are obvious exceptions. Isaiah Berlin, of course (remember that his mother Marie Berlin was born Volschonok and how many of his family in Riga were murdered in the Holocaust), but also Marie Rambert, born to a Lithuanian Jewish family from Warsaw and Emeric Pressburger from Miskolc in northern Hungary. But, generally, the blue plaques and the acclaim have tended to go to those from Berlin, Vienna and Prague not to the *Ostjuden*.

This isn't to minimise the achievements of Freud, Gombrich and Chain, Berlin, Kokoschka and Heartfield. They were all huge cultural figures. Their impact on British culture was enormous. It is a tribute to the blue and black plaque schemes that they recognise so many Jewish refugees and immigrants. The

research that goes into these plaques is prodigious and deserves great recognition. As always with the history of refugees, however, the story is more complicated than one might think.

Meanwhile, to do full justice to Isaiah Berlin: born in Latvia in 1909, Isaiah witnessed the February Revolution in Petrograd when he was just seven. It made an indelible impression, leaving Berlin with a lifelong horror of violence and political extremism. His family sought sanctuary in Britain in February 1921, long before the Nazis took hold, and he spent his life defending freedom and diversity.

What was perhaps most striking was the contrast between his family's early lives as Jewish refugees from Riga and the apparent solidity and tranquillity of their UK homes. This is perhaps why Isaiah, on his first morning in England, went over to the piano in the Surbiton house where the family had spent their first night and, with one hand, picked out 'God Save the King.'

The following year the family moved to Upper Addison Gardens, an imposing terraced house with magnificent communal gardens. Not bad for Mendel Berlin, a Jewish timber merchant from Latvia. 'In photographs,' Ignatieff writes, Marie Berlin 'does not seem quite at home... Isaiah used to say that she took to exile in England like an indomitable refugee, like "someone sitting on her bags in Ellis Island with fourteen children.'" The Jewish image is telling.

As soon as Isaiah left for Oxford in 1928 his parents moved to Hampstead. More suburban than, certainly more Jewish. Marie became chairwoman of the Brondesbury Zionist society and kept kosher. Her son, meanwhile, moved into a life spent, according to Ignatieff, 'in the walled gardens and high-windowed rooms of English institutional privilege': Oxford colleges, Albany in Piccadilly, the British Academy where he was President, Headington House, Oxford, where he lived his entire married life and where he welcomed the great and the good. Had his family not left Latvia when they did, his life – and the whole development of 20th century political and philosophical theory – could have been very different.

David Herman

JOYFUL REUNION FOR '45 AIDERS



Dancing around some of our wonderful survivors

Over 400 people, including some of the original 'Boys' and their children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren from all over the world, as well as dignitaries and representatives of other Holocaust-related organisations, attended a reunion dinner celebrating the 77th anniversary of the Boys' liberation in May.

Survivors Harry Olmer, Mala Tribich, Zigi Shipper, Harry Spiro and Jan Goldberger, plus three members of the 2nd generation, lit six memorial candles. After a minute's silence, festivities began with an uplifting musical performance,

followed by Israeli dancing and a fascinating film about the '45 Aid Society's new online resource on the history of the Boys.

Harry Spiro and Mala Tribich also spoke in depth about their experiences during and after the Holocaust with 3rd generation TV personality and Holocaust educator, Robert Rinder.

Chairman of the '45 Aid Society, Angela Cohen, said: "We were thrilled and overjoyed to see so many of our wonderful Boys and their families reunited at last after so long apart. The room was filled with joy and love and celebration, something that our Boys have instilled in their families and they are an inspiration to everyone around them".



KINDER MEET

AJR's Kindertransport Committee convened at Liverpool Station for their May meeting. The picture includes Sir Erich Reich (who was the inspiration for the little boy featured in the statue), Michael Newman, Danny Kalman, Ian Goldsmith, Nick Sigler, Madeleine Kerzner, Tanya Novick, Ruth Abrahams and Susan Harrod.



SHARING THE HONOUR

The importance of capturing testimony was reiterated to me by HRH The Duke of Cambridge during the investiture for my OBE in February at Windsor Castle, reports AJR Chief Executive **Michael Newman**.

The memorable occasion worked like clockwork, from the walk through the many splendid rooms in the castle replete with weapons, furniture and objets d'art, to the briefing by a Lord Lieutenant, who reassured us that it was permissible to engage in conversation with Prince William during the ceremony. He also informed us we would know when it was time to take our leave.

The Duke reflected on his visit to a concentration camp in Poland, his pride at meeting Holocaust survivors, and also the need to remember and pass on the stories to future generations. He was also suitably knowledgeable about the work of the AJR and congratulated us on our endeavours.

After the formalities, we were among guests invited to have photographs taken in an adjoining room. The assistant to the photographer specifically wanted to meet me; it transpires she is the daughter of a Jewish refugee from Vienna, who knew about the AJR and our work. A poignant footnote to a wonderful day.

Supporting Education



The Jewish Museum London's Holocaust Gallery



Flyer showing the AJR-supported educational activities offered by Jewish Museum London

As the UK's largest dedicated funder of programmes and projects which promote teaching and learning about the Holocaust, the AJR last year awarded 18 major educational grants. One of these was to the Jewish Museum London, whose Holocaust Education programme offers an insightful and thought-provoking approach for students to build on their prior knowledge and understanding.

The Museum's sessions enable students to look closely at artefacts from its collection as well as hear the testimony of survivors and refugees from Nazism. Strong emphasis is placed on enhancing students' thinking skills, enquiry, interpretation, analysis and moral development.

As soon as the museum closed during lockdown it made a strategic decision to move to a blended learning environment, developing a streamed offer for schools. This offer now includes Museum workshops, Virtual Classrooms, Outreach sessions and a new Travelling Exhibition offer, all of which have enabled more students to attend the workshops according to the programme that best fits the needs of their school.

The Museum's approach to Holocaust Education begins in KS2 with Years 5 &

6 and focuses on the rise of Nazism and escape & rescue by learning more about the Kindertransport. For Secondary school students the programme delves deeper into the topic including life before, during and after the Holocaust and focusing on how people's faith might have been strengthened or challenged during this time.

In-person Museum workshops are based in the museum's collection and include an element of Object Handling. In contrast, Virtual Classrooms are perfectly suited to a digital environment. For example, the museum is now able to run Survivor testimony sessions online, which continue to be popular with schools even as the country emerges from the pandemic.

The new Travelling Exhibition, *The Promise*, focuses on the story of Eva Schloss, her brother Heinz, and the artistic talent he cultivated in captivity that Eva salvaged from obscurity through reproductions of Heinz's paintings. The exhibition can be booked out by schools on a weekly basis and comes with a teacher's resource and student activities connected to objects on the museum's learning portal.

Another activity is Virtual Broadcasts for Holocaust Memorial Day for secondary schools, incorporating a live candlelighting and pre- and post-broadcast activities.

The museum has also developed an innovative way of evaluating the emotional impact of its Holocaust Education programme. For example, at different points

during the workshop, students fill in a reflection card by selecting an emoji or word they identify with. The museum is currently trialling a digital method of capturing similar data.

Feedback not only demonstrates the students' emotional literacy, it also proves that tackling difficult topics such as the Holocaust can be done in a way that includes emotions of sadness and nervousness alongside inspiration. For example:

- *"Watching the film made me feel sad because he was the only one who survived in his family"*
- *"I felt overwhelmed because it was kind of emotional how he lost so many people"*
- *"In the galleries I felt excited because I got to see things that I have never saw before"*
- *"During the object handling I felt happy because we get to touch the objects"*
- *"I felt nervous holding the objects, because I might drop it"*
- *"Sadness that people can do such things to others and the people's lives can be impacted so hugely by others"*
- *"Surprised, sad and disgusted Jews should not have been treated this way, they are just like any other person."*

LETTER FROM ISRAEL BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



As Robert Frost pointed out, we all take decisions in our lives. Someone like me (i.e., a very old person) has had

to do so at various points in my life – what to study, whom to marry, where to work, where to live, whether to have another child, who to vote for, etc., etc. I'm sure that other people have had to make similar decisions, and they have all helped to weave the fabric of life. But suppose each such decision was a matter of life or death, how could we have coped with that knowledge?

As we marked Holocaust Memorial Day here in Israel, my thoughts automatically turned to wondering how I would have fared at that fateful time, and also how the relatives I lost dealt with their situation. I know for a fact that after Hitler's rise to power in Germany Jews there were faced with almost insurmountable difficulties if they sought to leave the country. For many, including both my maternal and paternal grandparents, this involved leaving behind the homeland and country they loved and for which – in the case of both my grandfathers – they had fought in the First World War.

In the memoir my late father wrote

about his life he states that as a young married couple his parents "had been very enthusiastic about Zionism and Palestine. They had been among the few Jewish residents of Hamburg to attend the 9th Zionist Congress held there in 1909. They told us children later that as a result of this they were ostracised by their family, friends and fellow-congregants, and that it took many years before their lapse was forgiven."

Oh, if only the Jewish community of Hamburg had not been so anti-Zionist! Who knows? Maybe my grandparents could have been among those brave Jews who came to live in what was then Ottoman-controlled Palestine, making a very different life for themselves and their descendants. But Hamburg was a thriving metropolis, with a rich cultural, social and commercial life, and would have always been a more attractive place to live in than a barren desert in the Middle East. My other grandparents in Silesia had tickets for a ship to Cuba but were prevented from leaving Germany because my grandmother was under sixty years of age.

I take my hat off to all those Jews who did come to live here in those early years, starting with the intrepid few who left Romania in 1882 and settled in Zikhron Yaakov under the aegis of Baron de Rothschild (among whom was the family of my son-in-law). Knowing what we know now, we can only shake our heads in sorrow as we look back at so many missed opportunities, at the hundreds, thousands and millions of Jews who did

not leave their homes and set out to build a new life for themselves in all those years when it was possible to go to live in Palestine.

Although antisemitism has always been with us, the Holocaust was an event that had no precedent in history as regards its extent, brutality and the industrial efficiency with which it was executed. It was not something that anyone could have foreseen and been prepared to forestall. Despite the terrible toll it took on our nation, some Jews managed to survive, whether by an act of providence, taking wise action or having managed to escape.

What it all boils down to is that we cannot always predict the results of our actions and the decisions we take, though we always hope that what we do is for the best. We cannot go through life saying 'if only I had done things differently,' though for the six million victims of the Holocaust that may well have been their final thought.



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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.

VOICES OF THE FUTURE

Having read David Herman's critique of two recent works about Second Generation voices (May), especially *The Journey Home*, I would like to add my own voice.

My father was born in 1920 in Guben which was then Germany, now Poland. My mother was a British-born Jewish woman.

My father came to Britain alone in 1939 and was fortunate to find work first in Scotland and then Wolverhampton as an engineer. His parents, although encouraging both my father and his married sister to leave Germany, did not try to do so themselves and did not survive.

Although I was aware from an early age of what had happened to my paternal grandparents and was brought up in an observant Jewish home in a town with a very small Jewish community, I never felt out of place with my non-Jewish friends nor did I feel the burden of family tragedy weighing heavily on me. We had photos of my grandparents on display and father sometimes spoke about his life in Germany but I can only be grateful to my parents for their loving upbringing of their only child.

In 1996, a friend suggested that we ask my father if he would like to make a visit to Guben with us. Having never considered it, I felt sure my father would say no. It took him less than a second to say yes!

My mother was concerned that returning to Germany for the first time in 57 years at the age of 76 would prove to be very upsetting for him. But Father was made of sterner stuff. As we approached the outskirts of Guben, he said "that's the Jewish cemetery on our right" as if he had been there only the day before.

We stopped the car to take a look and miraculously there were the beautifully preserved gravestones of my father's grandparents and my aunt's father-in-law.

We crossed the frozen river into Poland to see where my grandparents' home and shop had once stood and also visited the site of the synagogue where my father had been

barmitzvah'd, together with another boy who tragically did not survive.

I think my father enjoyed seeing Berlin again but he was a man who looked forward and not back. He was not bitter but determined to have a successful life personally, socially and in business to prove that he would not be beaten. I was indeed blessed to have such family.

Sharon Kronheim-George, Wolverhampton

David Herman's review, which refers to the problem of how representative of a wider population individual accounts can be, prompts me to write with a couple of suggestions.

Firstly, noting that half of your members are 2nd or 3rd generation, how about commissioning a survey aimed at gaining details of the demographic characteristics and relevant interests of this group?

Secondly, many of your members might be modestly reticent about having their experiences published in book form, but might be willing to contribute to an AJR archive where the kinds of concerns referred to by Alf Dubs could be brought together.

I write as a second generation member now in my 80's and can personally confirm the buzzing interest shared by my siblings, children, cousins etc to learn more about our past. I have also noticed the way in which, in later life, I have found myself reflecting on childhood experiences of being Jewish that I had great difficulty in coming to terms with then. I know I'm not on my own!
Steven Dorner, London

NOTE FROM EDITOR: AJR has an ongoing survey aimed at Next Generation members. Please participate via <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AJR2G>

UKRAINE

Thank you to both David Herman and Frank Bright for drawing attention (April) to the dearth of information relating to the brutal history of Jews in the Ukraine. It seems unusual for a country which had

the highest population of Jews in Europe pre-1939 (thanks to the Pale of Settlement), that more is not written about it. As Mr. Herman points out, "Holocaust by Bullets" is only now making its way into mainstream thinking, probably as a result of Ukraine's independence post-1991 when access to archive material increased.

'Complicated' doesn't begin to explain Ukraine's brutal history. Every minority, whether Jewish, Polish, Ukrainian or Russian living in Ukraine through the centuries has at one time or another been persecuted, although the Jews who were neither recognised as a separate indigenous group nor assimilated were mistrusted by every other group and were often on the receiving end of the worst brutality. Yet, according to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, not one war trial has been conducted or a single investigation of a local war criminal has taken place in Ukraine.

It is believed that between 0.9 - 1.6 million Jews in Ukraine were murdered by the Nazis, often assisted by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Germans coined the phrase 'bloody' Ukrainians. Frank Bright is right: most guards at slave labour and concentration camps were Ukrainian for the very reason that they were so vicious. However, to understand the complicated history of Ukraine through the centuries, you have to add into the mix examples of past atrocities such as the Katyn massacre (mainly Polish military officers and intelligentsia prisoners of war) in 1940 which was ordered by Stalin and carried out by the NKVD; the massacre of Poles (50,000 – 100,000) in Volhynic and Eastern Galicia by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) between 1943 – 1945; over 1,000,000 Jews killed by the Einsatzgruppen and assisted by local Ukrainian supporters and then in 1947, the Polish government's deportation of Ukrainian residents in the west of the country *en masse*. Polish propaganda at the time depicted Ukrainians as traitors, fascists and natural enemies of the Poles.

I can't help thinking that a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' should be set up one day so that every group can air its grievances. When empires such as the

Russian Empire fall apart they don't go quietly. Boy, am I thankful that Britain is an island. As Voltaire wrote "history never repeats itself, man always does". Can I also add Omer Bartov's excellent *Anatomy of a Genocide* to the list of books?
Alison Prax, London

KITCHENER CAMP COMMEMORATION

On 28 April I was lucky enough to attend a wonderful event at Wigmore Hall, London, commemorating Kitchener Camp in Richborough. The transit camp, near Sandwich in Kent, welcomed and offered refuge to almost 4,000 men fleeing Hitler in 1939. Although the story of this initiative is less well-known than that of the *Kindertransport*, it is one of which I have long been aware: my father Josef Meller was one of the Jews given safe haven there after escaping Austria. He was a slight eighteen-year-old when he entered Kitchener Camp, in which the men were free to come and go. It was only after the outbreak of WW2 that his freedom was curtailed by internment (first at AIC Huyton, then on the Isle of Man).

The Wigmore Hall commemoration was both powerful and emotional. It combined readings by Jon Sopel and Emily Maitlis with well-chosen musical interludes. When the highly professional Emily Maitlis could barely hold back her tears as she described the suicides of *Kristallnacht*, I found myself weeping along with her. The evocative tones of the London Cantorial Singers brought back memories of my grandfather singing mournful chants to me in his Shepherd's Bush flat. Having grown up in a secular Jewish home, I did not appreciate Opa's pride when he told me of his role as a cantor back in Vienna.

Rachel E Meller, Cambridge

I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon with lovely music, which stirred the emotions. I sat next to a young man who was just a concert goer, but who was most interested in the background of the concert; I filled him in with a bit of personal history too. It was a very interesting afternoon.
Eva Seeley, Sidcup, Kent

ISLE OF MAN INTERNMENT

I very much enjoyed your article on the commemoration of the internment of refugees on the Isle of Man (May). My father Karl Rikowski was interned there before being sent on the ship the *Duke of York* to the infamous Red Rock camp in Canada in July 1940, returning for another stay on his return from Canada in 1943, before being released to work for the war effort.

Although most UK internees were released by mid-1941 not all were released by this time from the Canadian Camps. Of the 2533 internees deemed "friendly aliens" by the Canadian and UK authorities 613 were released between 1940 and 1941. The remainder were released later: 1041 in 1942, 305 in 1943, 1 in 1944, 5 in 1945 and 1 in 1946. There were many reasons for this, including the fact that some refugees did not meet the criteria for release specified in the UK Governments white paper *GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN CIVILIAN INTERNEES. Categories of Persons Eligible for Release from Internment and Procedure to be Followed in Applying for Release*, published in July 1940. Others were held back by left-wing or Communist political positions which were somewhat unwelcome to their captors. Many were released into Canada only in 1942 – after influential supporters famously overcame antisemitic Canadian government resistance to accepting them.

As you rightly say, internees who were victims of Nazi oppression were initially interned with those holding Nazi beliefs and prisoners of war; this caused a lot of friction and violence until "friendly aliens" were separated into other camps. To add insult to injury, it is a matter of record that their Canadian captors were overtly antisemitic.

The whole Canadian episode was a shameful blot on the record of the British authorities for which there has never been any atonement.

Simon James, Ilston, Wales

Reading about the experience of internees on the Isle of Man, I thought my father's

LOOKING FOR?

Mr. EMIL RICH

Dr. Anna Nyburg is seeking information on Mr. Emil Rich, an Austrian refugee who founded the Milore glove company.
a.nyburg@ic.ac.uk

internment experience in Australia might be of interest to readers. A Hungarian refugee of Jewish heritage, my father arrived in Sydney in July 1939 just ahead of the outbreak of WW2. He quickly found employment as an electrical engineer and met and married my Australian mother. I was their only child, born in late 1941. My mother was in hospital with me for a month following a Caesarean, during which time the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and my father disappeared, interned as an enemy alien. He did labouring work with fellow internees for several weeks till the authorities realised people fleeing Hitler were unlikely to pose a danger and freed them. It's possible he got preferential treatment as he had an Australian wife and baby, though that is conjecture on my part.
Amber Wellesley-Smith, Leeds

80 TREES FOR 80 YEARS

The very idea of planting 80 AJR commemorative trees was an incredible target and to actually make it all happen was genius.

For us Hallgartens the tree and its descriptive plaque will be a focal point for meeting for future generations, as it is now for 36 of us, who span 90 years.

Peter Hallgarten, London NW3

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ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Many Jewish émigré artists who escaped the Holocaust can be said to have had greatness thrust upon them. The taint of tragedy may give their work a deeper meaning, a sense of loss defining the power of their genius. It is certainly true in the case of the Hungarian artist **George Mayer-Martón**.

He fled his home town of Győr with his pianist wife Greta Freid in the wake of the Anschluss. But his parents remained and died at the hands of the Nazis. When, in 1945, Mayer-Martón discovered that bitter truth he painted *Women with Boulders*, now in the Imperial War Museum collection. It is a strangely disturbing work. A blonde woman in blue sits in a rocky landscape clutching something close to her, while another cloaked and ghostly figure stands vigil over her. This is a desolate water-colour painting with a dark, brooding sky, a churning landscape in which the boulders themselves could almost be human: victims or perpetrators, it seems to be all the same thing. In the distance, a possible watchtower looms over them.

Losing his parents was the most appalling tragedy suffered by so many European Jewish contemporaries. And tragedy struck



A campaign is underway to save George Mayer-Martón's mural, *Crucifixion*, on the wall of Oldham Cathedral

George Mayer-Martón's *Women with Boulders*



again when his St John's Wood studio was burned by an incendiary bomb during the Blitz of 1940, destroying most of his life's work and possessions. Mayer-Martón took up academic work, becoming senior lecturer at Liverpool College of Art, where he pioneered something for which he is probably most celebrated; mural art.

While it took him until 1948 before he could paint in oil, Mayer-Martón's water colours are stunning and versatile. From representational sketches to Expressionist works, like his painting of exiled violinists, resonant of David Bomberg's *Ghetto Theatre*, to hints of cubism, the energy in much of his work is agitated or, by contrast, dreamlike; images swirl restlessly, whether it's women by the water or overturned boats resembling fish skeletons. His most innovative work, however, are the Byzantine style mosaics which won him several mural commissions from the Roman Catholic Church.

But a particular piece of his rare church art is now at risk of destruction. Known as the Oldham mural, it is a 1955 portrayal of the Crucifixion, eight metres high, and has been praised for its "dazzling beauty." This Byzantine Christ is a static, gilded figure on an enormous cross beneath which two figures, a man and a woman in more naturalistic pose, contrast their human grief with the remote, god-like status of someone already ascended to heaven. It is locked in the now redundant Roman Catholic church of Holy Rosary in Fitton Hill, Oldham, closed in 2017, and which is threatened with re-development. Many organisations have come together to try and save the mural, which has become the subject of a campaign by the Twentieth Century Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage

and the local community.

In August, 2020 an application for listing was submitted by Nick Braithwaite, the artist's great nephew. The Ben Uri Gallery lent weight with a recent online event in which curator Sarah MacDougall discussed the significance of George Mayer-Martón's work within the context of wartime and post-war émigré artists in Britain.

Mayer-Martón was born György, or Georg in German, but changed his name to George on British naturalisation. He grew up during the final years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and served in its army during the First World War. After studying in prestigious art academies in Vienna and Munich, he became Vice-President of the leading progressive society of Viennese artists, the Hagenbund. He completed over 200 oil paintings in Liverpool and much of his work is held in private collections and public art galleries including London's Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum and the Imperial War Museum. He died from leukaemia in 1960, leaving several mosaic designs unfinished.

We can only hope that public efforts to save his exceptional mural will succeed, and prevent another devastating loss of British émigré art.

Annely Juda Fine Art

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

An afternoon of Royal composition

What do *Wolf Hall*, *Lesbian Vampire Killers* and the *Platinum Jubilee Celebration* have in common? They all feature music composed by **Debbie Wiseman OBE**, who will be giving a Zoom talk exclusively for AJR members on **Tuesday 14 June**.

With more than 200 scores under her belt, Debbie is one of the UK's most successful composers. Her film credits include *Tom and Viv* – which was nominated for two Academy Awards – *Haunted*, and *Wilde*. Last year she topped the popularity list for living composers, with a record four entries in *Classic FM's Hall of Fame*.

Born in Belsize Park, Debbie attended Henrietta Barnett grammar school and began studying music seriously from the age of 16. Each weekend she attended Trinity College of Music Junior Department, and then went on to study piano and composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

She always hoped to write music for films and TV but, without any connections in the industry, it was tough to get into. Her big break came when a production company that had been commissioned by Channel 4 chanced upon a vocal music piece she had included in one of the many dozens of show reels she had mailed out. The producer happened to be in search of a vocal piece for a particular show and this bit of luck started the ball rolling for Debbie.



It was hard work nevertheless and Debbie played in numerous bands and at functions all over London to keep the money coming in until she began, eventually, to win some big commissions.

Nowadays there must be very few people in the UK who have not heard a theme from one of Debbie's many films or television productions. Whether it was watching Stephen Fry bring to life Oscar Wilde for the big screen, hearing up to the minute political commentary on a Sunday morning with Andrew Marr, or revelling in the Tudor world of Thomas Cromwell in *Wolf Hall*, Wiseman has gifted us iconic themes of beauty and passion, love and laughter.

Just last month millions of viewers enjoyed her magnificent score during the live ITV broadcast 'The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration' on Sunday 15 May, for which Debbie was both Musical Director and Composer. This major event, one of the few Platinum Jubilee celebrations which Her Majesty attended in person, saw Debbie

rubbing shoulders with a huge number of glitterati ranging from Katherine Jenkins to Tom Cruise.

As well as her composing work, Debbie appears in concert halls across the country conducting her film scores. She was one of 11 composers chosen to compose music for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012 and was also commissioned to compose the Overture and Finale music for the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebration in 2016.

She is currently *Classic FM's* Composer in Residence and her latest album *The Music of Kings and Queens*, with narration by Dame Helen Mirren and Damian Lewis, went straight to Number 1 in the UK Classical Chart.

Debbie will talk about these and other experiences during her talk for AJR members on **14 June**. The event will start at **2pm** – to take part simply go onto Zoom and join meeting ID: **8856 223 6727**

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REMEMBERING THE GIRLS

This month the AJR plants one of the last of its 80 trees in Windermere, honouring the orphaned Jewish children brought to Windermere after WW2, aka 'The Boys'. It will also honour the fact that Windermere was home to several girls who came via Kindertransport before war was declared and who were subsequently evacuated from Tyneside. Vivien Sieber, author of a new book *Kino and Kinder*, takes up the story.



Summer 1939
 Edith Hanna Elfi Stella Lore Dasha Helga Annie* Ruth Marion
 Margot Lore ? Lisl R. Ilse Eva
 *The two little girls with Annie are cousins visiting

In early 1939 a group of Newcastle friends decided to establish a hostel for girls saved by the Kindertransport. The committee, chaired by a local jeweller, David Summerfield, raised the funds to provide and furnish a house and employ two matrons to run it. Furniture, bedding, duplicate kitchen equipment, fuel, food and clothing were sourced and the committee also covered the cost of education and health and the £50.00 sponsorship fee per child.

The two matrons, recruited via Woburn House, were the celebrated cook Alice Urbach and my grandmother Paula Sieber. Both were refugees from Vienna, where my grandmother had run a cinema. The hostel was at 55 Percy Park, Tynemouth, where the AJR planted a tree in January.

The girls, aged between five and fourteen, arrived at Harwich from



Germany, Austria and one from Czechoslovakia. Most were sent to Newcastle via Liverpool Street by train. They attended school locally and were treated with generosity by teachers, fellow students and the local community. Despite their linguistic and educational differences, the children were rapidly assimilated. They enjoyed summer on the beach, sending home pictures from street photographers.

The girls wrote movingly about leaving their parents and life in the hostel: *We were separated into three groups: 'little ones', 'middle ones' and 'big ones', according to age. We big ones had to look after the younger ones and help with the housekeeping. It was very hard for some of the children who kept crying for their parents and who did not know if they would ever see them again. Of course, we did not speak English and the girl from Czechoslovakia did not speak English or German. The matrons were kindly but also imposed rules and regulations which some children resented.*

In September war broke out and all refugees over 16 were declared enemy aliens. Paula's son, Peter, was interned in the Isle of Man and Canada. Following Dunkirk and the onset of German bombing, the coast was declared a restricted zone and the Newcastle committee was given only three weeks to find and relocate to a new property.

The committee found and rented South

Wood - a house on the outskirts of Windermere that was part of the Wood estate. Although large by domestic standards, the house was small for 25 girls and two matrons. Alice prepared their daily meals in the compact kitchen. As the local school, St Mary's, was only a short walk the girls returned for lunch.

The children were pleased to move to the beautiful Lake District, commenting on the wild flowers and the garden. Teachers at St Mary's were kind and the local community supportive. As there was no domestic help the girls had to do routine tasks – cleaning, fires, kitchen duties – alongside their schoolwork. Kosher meat was sent weekly from Newcastle and committee members visited regularly.

When girls reached the age of 14 they found employment or training locally or had to move further afield. After the war most of the girls discovered they were now orphans, although a few found distant relatives who had survived. The hostel closed in 1946 and the younger girls were moved to other hostels.

Despite experiencing terrible events the 40+ girls went on to have useful and fulfilling lives, many creating their own families. They stayed in touch with one another and the matrons as they spread across the globe.

www.vivien sieber.eu/kino-and-kinder

Wolf Suschitzky's lucky break

Less than ten years after he emigrated from Vienna to London in 1934, Wolf Suschitzky had become a successful cameraman and photographer: his work was featured widely in magazines such as *Lilliput*, *The Listener*, *Picture Post* and *Animal and Zoo Photography*, as well as in children's books and portraiture and animal photography guides. As early as 1948, the renowned fellow refugee photographer, Helmut Gernsheim, praised Suschitzky's reportage and documentary photography in his book, *The Man behind the Camera*.

Dr Julia Winckler, of the University of Brighton's School of Art and Media, describes in recent essays how Suschitzky, who died in October 2016 at the age of 104, reached the heights of his profession. Using her conversations recorded between 2001 and 2016, she recounts key aspects of his work: the street photographs of London, both pre- and during war-time; his child and animal portraits, as well as numerous creative collaborations with fellow émigrés.

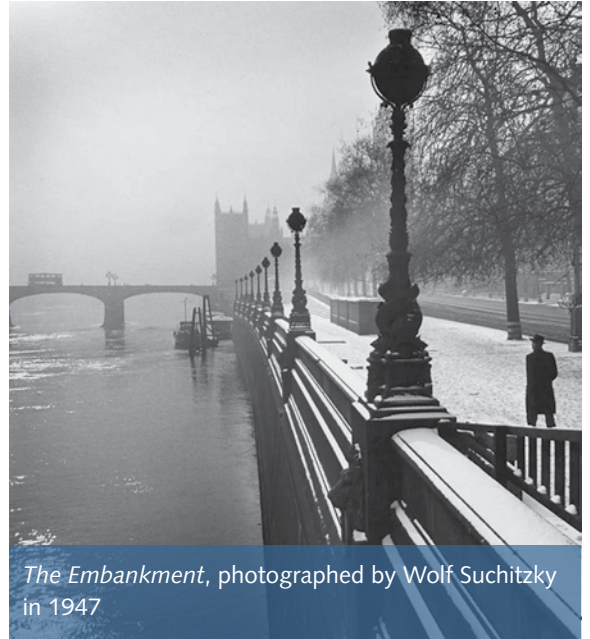
Suschitzky originally wanted to study zoology, but his older sister Edith, who was already a successful photographer, encouraged him to take up photography. Active in left-wing circles, she had married Alexander Tudor-Hart and fled in 1933 to London from Vienna - where their father ran a socialist bookshop - after the country turned, Mussolini-style, 'Austro-fascist'. Wolf Suschitzky followed her in 1934, but, like today's asylum seekers, was not allowed to work. After moving to Amsterdam, and failing to make a living there, Wolf was permitted to return to Britain, with a student visa. The capital

had become a centre for international media organisations: publications as well as agencies offered an expanding market for photographic and cinematic material.

Edith helped her brother look for work by introducing him to Stefan Lorant, the founder and editor of *Lilliput* and *Picture Post*. Suschitzky also met Paul Rotha, the British documentary filmmaker, who was impressed with his photographs of London bookshops and street scenes. Rotha regarded photographs and films as tools to educate and improve society. He had been commissioned to make a series of zoo films at the London and Whipsnade Zoos. The zoos' director, Julian Huxley published a monthly magazine about zoo and animal photography; its mission was to educate the public to adopt a more understanding attitude towards the animal world. Contributors soon included Wolf Suschitzky and another famous émigré photographer of animals, Ylla, born Camilla Koffler in Vienna. Suschitzky recalled meeting her at the north London home of the émigré architect Ernó Goldfinger.

After Suschitzky received a permit in 1938 to work as a freelance photographer, he could earn a living. His first exhibition of animal photographs took place in London in 1940. Suschitzky went on to publish books on how to photograph children and animals, and provided the photos for books on animals by Huxley. Besides his animal and child photos, he carried out a wartime assignment from the Ministry of Information - photographing the extensive bomb damage inflicted by enemy aircraft.

Winckler highlights the coincidence that, while Suschitzky had been taking pictures of zoo animals in London during 1938-39, two of his cousins, Wilhelm



The Embankment, photographed by Wolf Suchitzky in 1947

and Joseph Suschitzky, imprisoned in Buchenwald concentration camp, had to look after the bears in the camp's 'zoo'. The cousins were allowed to come to Britain, after their sister 'bought' their release. They shared the fate of other 'enemy aliens': Joseph was interned on the Isle of Man; his brother Wilhelm in Australia. Continuing the legacy of the destroyed Vienna bookshop, they in 1945 set up their own bookshop, Libris, on London's Boundary Road. After the war, Wolf Suschitzky went on to portray famous women and men, and shoot remunerative TV commercials, documentary films and full-length feature films, such as *Ring of Bright Water* and *Get Carter*. From 2000 his work was exhibited more widely - at the Ben Uri Gallery, Tate Britain, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and The Photographers' Gallery, amongst others. Though fully occupied after the war as cameraman and photographer, Wolf was not widely honoured until he was in his seventies. Full recognition of his talents culminated in the international celebrations of his hundredth birthday. The University of Brighton awarded him an honorary doctorate. Further information about Julia Winckler's work on Suschitzky can be found in Volume 39: *Humans and Animals in Reflections on Exile*, Yearbook Exilforschung (2021); and in Volume 19: *Applied Arts in British Exile from 1933: Changing Visual and Material Culture*, Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies (2019).

Martin Mauthner

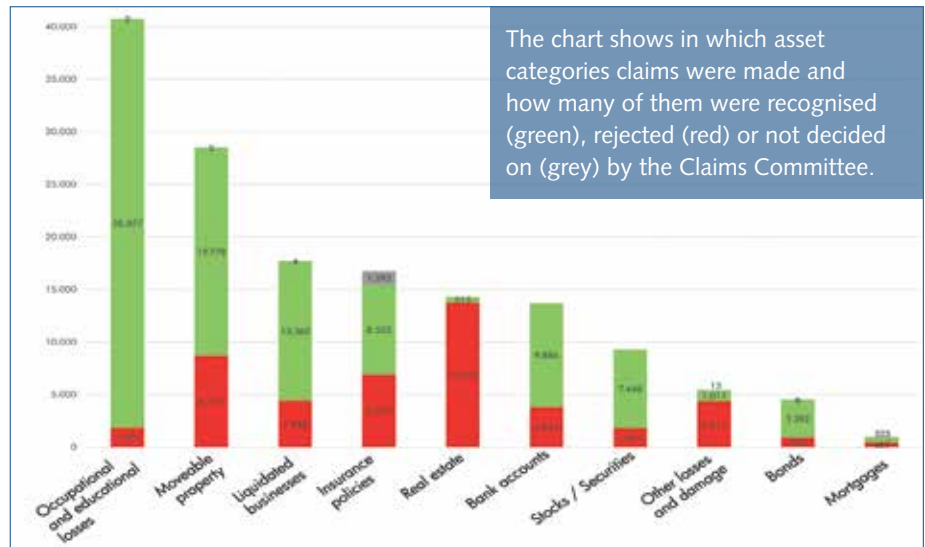
Austrian fund dissolved

The General Settlement Fund for Victims of National Socialism was established in 2001 on the basis of the Washington Agreement between Austria and the United States of America. Its task was to acknowledge, through voluntary payments, the moral responsibility for asset losses suffered by persecutees of the Nazi regime in Austria.

On 26 April 2022, the Board of Trustees of the General Settlement Fund – which includes the Presidium of the Austrian National Council as well as representatives from all parliamentary parties and the Federal Government, and from victims’ associations and the religious communities including the Jewish Community Vienna – determined that the Fund has completely fulfilled its tasks. Pursuant to the General Settlement Fund Law, the Fund is thus deemed dissolved.

Persons who had been personally affected by Nazi asset seizures, and their legal successors, were eligible to file applications. Of 20,702 applicants, 9,650 (47 %) filed applications as heirs of persecuted persons, 11,052 (53 %) also filed applications for their own losses. The applications were decided by the independent Claims Committee.

Overall, the Claims Committee recognised claims of 1.6 billion US dollars; 32 % of these related to educational and occupational losses, 22 % to liquidated businesses and around 15 % to stocks.



The remainder was distributed among the other categories of losses: bank accounts, insurance policies, real estate, moveable assets, bonds, mortgages, and other losses and damages.

In total, the General Settlement Fund has disbursed around 215 million US dollars to around 25,000 beneficiaries.

In addition, the Arbitration Panel for *In Rem* Restitution was established to decide on applications for restitution of public property. The Arbitration Panel received a total of 2,307 applications, 140 of which met the requirements set out by the General Settlement Fund Law. The total value of the real estate recommended for restitution comes to an estimated 48 million euros; 9.8 million euros of this amount were awarded as a comparable asset in cases where actual restitution was no longer possible.

Most applicants lived in the US, followed by Austria, Israel and the UK. 2180 applications for monetary compensation and 211 applications for in rem restitution were

received by applicants from the UK.

After the completion of their tasks, the Claims Committee was dissolved in 2017 and the Arbitration Panel in 2021. Twenty years of work by the General Settlement Fund have produced a great deal of findings and

historical knowledge. With regard to their collection, preservation and communication, the Board of Trustees noted that these tasks have now been assigned to the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism by the National Fund Law.

Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund and the General Settlement Fund, expressed her gratitude to the staff of the dissolved Fund for their many years of dedication, emphasising that, “The work of the General Settlement Fund has a significance for Austria’s historical self-image that goes beyond the compensation and restitution it has rendered. The National Fund understands this as a legacy that must be carried forward.”

Download Brochure: www.nationalfonds.org/files/content/documents/gsf/GSF_Broschuere_EN_web.pdf



“To Comprehensively Resolve Open Questions of Compensation For Victims Of National Socialism...” The General Settlement Fund For Victims Of National Socialism 2001–2022, Ed. National Fund of the Republic of Austria, Vienna 2022.

LUXEMBOURG WRAPPED UP

The Claims Conference has distributed €1,000,000 from the Luxembourg Fund to Holocaust survivors who are currently living in or were persecuted in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg at the time of the Shoah.

OPEN MANX ACCESS

Internees on
the Isle of
Man

The AJR recently honoured the Jewish refugees who were interned on the Isle of Man. Much has been written about the creativity of, and the camaraderie between, the internees – for example the music that was written by German and Austrian refugees, such as the bilingual revue *What a Life!* by Hans Gál. But it was certainly not all fun and games. In this article Professor Paul Weindling offers another slant on this chapter of Jewish refugee history.

In a corner of Douglas borough cemetery there is the Jewish section, dating from 1941. This was to avoid the expense of transferring bodies to Liverpool – at that time £14. The gravestones are helpfully documented by <https://www.jewishgen.org>. There are a few stones provided by families: one for Arthur Pautzen, an Austrian engraver, who died from pneumonia. Most stones were provided by the War Graves Commission. One group of stones carry the Star of David, suggesting ritual orthodoxy. A second group has no religious symbol, suggesting a liberal outlook. Then there is – in a far corner – the isolated stone for Tauba Rubel who committed suicide on 19 March 1941. Tauba or “Annie”, originally from Vienna, was severely depressed. The local researcher Hamish Killip documents that some burials are without a headstone: sadly, one for a baby from the women’s camp of Port Erin, sited by a general memorial to the Jewish internees.

As to how many and who among the internees died, given that not all burials had a memorial stone, can one turn to death certificates and coroner inquests? These are public records in the UK; on the Isle of Man special permission is necessary from the Coroner and

Registrar for access to these records. Manx officialdom worries that consulting records of Jewish refugees who died will distress islanders today.

Might the International Holocaust Research Alliance provision for access to Holocaust related records help to allow historical access to whatever internee records remain? Regrettably not. The Isle of Man is one of the few European countries which is unaffiliated to the IHRA. In contrast Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney are affiliated through the UK Delegation. Even if the Isle of Man does not wish to affiliate, it could adopt provisions of best practice set by the IHRA on access to named records. The Tynwald adopted EU privacy legislation without the IHRA get-out clause for Holocaust related research. For the legally minded, this concerns recital 158 to the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Regulation (EU) 2016/679. While we can all agree on privacy, the EU legislation has meant that privacy cannot be a barrier to historical inquiry about Holocaust victims and refugees: www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/why-it-important-have-open-access-holocaust-archives. There needs to be a mechanism for families and historians to contact the IHRA alerting them to blockages. If you want the death certificate of Tauba Rubel, the current position is that a copy of the original record costs £12 (an archival scan would normally be 50 pence). The Coroner has allowed access to Tauba’s inquest, but on condition that I will not communicate my findings! We are consequently still in discussion, as history does involve communication.

While letters and diaries contain stray references to death, the death certificates are a way to reconstruct deaths among the internees. It is, though, necessary for personal experience and memory to be linked to official records. One gentile



socialist Austrian made two suicide attempts to be relocated to the Jewish internees, having been threatened by her fellow internees with “proper treatment” in a concentration camp on repatriation (which mercifully never occurred).

At Ballamona psychiatric hospital over a hundred internees were regarded as “difficult patients” and kept under armed guard. Individual files show a restorative kindness, although prisoner patients were distressed, depressed and at times suicidal. Erwin Stengel, the interned Austrian refugee psychiatrist and expert on suicide, was not consulted. The Ballamona records show that there were two Austrian Jewish refugee nurses, Agnes Schneider and Ingeborge Hedwig Johanna Rose, employed during the war alongside two Danish nurses. One severely depressed Italian patient died. Most patients were restored after a couple of months, but several patients stayed until 1946 when they were relocated to the mainland.

So to answer the basic question of how many and who died of the Jewish internees, and under what circumstances, there is an administrative rigmarole. Hopefully, the IHRA can be proactive on these matters. The research is not to embarrass or cause distress, but the deceased and disturbed internees merit historical recognition and commemoration.

Trees for Yom HaShoah



This year the AJR marked Yom HaShoah by planting the last batch of its 80 Trees for 80 Years. Ceremonies all over the country were attended by the sponsors and local dignitaries and communities, leaving a wonderful living legacy of this very special day.



Tree sponsored by the Brenner, Ehrlich & Loeb families
Cannons Hill park, Birmingham



Tree sponsored by Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines
Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys



Tree sponsored by Peter Hallgarten
Stephen's House & Gardens, Finchley



Tree sponsored by AJR
Ne've Shalom, Hull



2 trees were planted, one sponsored by Marcelle Black, the other by Kathrine Jackson
Lyttelton Playing Fields, Hampstead Garden Suburb



Tree sponsored by Anthony Spiro
Victoria Park, Finchley



Plaque sponsored by Vivien Andersen
Princes St Gardens



Tree sponsored by Tony Balasz
JCoSS, Barnet



Tree sponsored by Ruth Barnett
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Pontefract



Tree sponsored by Tom Heinersdorff
Gwyrch Castle, Abergelle



Tree sponsored by Simon Rubin
JFS, Kingsbury



Tree sponsored by Simon Rubin
Yavneh College, Borehamwood

A BRIGHT DAY IN BRENT



Generations of Wertheimer descendants, plus guests, with the Preston Park tree

It was a beautiful English spring day, with the wind rippling through the trees in the middle of Preston Park in the London Borough of Brent. A perfect venue for our planting celebration and very fitting, since most of the Wertheimer refugees who came to the UK had settled in North London.

We Wertheimer descendants will always remember 11 April 2022. No one from the first generation of refugees is still alive but the planting spanned the three subsequent generations. I am so glad our family came together to sponsor a tree; I am sure the project will spark other families to create their own tree planting ceremony.

I can't thank the AJR enough for its 80 Trees for 80 Years brainwave, which encouraged our extended family in the UK to come together for the second time. The first time was in 2016 when we laid a Stolperstein in Bielefeld in honour of our great-uncle Eduard, who perished in the Holocaust, so it seemed appropriate to also plant the tree in his name.

The Wertheimers were well-to-do, educated and cultured pillars of their society and rooted in Germany; records go back to 1719. Paul and Eduard Wertheimer were the third generation of family entrepreneurs and ran a successful silk-weaving business in Bielefeld, employing over 600 staff, making them the second largest undertaking in the area. They were known for their socially enlightened attitude to their employees, paying above average wages and offering unusual conditions such as interest-free mortgage loans to help employees to buy their own homes. This commitment was recognised by the German authorities who named a street near the factory the Wertheimerstrasse. Until recently this was the only street in greater Bielefeld named after a

Jewish family. The family acknowledged their cultural heritage but were not practising Jews. Eduard maintained sporadic contact with the synagogue while Paul and his wife Helene had their children baptised.

It felt very good to give something back to Britain in a tangible way which will benefit future communities and at the same time visibly associate Jewish refugees with the fight against climate change. It was also a suitable event at which to say a short prayer for Eduard – and symbolically for millions of other victims of the Holocaust – who never had a proper funeral. He decided to take his own life in July 1942 when an inside Gestapo informant told him he was going to be on the next train for Theresienstadt. By then he knew only too well what this meant.

Eduard's brother Paul emigrated to the UK in 1936 but despite many attempts to persuade Eduard to leave Germany, he felt it was his responsibility to help support the increasingly destitute Jewish families who had been resettled in his house, while he had been forcibly moved to a room on the top floor. He also used his considerable wealth in the early Nazi period to sponsor young Jews to get trained so that they could emigrate to Palestine while this was still possible. Later on, as Jewish assets were confiscated, his means were much reduced, but he continued to provide for many families till his death.

We were joined at the Preston Park



Eduard & Paul Wertheimer

ceremony by Barry Gardiner, MP for Brent North, and Jo Briggs, valiantly standing in for Covid-stricken Karen Diamond and the local Mayor. Everyone, including several local residents, Brent Council officers and its Parks Department, bent over backwards to make the planting a memorable event, including lending shovels to some of the children so they too could be involved.

It was fitting that Rabbi Mariner, previously from Belsize Square Synagogue, ended the ceremony with a prayer for all refugees, of whom there are now more than ever before in our planet's history. It was a reminder that we are the lucky ones. The mantle has been passed to us: it is now our responsibility to help others in desperate need, be they Syrian, Afghan or Ukrainian. In this context the recently passed anti-refugee/asylum seekers law is a blot on the UK's history of tolerance and generosity of spirit. Had this been enacted during the 1930's many of us second, and subsequent, generation Wertheimers might never have been born.

The fuller story of the Wertheimer family, with many photographs, was written for the time capsule which was buried next to the tree, and is available to members on request. It is a testament to the inability of the Nazis to destroy our family and to the incredible resilience of the human spirit.

Sonia Lauber Sampson
sonialaubersampson@gmail.com

REVIEWS

LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

Edited by Marita Krauss and Erich Kasberger
Cambridge University Press

Since 1997, there has been an 'Else Rosenfeld Street' in Munich, east of the centre. It commemorates a half-Jewish social worker who worked in the area during the war. The Nazis had requisitioned part of a nearby convent and turned it into a transit camp. There, helped by nuns, Else worked as a housekeeper for Jews facing deportation.

At first, she thought 'resettlement in the East' meant the Jews would face harsh living conditions in Poland. In 1942, it dawned on her that extermination would be their fate. When she saw her own name on a list of forthcoming deportees, she went into hiding, in Berlin and later in Freiburg, from where 'people smugglers' helped her to escape to Switzerland. After the war, she was able to join her family in Britain. Her husband, Siegfried Rosenfeld, an assimilated Jewish lawyer, had obtained a visa days before the outbreak of war, and his wife insisted he go and leave her behind; Quakers had already helped their son and daughter come over that same year.

This significant book interweaves translated extracts from the letters the couple wrote and the diaries they kept during the war years of separation. It highlights the contrasting way those sombre years affected the couple. Until Hitler came to power, Siegfried had been a Social Democrat member of the Prussian parliament and the most senior official in the Prussian justice ministry.

In 1940, he was briefly interned, like his son, on the Isle of Man. On his release, he was at first not allowed to work. He then found a job, aged seventy, as a junior bookkeeper for a milk delivery firm, but was dismissed after nineteen months. Lodged in an Oxford attic, and virtually penniless, he tried to make contact with exiled

SPD members in London, and with the AJR, which the editors of this book describe as 'the leading Jewish exile organisation in Great Britain.' He was also unsuccessfully attempting to get entry for his family to Argentina, where relatives had already settled.

After seven years of separation, he was reunited with Else in March 1946, but his health broke down. An embittered Siegfried died in December 1947, while in a Quaker home for the elderly. Exile had broken Siegfried's spirit, and it is easy to understand why he felt a strong hostility to the Germans as a nation. One would expect Else to share that attitude, but, remarkably, such was not the case.

Like Viktor Klemperer's diaries, Else provides a detailed and harrowing account of the anxiety and humiliation Jews had to confront every day in Nazi Germany. Like Siegfried, she had lost her job with the advent of Hitler: she had been a voluntary social worker in a Berlin women's prison. She nonetheless persevered and survived the subsequent years, not only because of her indomitable spirit, but also because of the kind acts of brave fellow Germans. She constantly refers to the 'silent heroes' who offered support. Else wants to demonstrate that the German 'collective guilt' referred to by the Allies, and endorsed by Siegfried, never in fact existed.

Whereas many persecuted Jews and others never wished to revisit post-war Germany and Austria, Else built herself a home near Munich. She spent half the year there, the other half with her children in Britain. She died in Birmingham in 1970.

Martin Mauthner

THE JOURNEY HOME: EMERGING OUT OF THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

Edited by David Clark and Teresa von Sommaruga Howard
Publisher Peter Lang

This collection of 20 people's engrossing accounts of returning to the family homeland examines how the influence the catastrophic disruption of the war on their parents' lives has affected future

generations. As the dedication says: "For all our parents and grandparents. Whether we knew them or not, they shaped our lives".

The book is divided into three sections – those who returned with a survivor or refugee parent – those who returned without – and journeys undertaken for commemorative events. Each chapter tells a different story about what it means to grow up in the shadow of the Holocaust. Writers explore breaking free, or understanding the forces which shaped childhood, by making a physical and emotional return to the home their ancestors were forced to leave.

Many of the second-generation authors had two Jewish refugee parents, some only one or came from mixed marriages. But all had relatives who perished, including experiencing the tragedy of growing up without grandparents and wider family. It included the feeling of being "different" from neighbours or school friends. Parents often refused to talk about the past or kept it secret, thus passing on their trauma to their offspring.

The most interesting thing is undoubtedly the journeys themselves and how parents – often by then elderly and frail but fiercely determined – responded to seeing their former birthplaces and homes. A few had relatives still living in their countries of origin, having returned after the war or survived in hiding despite the destruction of whole communities, structure and way of life.

Reactions of those living in former homes varied from inviting visitors in, to the slammed door or the tireless efforts of non-Jewish people to ensure the lives of their neighbours were never forgotten. Laying of *Stolpersteine* (stumbling-stones) forms a key aspect of commemoration for Gina Burgess Winning who was involved with 20. Those returning often attended receptions with civic dignitaries and were invited to speak or, importantly, became involved in education projects.

Secrets were discovered: Monica Lowenberg found out that her non-

Jewish grandfather had been a card-carrying member of the Nazi party. Writers sometimes returned several times – perhaps with partners and children – kept close links and saw how their parents' birthplaces changed and developed. Brexit sometimes provided the spur to reclaim native passports and retain the cultural heritage.

Journeys included Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland sometimes involved chilling visits to camps. Large cities such as Berlin, Vienna and Kraków were destinations but some writers made very difficult expeditions to smaller towns and villages particularly in the Iron Curtain era. Photographs show childhood pictures, old homes and family. Starting each new chapter is always fascinating because – like the authors when they started out – one never knows what will happen on their trips. But one thing is certain: there is always the pull of the country left behind on the voyage of discovery of the forces which ensured our parents shaped us as they did. Written during the Covid pandemic from 2020 – 2021, the book certainly shows how the authors used their time and experiences wisely!

Janet Weston

WITHOUT LET OR HINDRANCE

By **Geoffrey Charin**

The Book Guild Ltd

Geoffrey Charin's first novel has been published to much acclaim. The writer and critic Adam Lebor praised his 'sharp eye for evocative period detail' and 'complex, well-rounded characters' and Jane Thynne called it 'a gripping thriller'.

It starts as a detective thriller. The bodies of two women are found in an apartment in Berlin in 1938 and

Inspector Stieglitz is called in to investigate. But very quickly the novel turns into a very different kind of thriller, full of spies, fascists, refugees and famous politicians.

The central character is Veronica Beaumont, a young aristocrat, the daughter of Sir Roland Beaumont and his wife Cynthia, upper-class antisemites. We first meet Veronica at a party in Mayfair in aid of the Anglo-German Friendship Club. Veronica is accompanied by Billy Watson, a young rising star in the British Union of Fascists. Other guests include Unity Mitford, Sir Oswald Mosley and Mrs Diana Guinness (the Führer 'is such a darling'). Everyone who is anyone in right-wing antisemitic circles is there.

But appearances can be deceptive in this novel full of twists and turns. Veronica has found out that her aunt and uncle are desperate to escape from Nazi Berlin. Her aunt's description of their life in Berlin is shocking and Veronica's life changes overnight. She sets out to rescue her uncle and aunt and Jewish friends of theirs, trapped in Berlin, and becomes involved with an organisation which is trying to rescue German Jews. Suddenly, she has become 'a people-trafficker, dealing in forged documents'.

Then, the plot thickens. The novel has a fascinating cast of characters including vicious British fascists, Nazis, German and British Jews, forgers and politicians including Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Lord Halifax and Anthony Eden. Everyone seems to be plotting against everyone else. The Anglo-German Friendship Club and the fascists, including Veronica's lover Billy, are out and out appeasers; so, for very different reasons, are Chamberlain and Halifax; British Jews

want to help German Jews come to Britain and Zionists want to help them escape to Palestine. Charin has done his research and the novel is full of knowing references to the Evian Conference, *Kristallnacht* and the Czech crisis.

Without Let or Hindrance moves between London and Berlin. Veronica has recently spent a year in Germany, speaks fluent German, and travels to Berlin on her secret mission as the pace picks up.

Charin has written a fine historical thriller. As the political mood in Germany darkens and war approaches, the novel becomes desperately moving. The noose tightens around the German Jews Veronica is trying to rescue. The British fascists and German Nazis become increasingly menacing. Will Veronica succeed or will the forces of evil kill her, and who will get to her first: the British fascists, the SA or Inspector Stieglitz and the Berlin police?

David Herman

www.fishburnbooks.com

Jonathan Fishburn

buys and sells Jewish and Hebrew books, ephemera and items of Jewish interest.

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OBITUARIES

HELEN SARKANY

Born: London, 26 January 1937
Died: London, 7 February 2022



Helen Sarkany worked tirelessly for Jewish refugees, chairing two different panels of Holocaust survivors and liaising with representatives from five separate agencies.

In 2015 Helen's dedication and vigorous pursuit of these causes was recognised when she was named Volunteer of the Year by JVN, an award she had been nominated for by AJR.

Her lawyer's training and skills ensured that cases were well presented and she also applied compassionate understanding, integrity and an innate sense of fairness to bring support to those in need. As well as advising committees regarding survivor activities and protocols, Helen represented survivors on the Board of Deputies of British Jews, passionately making a stand for those who could not speak for themselves.

Helen was born in London in 1937. Her parents had immigrated to England from Western Russia a decade earlier because her father had invented a machine which was useful to British farmers. Helen grew up in St Albans, Herts, and then studied

English at Queen Mary University of London, before becoming a teacher, inspiring a love of literature in A-Level students.

Her lifelong fascination with the law coincided with her becoming a lay Magistrate, and she qualified as a lawyer in her 40s. She found her true vocation chairing tribunals for disputes concerning social security, mental health, and medical and drug issues. She was fascinated by the intellectual challenge as well as the human stories involved.

Her work with Jewish refugees held a deeper significance, because of the impact of the Holocaust in her personal life. Her husband, Imrich ('Emery') Sarkany, was an eminent dermatologist. Born in Czechoslovakia, he was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust, becoming an orphaned refugee in England by the age of 16. Although Helen's own parents had come to England before the War, their many relatives were all murdered in occupied Russia by the Nazis.

In retirement, Helen devoted herself to charitable work with the AJR and with 'Support Through Court', a charity which gives advice to people who cannot afford legal representation in the Royal Courts of Justice. She also became involved in Holocaust education work, including with schoolchildren in her husband's hometown in Slovakia.

Helen was a supremely positive, energetic and friendly person, devoted to her family, her friends and her work. Everywhere she went and everywhere she worked, she made friends. She continued living her fast-paced life to the full right to the end, making her sudden and unexpected death from a pulmonary embolus a shock for everyone who knew her.

Her husband Emery died in 2005. She leaves her three children, Elizabeth, Robert and Andrew, her seven grandchildren and a great granddaughter.

Bob Sarkany and Bernadette Cleal



IBY KNILL

Born: Bratislava, 23 November 1923
Died: Leeds, 17 April 2022

Iby Knill (née Kaufman) survived Auschwitz-Birkeanu, an armaments camp in Lippstadt, and a death march to Bergen-Belsen. She was liberated by the US Army on Easter Sunday 1945.

Iby worked as an interpreter and translator for the Allied Military Government, where she met and married Bert Knill, a British officer. They settled in England and had a son, Chris, and daughter, Pauline, as well as two stepsons from Bert's previous marriage.

Iby was an active member of the

Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association (HSFA), a Leeds-based charity that raises public awareness about the consequences of hate and discrimination. Her wartime experiences are also reflected in two autobiographies, *The Woman without a Number* and *The Woman with Nine Lives*).

Continued on page 19



FREDERICK HIRSCH

Born: Berlin, 20 March 1923

Died: London, 24 March 2022

Friedrich Hirsch (Friedel) and his younger brother Heinrich spent their early years in comfortable Wilmersdorf, Berlin. Their parents, Julius Hirsch and Martha Johanna Wulkan were both journalists from the former Czech crownlands.

Julius Hirsch was the theatre and arts editor for *das Neue Wiener Tagblatt* and *die Neue Freie Presse* where, according to the family, he inherited Theodor Herzl's desk after Herzl left the paper to concentrate on Zionism. Johanna Wulkan was also a journalist, employed by Ullstein Verlag as the fashion editor of *Die Dame*. She also wrote a regular column for the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*. Aside from journalism, Julius toured with Max Reinhardt's productions, and until 1933 was General Secretary of the Union of German Theatre directors.

In September 1935, the family left Berlin. As Austrians, Vienna was the obvious destination. While their parents struggled to find work, Friedel and Heinrich began new schools and tried to make new friends. Even before the Anschluss, both always remembered the shock of discovering the Viennese brand of antisemitism.

After 1938, Julius worked as a volunteer for the emigration department at the IKG, Vienna's Jewish community offices on

Seittenstettengasse. The two boys left on a Kindertransport from the Westbahnhof on the evening of July 11th 1939. Within a week of arriving in London, the brothers were separated and would not see each other again until 1945. Heinrich was sent to a Millisle, a Jewish refugee farm in Belfast. Friedel went to a family in Downham Market in Norfolk, and was later taken in by the local doctor. In May 1940, as he was already sixteen, he was arrested as an enemy alien and sent across the Atlantic to Canada.

In August 1942, their parents were deported to Terezin where Julius died a few months later. Johanna remained alive until May 1944. Her last postcard was sent a few days after her departure for Auschwitz.

Julius had two sons from his first marriage: Wolfgang Heinz, the East German actor and Hans Heinz, a tenor singer who taught at the Julliard in New York. Heinrich became the actor, David Hurst, best known for his role in *Hello, Dolly* as Rudolph the headwaiter.

Frederick spent his career at the paper merchants Bunzl & Biach. Starting in the warehouse, he rose to become company director in Milan and East Berlin, and deputy managing director of the London office. With a talent for languages, he travelled a great deal and adapted easily to wherever he landed. He loved Italy and was fascinated by Eastern Europe.

After retirement he learned both Hebrew and Arabic and kept two radios on his desk, one tuned to Radio Jerusalem the other to an Arab station. He also joined Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue.

Always at the centre of his life were his beloved wife Katja, his home in Pinner, his children Yael, Julian, Rebecca, Jeremy and Deborah and fifteen grandchildren.

Remembered for his wonderful sense of humour, he is greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

Yael Hirsch

Continued from page 18

Iby's dynamic personality and enduring testimonies are reflected within the HSFA's learning programme, which is delivered to hundreds of school children across the North every year. HSFA Director, Dr Alessandro Bucci, said: "Iby was open-minded and truly inclusive. She was an Auschwitz and death march survivor, but she was also an author, a loving mother and Oma, our matriarch, friend, and supporter. Through each of these roles, Iby sought to produce

positive change in the world.'

Professor Bob Cryan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Huddersfield, also paid tribute to Iby's work in Holocaust commemoration in the North of England, saying: "It was a privilege to recognise Iby's services to Holocaust commemoration with an Honorary Doctorate of the University of Huddersfield. Her tremendous contribution to spreading awareness here in Huddersfield and across the country has educated, informed, and inspired many

people and her legacy will continue through the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre."

AJR chief executive Michael Newman said, "Once met, Iby was not easily forgotten and she will be fondly remembered by all who knew her at the AJR. We're pleased to have been able to support Iby in her final years, through our Homecare scheme."

Alessandro Bucci

ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Tuesday 7 June @ 2pm	Raymond Simonson, CEO of JW3 https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82093912538	Meeting ID: 8209 391 2538
Tuesday 7 June @ 4pm	Chitra Ramaswamy and Henry Wuga - Homelands: The History of Friendship https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87928426763	Meeting ID: 879 2842 6763
Wednesday 8 June @ 2pm	Herbie Goldberg - Mendelssohn's great compositions, part 2 – The Youth and the Man' https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/864483428488	Meeting ID: 8644 834 2848
Monday 13 June @ 10.30am	Online yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Monday 13 June @ 2pm	Lynn Holden - Jewish Folk Lore https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89783495891	Meeting ID: 897 8349 5891
Tuesday 14 June @ 2pm	Debbie Wiseman OBE – the most popular living British composer https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88562236727	Meeting ID: 8856 223 6727
Thursday 16 June @ 10.30am	AJR Book Club Discussion (no speaker) - <i>Two Hitlers and a Marilyn</i> by Adam Andrusier https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85604086875	Meeting ID: 8560 408 6875
Monday 20 June @ 10.30am	Online yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Tuesday 21 June @ 2pm	Jonathan Bergwerk – The life and music of George Gershwin https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81820042937	Meeting ID: 8182 004 2937
Tuesday 21 June @ 4pm	A virtual tour of the Palace of Holyrood House https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85636590219?pwd=cGFIS2p2RIQxTSStQTNXMVFjS2J2dz09	Meeting ID: 856 3659 0219
Wednesday 22 June @ 2pm	Adam Andrusier (author) - <i>Two Hitlers and a Marilyn</i> https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85150237341	Meeting ID: 8515 023 7341
Monday 27 June @ 10.30am	Online yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Tuesday 28 June @ 2pm	An afternoon of music with Philip Heyman, Lead Viola Player with the Welsh National Opera https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89037232012	Meeting ID: 8903 723 2012
Wednesday 29 June @ 2pm	Dr Rachel Pistol – Internment camps in the UK/Australia/Canada with what happened in the USA https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82426259124	Meeting ID: 8242 625 9124



IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	REGION	CO-ORDINATOR
Thursday 9 June @ 12 noon	Glasgow 2g	Agnes Isaacs agnes@ajr.org.uk ; 07908 156361
Tuesday 14 June @ 10.30am	Edgware & Stanmore	Ros Hart roshart@ajr.org.uk ; Tel: 07966 969951
Wednesday 15 June @ 12 noon	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs agnes@ajr.org.uk ; 07908 156361
Monday 20 June @ 2pm	Bromley	Ros Hart roshart@ajr.org.uk ; Tel: 07966 969951
Wednesday 22 June @ 12 noon	Dundee	Agnes Isaacs agnes@ajr.org.uk ; 07908 156361
Tuesday 28 June @ 10.30am	Ealing	Ros Hart roshart@ajr.org.uk ; Tel: 07966 969951
Wednesday 29 June @ 12 noon	Glasgow 1g	Agnes Isaacs agnes@ajr.org.uk ; 07908 156361

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