



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## The Wiener Library at Ninety

As part of its 90th anniversary celebrations The Wiener Holocaust Library is holding two new exhibitions until 15 February.



Dr. Alfred Wiener at his desk in Manchester Square

One is called 'The Wiener Library at 90: Highlights from the Archives', commemorating the anniversary of the founding of world's longest continually existing archive on the Nazi era and the Holocaust and showing the range and importance of the Library's extraordinary collections. The second exhibition is called, 'The Wiener Library at 90: The Wiener Family Story', tracing the history of the family of the founder of the Library's founder, Dr Alfred Wiener (1885-1964).

Much of the early story of the Wiener Library will be familiar to readers of Daniel Finkelstein's superbly written book, *Hitler, Stalin, Mum & Dad: A Family Memoir of Miraculous Survival* (2023). Born in Potsdam in Germany in 1885, Finkelstein writes, his maternal grandfather 'belonged to a small but recognizable group, the German Jewish intellectuals ... that Hitler would seek to destroy.' Like many German Jews at the time Dr. Wiener was fiercely

patriotic and he served in the German army in the First World War. He was awarded the Iron Cross (second class) and the Iron Crescent.

He returned to Berlin after the war and published, *Prelude to Pogroms?* (1919), which proved to be remarkably prescient. It begins, 'A mighty antisemitic storm has broken over us...' He was one of the first German Jews to sound the alarm and went on to become the General Secretary of the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith and started to monitor the Nazis' activities from a secret office on Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, collecting Nazi newspapers and leaflets and following Nazi speeches, profiling Nazi leaders, and analysing Nazi policies. 'By 1933,' writes Finkelstein, 'the archive contained over half a million items.'

In 1933 Wiener escaped to Amsterdam with  
*Continued on page 2*

### PLEASE JOIN IN

This month's *Journal* contains details of a huge range of events, outings and virtual activities for AJR members and friends. We would particularly like to draw your attention to our forthcoming concert at Wigmore Hall (page 4) and visits to some outstanding exhibitions and venues (page 17). We hope to see you at some of these.

If you prefer simply to read, we hope you will enjoy our articles offering insights into the experiences and interests of many Jewish refugees. The article by the acclaimed foreign correspondent Hella Pick, on page 12, is just one example.

As always, we would welcome your feedback on our Journal or any other aspect of the AJR's work.

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

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## The Wiener Library at Ninety (cont.)

his wife Grete and their first two daughters. There he founded the Jewish Central Information Office, which according to Finkelstein was 'the world's most important – the world's only centre of anti-Nazi propaganda and research.' By 1938 the JCIO had over 8,000 books and pamphlets, together with numerous newspapers and press clippings and employed ten members of staff. On September 1, 1939 – the day that Hitler invaded Poland – Alfred Wiener opened the Jewish Central Information Office in London. On 10 May 1940 the Germans invaded Holland. Alfred's wife and daughters were trapped.

In August 1940 Alfred moved to New York. He returned to London after the war and was Director of the Wiener Library until his retirement in 1961, aged 75. He had a talent for recruiting prominent figures to the new Wiener library Board, including David Bowes-Lyon, the Marquess of Reading and Leonard Montefiore. Early postwar historians of the Nazi genocide such as Gerald Reitlinger (*The Final Solution, the Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe*, 1953) and Alan Bullock (*Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 1952) paid tribute to Wiener and his archive.

Alfred Wiener died in 1964. 'He believed in the power of truth,' Finkelstein writes, 'Discovering the truth, revealing the truth, helping people understand the truth, that

was his life's work.' He asked for the psalms and prayers at his graveside to be read in Hebrew and in German.

Dr. Wiener was succeeded as Director of the Wiener Library by Professor Walter Laqueur (1921-2018), also a German-Jewish refugee. Born in Breslau just after the First World War he left Germany for the British Mandate of Palestine in November 1938. He was later Director of the Wiener Library for

almost thirty years, from 1965-1994, during which time he established himself as a leading historian and a wide-ranging and prolific author (he wrote or edited almost fifty books while he was at the Wiener Library). In 1980 an open letter from academics was published in *The Times*. It declared, writes Finkelstein, 'that without the Wiener Library, the current state of research into the history of national socialism would be "unthinkable".'

Laqueur was succeeded by another Jewish historian, Professor David Cesarani (1956-2015), the first British-born Director of the library. Under Cesarani the Wiener Library hosted a number of prestigious conferences on subjects from *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation* to *Genocide and Rescue: The Holocaust in Hungary, 1944*. As Professor Lawrence Goldman wrote in his obituary in *The Guardian*, 'Cesarani had become a leading conduit for, and interpreter of, new research into the policies, mechanics and chronology of the 40s genocide.' The

1990s were an exciting time in Holocaust studies. After a long period of silence, the Holocaust started to enter the cultural mainstream, with major new novels, films and museums. Cesarani was not just a leading Jewish historian, who wrote acclaimed books on Eichmann (2006) and *The Final Solution* (2015). He was also a fluent and lively broadcaster and journalist. After Cesarani, Ben Barkow took over and ran the Library for twenty years, from 1998-2019. He is the author of *Alfred Wiener and the Making of the Holocaust Library* (1997) and many members of the AJR will have fond memories of



An unidentified man, Bergen-Belsen Displaced Persons camp. c.1947 from the Wiener Holocaust Library collection

his time at the Library. During this period he managed the move from Devonshire Street. In 2019 he was succeeded by Dr. Toby Simpson, the current director. He has focused on raising the profile of the Library and the digitisation of the Library's holdings. Under his leadership the Wiener has digitised over 100,000 pages for the first time last year.

Dr. Stefanie Rauch, Head of Collections at the Library, recently wrote a fascinating article about 'The Wiener Holocaust Library at 90: Our Collections in 2023.' She begins by discussing the sheer size of the collection which includes up to two million items, 'including published and unpublished works, documents, press cuttings, photographs, letters, artworks, objects, and eyewitness testimonies.' Of course, books and pamphlets about the Nazi persecution of Jews have always been the core of the Library's collection. Today, Dr. Rauch writes, 'the Printed and Audio Visual collections of the Library include over 50,000 books, 15,000 pamphlets, 600 posters, 500 unpublished memoirs and 500 manuscripts (drafts of books and articles, and unpublished theses) and a large number of videos and tapes.' The Library's periodicals collection includes more than 3,000 titles in over fifteen languages. Then, of course, there are the photo collections consisting of about 40,000 items, including 'photos of concentration camps and ghettos, the Kindertransports, the Lvov pogrom, and post-war Displaced Persons and Jewish relief efforts.'

There have been many changes at the Wiener Library. In 2011 it moved from its impressive home at 4 Devonshire Street, where it was based from 1958, to 29 Russell Square. It also has a new name: it is now the Wiener Holocaust Library and, of course, it has, of course, embraced new technology. Ninety years on, The Wiener Holocaust Library has much to celebrate.

David Herman

The Wiener Holocaust Library

AJR  
The Association of Jewish Refugees

# THE IMPACT OF THE ISRAEL - HAMAS WAR

IN CONVERSATION WITH  
NATASHA HAUSDORFF (Barrister | Expert Commentator In International Law)  
BEN M. FREEMAN (Holocaust Scholar | Author)

12 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 6:30PM | REGISTER TO WATCH ONLINE

LIMITED PLACES FOR 36/46 TO ATTEND THE EVENT IN-PERSON. TO ATTEND IN PERSON PLEASE EMAIL [DEBRA@AJR.ORG.UK](mailto:DEBRA@AJR.ORG.UK)

## ZOOM ZOOM

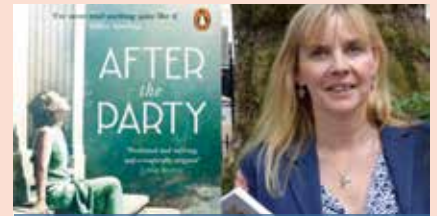
During lockdown (remember that?) the AJR Outreach team started a programme of Zoom events featuring a wonderful array of speakers. This proved so popular that it became a regular part of our Outreach programme.

Our Zoom meetings are held most Mondays at 4pm, and on Tuesday and Wednesdays at 2pm. The range of topics covered is enormous, thereby ensuring there really is something for

everyone. This month our programme includes an author, a comedian, the daughter of the wife of a Nazi officer, and a quiz.

Other regular online offers include a monthly Book Club, during which participants discuss our book of choice and share lots of other book suggestions, and three Keep Fit sessions every week, ranging from Chair Yoga to Dance.

The latest Zoom programme appears



The author Cressida Connolly features in this month's Zoom programme

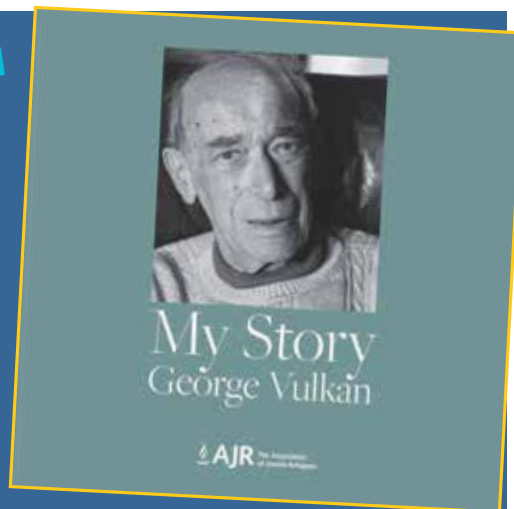
both on the back page of this *Journal* and in our weekly e-newsletter sent out every Sunday morning. Be sure to make a note in your diary of the times so that you don't miss out!

## GEORGE VULKAN BEM

**The AJR is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of our treasured member, George Vulkan BEM.**

George was an active member of the AJR who made an enormous contribution to our work by serving on a committee disbursing welfare assistance to his fellow refugees and survivors.

We feel privileged that George was our first member to share his testimony as part of our *My Story* project, which tells the life stories of Jewish refugees



and Holocaust survivors through the production of individual life story books. Visit [www.ajrmystory.org.uk](http://www.ajrmystory.org.uk) to download his full story.

## JOIN US FOR YOGA OR DANCE

The AJR is looking for more members to take part in our weekly Chair Yoga and/or Dance classes, both led by the energetic and endlessly happy, Jackie Turner.

Yoga is an all-round exercise which benefits all ages and abilities. We meet over Zoom at 10.30am on Monday mornings for 45 minutes of Chair Yoga followed by 15 minutes of mindful, relaxing meditation. It is a fantastic way to start the week.

Dance classes take part at 10.15am on Wednesday mornings and are always really good fun. Jackie talks us through the moves before each song and the moves are not too taxing.

Participation is completely free – all you need to do is use the zoom links that are published on the back of this *Journal* and in our weekly e-news.

If you have any questions about the classes please contact Ros Hart via [roshart@ajr.org.uk](mailto:roshart@ajr.org.uk) or 07966 969 951.

Here's to a fit and healthy 2024!

## A Jewish Heritage Month?

**On Thursday 11 January 2024 there was a Parliamentary debate on a motion calling for the creation of a British Jewish History Month.**

The opportunity to celebrate formally and raise awareness of Jewish heritage in the nation's calendar is a positive step forward in spotlighting parts of Jewish history and culture that can often be overlooked.

Here at The AJR, we have produced powerful resources which proudly

celebrate the striking impact the Jewish refugees and survivors from Nazi oppression people have made on a vast range of British intellectual and academic life. From photo-journalism to psychoanalysis, from food to the stage, from art history to publishing, all of which would have been incalculably the poorer without the Jewish refugees' contribution.

The AJR's fast growing next generation membership is testament to this – with many of the children and grandchildren of those original refugees joining the organisation to preserve and celebrate their family history and heritage.

## SWITCH ON ELECTRICS

Rewires and all household electrical work

**PHONE PAUL: 020 8200 3518**

**Mobile: 0795 614 8566**

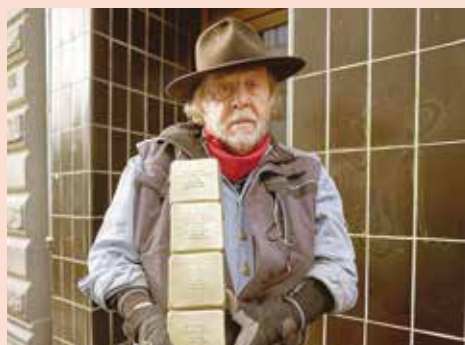


# STOLPERSTEINE NRW

Most AJR members will be very familiar with Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine project, which involves laying small brass memorial plaques in Europe's streets, to commemorate individuals who were persecuted by the National Socialist regime.

With more than 90,000 Stolpersteine in 27 countries, the largest decentralised memorial in the world has been created.

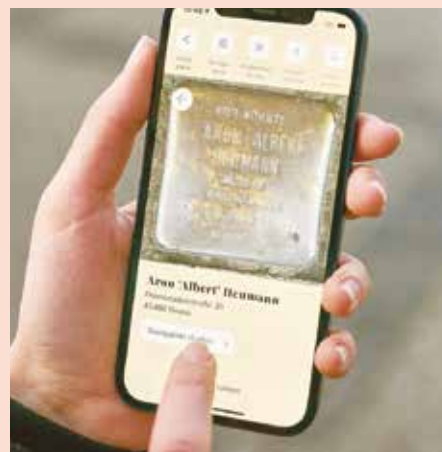
Now the project has been extended into the digital realm, with the launch of *Stolpersteine NRW* which provides a searchable database by places and



Gunter Demnig, creator of the Stolpersteine project

names for over 15,000 Stolpersteine across Germany's North Rhine Westphalia region.

Created under the initiative of the German public-broadcasting institution Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln (WDR) the database can be easily accessed via the internet and also has



The Stolpersteine NRW mobile app

its own mobile App, published in both German and English languages. It has already won several awards and is likely to be extended to cover other German states in due course.

<https://stolpersteine.wdr.de/web/en/info>

## JOIN US IN WIGMORE HALL

As part of our series of events marking the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport we are delighted to be organising a special commemorative concert at the Wigmore Hall on Sunday 12 May and strongly encourage you to come along with your family and friends.

We are thrilled that the Leonore Trio will be performing a musical programme featuring the works of a combination of iconic composers.

The AJR's connection with Wigmore Hall stretches back to 1948 when we organised our first ever concert there, the proceeds of which were used to support those refugees in need. Wigmore Hall was then used extensively by the AJR over the following decades and has long been a personal favourite destination for many of our members. The advert promoting our first event appears on p7 of the February 1948 edition of the AJR Journal which can be found at [https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1948\\_february.pdf](https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1948_february.pdf)

Tickets for this one-off concert, which is being presented in association with the Holocaust



educational charity Learning from the Righteous, are £20 each from [www.wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk)

DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S

## LETTER FROM ISRAEL

REMEMBERING  
7 OCTOBER

It didn't take long for Israel's many artists to react with horror, sadness and grief to the October 7 massacres. The

last 100+ days have seen countless commemorative events and exhibitions staged throughout Israel, as well as in many other parts of the world.

These include the 'Names & Faces' exhibit in Jerusalem's Safra Square Plaza which uses illustrations to pay tribute to those affected by the brutal attack and which is set to run until May, and 'Nova 6.29' at Tel Aviv's Expo, named after the exact time when the rockets began falling on the Tribe of Nova desert rave. Visitors to this exhibition find themselves in a camping

area permeated with an earthy, dimly-lit atmosphere, here and there a flip-flop sandal or teddy bear left behind, with photos of victims displayed on chairs. As one approaches the stage, the trance music switches to Hatikvah.

Another example is the 'Or Gadol' exhibit at Jaffa Port, which includes some 100 artworks inspired by the devastating Hamas attacks. This exhibit got underway within three weeks of October 7, with artists from the Gaza border communities as well as other well-known Israeli artists.

I recently visited an exhibition entitled 'Remembering the Gaza Border Communities' at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Israel's foremost art academy. This exhibition graphically presents the western Negev area which was attacked on 7 October. It depicts life in the region before the massacre, focusing on its serenity and agricultural character. It also seeks to raise funds to assist the residents of the area who have had to

leave their devastated homes.

The Bezalel Academy, named for Bezalel ben Uri, mentioned in the Bible as the artist responsible for designing the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Law when the Children of Israel were making their long journey to the Promised Land, was established in 1906, long before Israel existed as an independent state. It has recently moved into a grand new custom-built building in downtown Jerusalem, on the site known as the Russian Compound. Inside the building the various departments fill the four spacious storeys with plenty of room for workshops, classrooms, studios and exhibition space.

A plaque embedded by the entrance states in Hebrew, Arabic and English: *Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem; Based on principles of human dignity, equality, pluralism and freedom of thought, speech and creative expression.*

## FASHION CITY

**The East End has been at the centre of the UK's immigration story since the 1800s. So it is no surprise that when the Museum of London Docklands created its new exhibition, *Fashion City*, the protagonists of its story were the Jewish refugees that have shaped fashion.**

The immersive experience allows you to measure up in a 20th-century tailor shop, take your family portrait on a pin-hole camera in a makeshift studio, see the glitz and glamour of '70s Carnaby Street, and get up close to the finest couture.

The exhibition perfectly balances celebrating influential designers such as the flamboyant Mr. Fish, who designed for the likes of Mick Jagger



Bowie wearing a dress designed by Mr Fish, one of the Jewish designers featured in the *Fashion City* exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands until 14 April.

and David Bowie, to the empowering story of Kindertransport refugee turned Royal wedding dress designer, Netty Spiegel.

The museum reflects the influence of Jewish immigrants on London's fashion, but also sharing a transparent and honest view of the challenges that Jews have faced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and later in learning to bring together their faith and identity with that of their new homelands, often with very little material and objects from their past lives.

In a time where the Jewish community is once again battling against a backdrop of political tensions, this exhibition is a powerful and even emotional enlightening

of the definition of the Jewish spirit; one of rebuilding, community, and a humble ability to bring real change into the world, even if it just begins with a tape measure, a thread and needle.

***Fashion City – How Jewish Londoners shaped global style is at the Museum of London Docklands until 14 April 2024.***

**On Monday 25 March you can join the AJR for a group outing to the exhibition. See advert on page 13 and contact [karendiamond@ajr.org.uk](mailto:karendiamond@ajr.org.uk) for more details.**

Georgia Rawson



# 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.

## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Thank you, Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, for writing so eloquently (December) to remind us all of the core teachings of Judaism – humanity and respect for others – exhorting us to care for each other, whether Jewish or not. These values partly underlay my decision to reclaim my Jewish roots, which had been lost for two generations.

I agree with Jim Newmark that Israel's Government has put the Israelis into a morally indefensible position, even if it does not lead to Israel's demise. It will inevitably lead to more bloodshed in the area, leading to more hate and more division in the Middle East, as well as the rest of the world, with the inevitable spin-off of more antisemitism. While I admire much about Israel, I cannot condone the political position of the current ultra-right hard-line Government. Where are the core Jewish values here? I want nothing to do with these people and I don't identify with them. So I was very discomforted by the bold heading in AJR's November Journal "We stand for Israel". At present I don't.

It is clear that only a political solution will reduce the conflict and bring some hope of peace to the table. But the current Israeli Government just wants to get rid of the Palestinians rather than begin a dialogue. And I don't think Hamas can be wiped out by a bombing campaign which kills many thousands of (often young) civilians. If anything, Israeli policy will bring more of the Gaza population behind Hamas. What an irony. And it is terrible to watch fellow Jews engaging in so much killing. In the last analysis I would rather be oppressed than be the oppressor.

It seems utopian to propose a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian people at present. But that is what needs to happen. Clearly at this moment the two peoples cannot live together; so the only viable solution has to be some sort of two-state solution. Yet the current leadership won't even talk about it, never mind consider making any of the very major policy changes to make such a dialogue possible.

We live in difficult times, but as Jews we need to support any initiatives which get people together rather than divide them further.

*Sonia Lauber Sampson, Portugal*

I was surprised that Mr. Callender's letter had its full text published (January), taking up space which could have been given to other opinions. I was very upset at the writer's biased views, just like the BBC who mainly talk about Gaza and not the rockets hitting Israel, or how much time Israelis spend in shelters. I never say 'my country right or wrong' as nobody is perfect: there are two sides to every story. Whenever I have spent time in Israel and talked to Palestinians they told me how happy they were working, that they were free to build mosques, that their daughters could go to university. Of course, the present situation is very upsetting but you have to protect yourself from a group that enjoyed beheading people, killing babies and raping women.

*Gisela Feldman, Manchester*

I understand there are two sides to an argument but, as a Holocaust survivor, I find it highly upsetting that you have devoted so many column inches to Mr. Callender's anti-Israel diatribe.

If I wanted to read material straight from Hamas propaganda, I would not subscribe to a Jewish magazine.

Among my many secular Jewish friends, I know of no instance of such extreme anti-IDF opinion. All are supportive of our brave young men fighting to protect their fellow Israeli citizens from neighbouring barbarians.

*Dr M Ladenheim, Surbiton*

As someone who has spent a considerable amount of time in the Middle East, I was initially surprised at the amount of publicity given to the Gaza War, while the on-going nearby Syrian and Yemen wars are being largely ignored. The president of Syria, with the help of the Russian army

and air force based there, is responsible for over half a million Syrian dead, including many women and children. In the Yemen, some 300,000 or more deaths have been incurred in the war that Saudi Arabia is very involved in. Sad to report we Brits supply and maintain, in Saudi, the aircraft that are doing the bombing.

So in these two wars alone, nearly a million Muslim lives have been lost but the BBC, Al Jazeera and others, including demonstrators in London, make a big fuss over the 20,000 lives lost in Gaza. Regrettably, I can only come to the conclusion that when a Jew kills a Muslim, it is considered very bad while Muslims killing Muslims is somehow almost acceptable? Or is it really, as I suspect, another example of antisemitism.

*Steven Schrier, Hayling Island*

As a three-year-old I was in our apartment in Vienna when the gestapo burst in on Kristallnacht, looking for my father. He had gone into hiding so they smashed up the apartment. However, my mother and I were untouched. Compare that to what Hamas has committed in Israel. I never thought that I would find humans more evil than the Nazis. Now I have.

*Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts.*

I was pleased to learn from your correspondents Lipmann and Callender (January) of your 'one-sided attitude' to the Israel-Hamas conflict. If our *Journal* (representing, as it does, survivors of some horrors and other persecuted members of the diaspora) would not favour Israel, we simply could not continue giving it our support. The very publishing of these letters assures an open mind and a tolerance for an alternative, albeit misguided, view.

To describe Palestinians in Gaza as eternal and innocent sufferers is rather off the mark. When Israel removed its presence from the strip, they lived on UN hand-outs in refugee camps and burned Israeli planted vines etc, rather than build an economy. Their hospitals (now known

to host tunnels and Hamas fighters) sent two-thirds of their sickest patients to Israel to be cared for. They voted in Hamas on the basis of an enhanced and threatening anti-Israel policy on an 80% turn out. They trained their children to throw missiles of all kinds at Jews. They are still instrumental in hiding both Hamas fighters and their captive hostages.

I do stand behind Israel when she hits back for the first time in many centuries. The world may prefer the old punch-bag, but our six million brethren and rather fewer survivors had a part to play in establishing a state which provides a fixed point and protection to all of us. Constructive criticism arguably may be in order, but not when our ultimate shelter is in danger and our brethren are fighting for its very existence. They are there doing the fighting and we are here looking on.

Palestinians are not imprisoned in Gaza they are free to go wherever they want, but nobody, including their own ilk, wants them. The reason can only be guessed at.

I beg your correspondents to consider our self-interest and fight a war to the end rather than succumb to the UN's (just as one-sided as you accuse AJR of being) begging in 1948, 1967 and 1973 when each time they came back fully refreshed.  
*George Donath, London, SW1*

### THE QUAKERS

I read your very interesting article (January) about how the Quakers helped Jews to flee the Nazis. My mother, Elisabeth Loewenstein, lived in a poor village in Germany called Geseke. She desperately tried to get a visa to save her life from an uncle in South America, but he couldn't get one.

In desperation and with a small amount of English she wrote to all the main towns in England and the Oxford Quaker society, to her amazement, sent her a visa to be a maid in a house in Oxford. This visa saved her life and I'm eternally grateful to them for the kindness they showed her.

Her employers then sent a guarantee so that her brother, for whom she had managed to find forged papers, also came to England after a nightmare six months spent in Buchenwald.

They saved not only her life but also her brother's.

*Eve Forman, Elstree*

I was very interested in the article by Peter Kurer about the influence the Quakers had in organising the Kindertransport.

It is a little known fact that deserves much more appreciation, as many Quaker volunteers worked at the Bloomsbury House, the vital contact point to come to if we needed help. Although I was not on a Kindertransport I and members of my family owe a great debt to the Bloomsbury House team.

I would like especially to mention Bertha Bracey, who helped to get the Kinder on their journey as well as finding sponsors. She arranged for people to meet the trains where they stopped and after the war she persuaded the RAF to provide a Wellington Bomber to take the 300 Windermere children to the Lake District for recuperation.

She has a Blue Plaque in Birmingham, but I believe her name deserves to be better remembered, perhaps not quite on the same scale as Sir Nicholas Winton but not far behind.

*Victor Garston, London NW11*

## Erratum

"The bush burned but it was not consumed" (AJR Journal December 2023): Mark Faerber asks us to point out that the first photograph which accompanied this article was not of him but of his son-in-law, Meir Chami, his daughter, Daniella and grandson Netanel Chami. We apologise to the family for this error.

# LOOKING FOR?

### JEWS IN WALCZ (POMERANIA)

Piotr Wojtanek is an historian from Wałcz (the former German name of Deutsch Krone – in Western Pomerania). He is looking for any information about the Jewish population of the area and people who were born in the towns of the Wałec region.

[p.wojtanek@wp.pl](mailto:p.wojtanek@wp.pl)

### VERA WETZLER

Sandro Baldan is seeking the family of Vera Wetzler who was a prisoner in 1944-45 in the Nazi camp of Sackisch Kudowa in Poland. She was there at the same time as Luigi Baldan, an Italian Military Prisoner (Sandro's father). In the years 1960-70 she was living in Fakenham, Norfolk.

[baldan.sandro@inwind.it](mailto:baldan.sandro@inwind.it)

### IDA & LOUISE COOK

Debra Barnes would be interested to hear from anyone whose family were helped by Ida and Louise Cook, sisters who helped rescue 29 Jews from Germany and were later honoured with the title Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.

[debra@ajr.org.uk](mailto:debra@ajr.org.uk)

### JEWISH FAMILIES IN COLOGNE

AJR 2G member Lorenz Beckhardt is looking for anyone who remembers their parents or grandparents talking about carnival in Cologne, or the Rosenmontagszug or the Kleine Koelner Klub, both in Cologne. Lorenz is Speaker of Koelnsche Kippa Koepp, the only Jewish carnival club in the world, and successor of the Kleine Koelner Klub. One of their activities is the research of Jewish families who were in and around Cologne before 1933.

[lorenz@beckhardt.de](mailto:lorenz@beckhardt.de)

# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

**"I am a colourist with line", said Edgar Degas. That statement blew the cobwebs off 18th and 19th century concepts of art because its truth, just waiting to be discovered, was that artists did not have to depend on the finished product to bring out the essence of their work.**

The raw magic of the charcoal sketch or the rough pastel could evoke the artist's intention sometimes more powerfully than a work laboured and polished to the point of effacing its essential message.

These fleeting, virginal ideas committed to paper by the Impressionists and post Impressionists are celebrated in some 80 works at the **Royal Academy of Arts** in *Impressionists on Paper: Degas to Toulouse-Lautrec*. It was a time when drawings, pastels, watercolours, temperas and gouaches began to be appreciated for their intrinsic value, rather than being regarded as just a preparatory stage to something more valuable.

The Impressionists first exhibited as a group in Paris in 1874. They rejected traditional subjects inspired by literature or history in favour of an immediate response to contemporary events. Domestic life, scenes in the café, the theatre, the races, all offered the chance to capture such fugitive moments. Their graphic works on paper began to appear alongside paintings in exhibitions, and soon the critics were responding favourably.

Take **Degas'** ballet dancers. There is nothing romantic about them. In *Two Dancers* we note the strong legs of athletes beneath the shimmering blue and orange dresses, and the companionship in the intensity of exercise, while *Two Dancers Resting* suggest two birds taking a quiet moment to flick their wings. Much more anguished is his charcoal and coloured chalk sketch on tracing paper, *Woman Combing Her Hair*. While the woman

pulls down a thick chunk of her long hair in one hand, with the other she is vigorously combing it, a painful procedure familiar to many of us long-haired people! Even her legs are contorted, with pain. Here again Degas seems obsessed with the extremes of physical activity, conveyed through a sketchy, unfinished technique.

I was captivated by **Renoir's** pastel and coloured chalk on wove paper, *Woman with a Veil*. Her sad and youthful face, seen in semi profile, is shrouded in a dark veil which covers her hair, her clothes and partially her face, leaving everything in shadow. It totally contrasts with **Henri de Toulouse Lautrec's** 1982 *Woman with a Black Boa*, in which the figure of the model seems equally disguised by the feather boa, but here the artist seems to use it as a symbol of power, as she stands in a messy dress, untidy hair, her arms akimbo and her face rabid. Again the looseness of the technique best conveys the ill-tempered mood of the model, and is perfectly suited to its sketchy imperfection.

*In the Cab*, a pastel on canvas by the Italian artist **Giuseppe de Nittis**, who settled in Paris in 1868 and became a close friend of Degas, sketches two women glimpsed through the window of a horse-drawn cab. He was obsessed by the fast tempo of Paris, and drew his fleeting impressions of the women, one of them distorted by conversation, as she inclines towards her companion. The speed of their movement is perfectly captured here: you can sense it in the virtual absence of colour, apart from a muddy brown, lifted by the pallor of their faces.



Edward Degas, *Dancers on a bench*, c.1898

The work of **Jacques Emile Blanche** could not be further from these examples. His rather traditional 1887 *Portrait of Madame Henri Wallet*, erodes the distinction between painting and drawing by the use of pastel to create a grand society painting, something for which he was famous. Yet the materials he used enabled him to absorb *avant garde* practices, giving us a distinctive, elegant profile of the lady in black with a high hat and a prominent crinoline.

Coloured chalk seems a favourite medium for many sketches. **Camille Pissarro's** back profile of a young peasant wearing an apron, looking down with her hands folded in front of her, again shares this sense of immediacy. **Renoir's** charcoal drawing of two sisters, *Yvonne and Christine Lerolle at the Piano* is charming. One has her arm around the other, and there is no piano in sight, but the intimacy between them, the elder one comforting the younger, is very expressive. It is, after all, what we really understand by the term Impressionism.

*Impressionists on Paper: Degas to Toulouse-Lautrec* at the Royal Academy's The Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries until 10 March.

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**CONTEMPORARY  
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# Refugees in Newmarket

**Claire Duncan** has been fascinated by the history behind some mystery photographs in her parents' albums.

When going through my parents' photo albums, I found one dating back to wartime. In it were photos of several Jewish refugees who were staying at Palace House Stables, a large house given to the refugees to live in by Anthony de Rothschild and which still exists as The National Racehorse Museum in Newmarket, Suffolk.

The pictures of the refugees were taken in the garden of the house by my father, a keen photographer. I'm not quite sure what the connection was between my parents and these refugees. However, I was led to believe that my mother had been 'matron' in a refugee hostel in Cambridge, a short distance away. She was engaged to my father, an English Quaker, by that time and it's possible that both hostels were run by the Quakers.

Whilst researching these photos I discovered that, coincidentally, archivists at Suffolk County Council, led by Hannah Salisbury, had been undertaking research about the very same refugees, working in partnership with the National Horse Racing Museum. They curated an exhibition, *We Have To Move On*, which was displayed at the National museum during 2022 and which included my father's photographs of the refugees.

The exhibition formed part of a broader project, which included a recent dance

performance and a classical concert, inspired by a memoir written by one of the refugees, Fritz Ball. The initiative also worked with local young people and Britten Sinfonia to share the refugees' story through two concerts which took place at NHRM. Fritz and his wife Eva had come from Berlin, where Fritz had worked as a lawyer until Jews were barred from the profession by the Nazi government in 1935. (Fritz had been arrested the day after Kristallnacht and spent time in Sachsenhausen concentration camp).

My father, William Barton, was a Quaker and conscientious objector who was working on an International Voluntary Service for Peace scheme. Here he met my mother, Friedel Fanger, who had fled from Berlin to Leeds in 1938 at the age of 20. My grandparents, David and Duschka (Dora) Fanger had been reluctant to flee, talking about how the strawberries were just ripening on their dacha and that 'the Hitler thing' would soon blow over. They were very fortunate in being able to make the journey too in April 1939, sponsored by wealthy South African family contacts.

I have now donated the albums to the Suffolk county archive. This has been useful as the team there have been able to add faces to the names and stories of many of the refugees from that time. I am very happy that the photos have



One of the photographs from Michael Barton's albums

found a home because I feel it's better than having them in an album unseen, although it was equally hard to part with them as it feels that a little bit of my parents is now missing. My mother wouldn't have been so sentimental about it! Like many refugees my mother was rather reluctant to speak about her time in Nazi Germany and WW2. She told me stories about her childhood in Berlin, including how she received a copy of *Mein Kampf* as a school prize for her typing skills! I think she wanted to protect my brother and me from how awful it really was there. If other Jews started to speak of bad experiences, she would quickly say: 'nicht vor dem Kind!' before changing the subject to a pleasanter one.

**William Barton's photos and other information about Newmarket's Palace House refugees can be found on:**

[www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/sharing-suffolk-stories/we-have-to-move-on/](http://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/sharing-suffolk-stories/we-have-to-move-on/)



Palace House, Newmarket, which served as a hostel for Jewish refugees



A sculpture of a horse's head drinking in the grounds of Palace House

# CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

Each year the Jewish Volunteer Network (JVN) celebrates the work of the many incredible people who voluntarily offer their support both inside and outside the Jewish Community.

Communal organisations are asked to nominate outstanding volunteers to be honoured at the event and this year AJR nominated two volunteers:

**Anthea Berg** started volunteering for AJR over 15 years ago. She has generously given her time to supporting AJR members in Glasgow in a variety of ways. She has volunteered at our outreach meetings, helping to set up meetings, welcome members and make sure no one sits alone.

Anthea has regularly hosted AJR book clubs and BBQs for our members, welcoming over 40 people into her home and garden with her husband, Geoff,



From L-R – Fran Horwich (AJR), Anthea Berg, Galina Pessin with her young granddaughter, Agnes Isaacs (AJR), Dmitri Pessin and Julia Baker (AJR)

in charge of the grill, and has also given many hours to our Telephone Friends project, keeping in regular contact with members both locally to her in Glasgow and nationally. She does everything with a smile, never needing to be asked twice!

In 2010 **Galina Pesin** began volunteering with the AJR, visiting and telephoning members living with dementia.

In June 2022, she joined our project to help teach English to our new Ukrainian members who escaped the war to find refuge in the UK. She also supports the knitting group, creating blankets

to be donated to the homeless. She completed our hand massage course, allowing her to give comfort to members she visits.

Galina does all this despite a number of difficulties in her personal life. She is always positive, cheerful and willing to help, usually without recognition.

The JVN awards event took place at The Grove Hotel, Watford, where we were also delighted to witness **Ann and Bob Kirk**, stalwart AJR members, receiving an outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award from JVN.

# ZONE OF INTEREST

The AJR's **Georgia Rawson** finds that a new film about Auschwitz camp commandant Rudolf Höss, *The Zone of Interest*, strikes a perfect, yet uncomfortable chord.

We so often relate the Holocaust to the imagery of shaven heads, emaciated bodies, and unfiltered violence, but rarely get an insight into its sound.

Director Jonathan Glazer has used thermal cameras and experimental filming techniques to create a stomach-churning and unnerving portrait of Höss and his family's attempt to build an idyllic home against the backdrop of mass murder.

Stanley Kubrick-esque groans of piercing sounds coupled with blocks of darkness and blood-red force one into a position that, even with eyes closed, you can't escape the daunting reality of the situation. A stark metaphor of

how those in the occupied territories could not discount the violence of National Socialism, even if they tried.

Without even stepping foot inside Auschwitz, Glazer allows the viewer to experience it like no other film has done, through a soundtrack of terror that never stops. The atrocity hangs over what would otherwise be an almost mundane drama of an everyday 1940's family.

On the surface, the window on the family's dynamics allows the viewer to judge them like you would any family, but this runs deeper when coupled with their soundtrack of china cups clinking, babies cooing, bees



A still from the film, showing the Höss family and friends in their garden, with the Auschwitz camp just behind

humming and children playing never quite masking the surrounding soundscape of gunshots, yelling, dog's barking, and screams from the other side of the wall.

The aspirations of Hedwig and Rudolf Höss reflect an arrogant belief in a superior Aryan race and greasing the Nazi political poll, all communicated through everyday marital discussion.

The *Zone of Interest* will undoubtedly mark a turning point in Holocaust cinema, through its multi-sensory depiction of how threat against humanity starts, develops, and ends.



# THE FOREIGNER IN THE ENGLISH HOUSEHOLD

**Thank you to AJR Enfield member Michael Heppner for sharing this wonderful insight into his parents' early experiences in England.**

Like many other refugee couples, my parents came from Nazi Germany with permits for domestic employment. My mother had taken a six-month cookery course run by Frau Hülsen in our home town of Breslau and my father had trained as a butler.

My mother, Alice, was a young housewife who had never considered herself a cook but she took that class seriously knowing that her livelihood could depend on it.

She left the course with Frau Hülsen's very thick cookery book as her guide and companion plus a thin, orange paperback which had been specially produced for Germans who were intending to get jobs as cooks in England – *Wie koche ich in England*.

This slim volume, published in Vienna, was intended to address the problem of "The foreigner in the English household"! Alongside pages of vocabulary and conversion tables are 24 pages of favourite English dishes and recipes, including some that few Germans would ever have heard of, with helpful instructions in German. Fish cakes; Toad in the hole (Kröte in der Höhle), Bubble and squeak (untranslatable); Shepherd's pie (Schäferpastete); Irish stew; Yorkshire pudding; Jam roly poly, Bread and butter pudding (Butterbrot pudding); Trifle (Kleinigkeit); Dundee cake and even how to make tea.

My parents arrived in Southampton from Hamburg on 7 July 1939 with their two year old son and took the train to London, where they registered with the Domestic Agency at Bloomsbury House and were allocated a room in a nearby boarding house.

The next day they were interviewed by a very upper-class lady who was looking for a cook to replace the one who had

left for defence work, as had her butler. The interview went well and they were engaged as cook and butler.

Armed with these two vital resources, and with considerable trepidation, my parents took the train to Salisbury to be greeted warmly by a liveried chauffeur who took them by limousine to Tollard Royal.

Trepidation transformed almost to shock when they turned into a long drive and rolled up at an imposing mansion, *King John's House*, the former hunting lodge of King John.

The Hon. Mrs Isabel Colvin introduced them to the assembled staff of two maids, the kitchen maid, the head gardener and under gardener, in addition to the chauffeur. After being shown to their quarters they were taken around this beautiful house that had been remodelled from the 13<sup>th</sup> century royal residence. This included the servants' hall, with a large table over which the cook presided as head of the household. There was a strict dress code: in the morning, the maids wore blue and white striped dresses, white cap and apron; in the afternoon black dress, lace apron and head dress.

Cooking was done on the AGA which was maintained by the gardener. My mother started by cooking continental – *Schmorbraten* instead of roast beef – and received no complaints. But there was also routine: Sunday's beef was Monday's shepherd's pie. May, the first maid and lady's maid, helped with the English specialities, like toad in the hole, and provided advice on breakfast problems, such as the need to cook bacon and kippers. May also took over cooking the sausages.

In the morning, after breakfast, the cook met



Michael Heppner with his mother's cookbook

with Mrs Colvin to discuss the menu. The daily menu was written on a slate, but the week's menu was written out on a pad.

Mrs Colvin was proud of her German cook and quite often brought visitors to the kitchen to introduce them – often because of the desserts. Continental cookery had arrived!

Eventually my parents left King John's House and moved to London, but Mrs Colvin kept in touch with her German cook. Apparently, the next refugee couple that Bloomsbury House sent her were not a success. Maybe they had a hard act to follow?

In 1944, Mrs Colvin invited her German cook (with the boy) to stay as her guests to escape the flying bombs that were battering London. We stayed for two months with Alice taking over cooking the lunches, while Mrs Colvin herself prepared breakfast and May, still there as the lady's maid, prepared high tea.

Alice kept Frau Hülsen's heavy German cookbook by her side always. But the slim orange cookbook *Wie koche ich in England* was consigned to her box of mementos, until I came across it and found that the only recipes that she had marked were toad in the hole, shepherd's pie and leg of mutton.

Mrs Colvin and her German cook remained friends until Isabel Colvin died in 1963.

Alice & Michael Heppner in Tollard Royal, Oct 1939



King John's House in 1939





# Reaching our emotions

**Hella Pick is a much-acclaimed journalist who spent 35 years reporting for the Guardian in Washington, at the UN and all over Europe. She is also a Jewish refugee, having arrived by Kindertransport from Austria.**

The Post Office scandal had been known for years with investigative journalists exposing the suffering of the postmasters and with a number of MPs taking up their cause. But none of it made much of a splash. It took a four-part TV dramatisation, 'Mr Bates versus the Post Office', to create national awareness and an outcry against this perversion of justice.

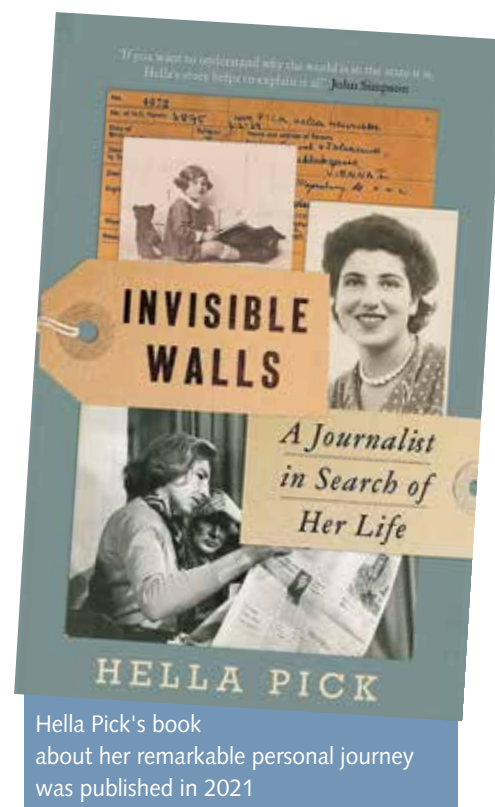
This may seem rather far-fetched, but I see a certain parallel with the impact that the film 'One Life' is having on public understanding of the Kindertransport. Both tell their story through one hero figure – Alan Bates for the Post Office, and Nicholas Winton in 'One Life.' The film about Nicholas Winton's extraordinary actions in rescuing over 600 children from Czechoslovakia is attracting large audiences. As with the Post Office saga, the screen has brought to life events that have long been public knowledge but whose enormity has not been really grasped. 'One life' has done something of the same for the Kindertransport story. The visual in both reached out to our emotions as no amount of writing or talking seems capable of achieving.

Strictly speaking, Winton's extraordinary rescue action was not part of the Kindertransport scheme which operated only to Germany and Austria. But it served an identical purpose and followed a similar pattern. The film depicts those bitter farewells at the railway stations, and the sight of bewildered uprooted children with an unknown future deposited at Liverpool Street station into the hands of stranger. It has vividly brought home to a wider public how Nazi persecution led families to save their children by sending them into an

unknown future probably never to be reunited with them again.

Nicholas Winton was a private individual who took the initiative to rescue the children from Czechoslovakia. The Kindertransport rescue operation was also triggered by a private initiative, not just by one individual but by a small group of prominent British Jews. Rather than try to organise it themselves, as Winton had done, they turned to the British government to support the scheme and provide entry visas for what turned out to be approximately 10,000 children. The Jewish communities in Germany and Austria were given the responsibility of gathering the children and organising the trains. The numbers involved were of course much bigger than Winton's children. But there was another big difference. Winton made little attempt to select the children he rescued. Apparently he took almost any Jewish child brought to him. It was different with the Kindertransport. The British initiators of the Kindertransport insisted on a very careful selection of the children to be brought to Britain. They had to be in good health and likely to merge easily into British society. Large numbers of Stetl children, some already orphaned, were rejected. It is an ugly aspect of the Kindertransport, which is not well known

The decision to rescue mainly Jewish children from Nazi persecution was triggered by the enormities of Kristallnacht in November 1938. This is now the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the Kindertransport rescue operation and for the last two months it has been widely commemorated. As a Kindertransport beneficiary myself, I have been involved in several events and have spoken in public both here and abroad. I was invited to Vienna and spoke at a British Embassy reception to mark the Kindertransport anniversary. I was also invited to speak to a group in the Austrian Parliament, and was interviewed on Austrian radio and TV. I am about to go to Berlin for the opening of a Kindertransport Exhibition in the German Bundestag. Generally this has involved speaking with insiders who are already familiar with the Kindertransport scheme. They ask similar questions: What



memories do I have of the childhood years I spent in my native Vienna? What recollections do I have of the journey to Britain? What do I remember of the family that looked after me? How do I feel about my native country Austria? Do I regard myself as a victim or survivor or both?

When I meet with younger people the questions start off very differently. Few know the meaning of Kindertransport and some do not even recognise the word. My answers can help. But better still is to turn to the screen. Hopefully 'One Life' will help to improve knowledge that close on 10,000 children were rescued from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia and given the chance to make good lives for themselves in Britain and beyond.

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# THE SHAPELL CENTER

The AJR's Debra Barnes reports on her visit to the extensive Holocaust archives in Washington.

Given the enormity of the Shoah it is unsurprising that one of the world's biggest museums on the subject, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington DC, has an archive so vast that it had to move to Bowie, Maryland, to find a building large enough to fit it all.

As part of our visit to Washington DC for the conference of the World Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants last year, we were given a tour of the USHMM archive, the Shapell Center. This 120,000 square foot conservation centre was purpose-built to house documents and artefacts of the worst crime ever committed, the Holocaust.

I had just donated a collection of AJR My Story books to the Shapell Center and had been told it was unlikely the box would be opened before my visit. Experiencing the scale of the archive during the tour, I appreciated why that was the case. The books will eventually be catalogued and available to view for pre-booked research purposes.

Sanitised, pristine... an infinite number of items are rigorously catalogued and locked away in acclimatised areas – some freezing, others almost airless. In one huge warehouse type room there's not much on show, except for the occasional open drawer containing, for example, a concentration camp uniform or the violin of Henry Rosner, depicted in the film 'Schindler's List'. The textile section is arranged by material to avoid different textiles interacting with each other in a corrosive way.

The 'paper vault' holds countless documents and photographs, stored in boxes of acid-free paper, on sterile metal shelving. Each box is barcoded, numbered and labelled as 'Philipson collection of restitution files', 'Mandel family papers', 'ICHEIC records' or the name of a camp, as examples.



Violin stored at the Shapell Center



Some of the paintings that are safely stored and yet easily accessible at Washington's Shapell Center

One room holds items so big they cannot be boxed. For example, a horse-drawn hearse, furniture such as carved wooden bedframes, tables and benches, giant trunks used by refugees escaping to Brooklyn, and incredibly a large collection of stones labelled 'Warsaw Ghetto Cobblestones to be deaccessioned' (there is a walkway of Warsaw Ghetto cobblestones in the USHMM already).

The art room has floor to ceiling pullout vertical walls so covered in pictures and paintings that you can hardly see the metal structure behind. These used to be catalogued by specialisation and media but that was changed a few years ago to

'by collection' as "it didn't make sense, we couldn't separate collections out, so we keep them intact to tell the story of the collections themselves", as our guide explained.

We also saw the laboratory-type rooms where artefacts are examined, authenticated and photographed, with world-class experts using state-of-the-art technology.

After a visit to the hugely impressive Shapell Center I felt reassured that the evidence to combat any future Holocaust deniers is safe in the hands of the USHMM.



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# 'DR' AUERBACH'S RISE – AND TRAGIC FALL

Corpulent and more than six-foot tall, Philipp Auerbach stood out, in Germany's first postwar years, as the young, dynamic and outspoken 'reparations Caesar'. He was not yet forty years old when the Allies recruited him, a middle-class Jew born in Hamburg in 1906, and a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, to help them carry out their welfare and compensation plans for the thousands of Holocaust victims in Western Germany waiting to start a new life.

Auerbach turned into a heroic 'Robin Hood' figure for the many who benefited from his actions. He and his staff first had to secure evidence that the displaced persons (DPs) were eligible to make a claim – not always easy as DPs had lost practically all their possessions. They then had to organise food, shelter, clothes, medical care, the return of stolen property and restitution payments – and ship passages overseas. Auerbach helped more than eighty thousand Jews and other Holocaust victims to emigrate, and emerged as one of Germany's best-known Jews.

But hubris set in, as his agency in Munich grew and as he, now a top Bavarian civil servant, travelled in his chauffeur-driven limousine, dispensing largesse in ways that did not always fully respect the rules. His high-handed manner angered not only the Allies, but the German authorities and the Jewish charities and international aid agencies involved in his work. He clashed with figures such as Leo Baeck and Hannah Arendt, as he controversially set out to rebuild Jewish communities in Germany. The prevailing view among Jews was that those who had survived the Nazi terror years should all emigrate. Auerbach, however, maintained that a 'judenrein' Germany would be a posthumous victory for Hitler.

Auerbach, moreover, became a Nazi-hunter, determined to uncover ex-Nazi officials who had slipped back into public service. Earlier, in Düsseldorf, he had exposed one senior official who had been appointed by the British military authorities. The occupiers told him his defiant behaviour had discredited them, and sacked him in January 1946. A few months later, the Americans appointed Auerbach head of the Bavarian government's restitutions office in Munich.

Here, his staff adored him, as he dealt

with the return of stolen property and financial compensation. But beyond, he made enemies, critics pointing to his chaotic administrative style and the way he cut corners. Ordinary Germans, among them the millions fleeing west from the territories ceded to Poland and Czechoslovakia, also saw themselves as Hitler's victims as they struggled to rebuild their lives. On the lookout for 'benefit cheats', they envied what they saw as the privileged treatment accorded to the DPs – dubbed 'Deutschlands Parasiten'.

Auerbach's nemesis was Bavaria's minister of justice Josef Müller. He'd been a Nazi who joined the resistance during the war. Müller resolved to collect evidence of Auerbach's alleged illegal activities. He had the cooperation of the US military authorities; by the early 1950s most of the DPs had been resettled, and Washington's priority now was integrating West Germany on its side in the looming Cold War.

In February 1951, Munich prosecutors accused Auerbach of embezzlement and other offences. His supporters maintained that personal enrichment was never an issue. Auerbach denied the charges, admitting only that he had not earned a doctorate, and had falsely presented himself as a 'Dr'.

Auerbach was being guarded in hospital with a kidney ailment when his trial began in April 1952 in Munich. The prosecutor and three of the five judges had a Nazi past; one was a former colleague of Josef Müller. A

Philipp Auerbach (ca. 1946) reviewing the contents of Hitler's recently discovered briefcase, including his Party Membership Book, Member No. 1



chief prosecution witness was later jailed for perjury. Although many witnesses testified to Auerbach's innocence, the court on 14 August 1952 found him guilty and sentenced him to two and a half years imprisonment and a fine.

Calling his trial 'a second Dreyfus affair', Auerbach said he would appeal. Instead, he that same night took an overdose of sleeping pills, dying two days later. The affair caused a sensation at the time, but became largely forgotten by the public at large, although scholars continued to delve into Auerbach's life and work. The Bavarian government subsequently reviewed the case and posthumously rehabilitated Auerbach.

Now, Hans-Hermann Klare, a former editor of the popular weekly magazine, *Stern*, has revived considerable interest with his well-researched and moving *Auerbach – Eine Jüdisch-Deutsche Tragödie* (Aufbau Verlag). The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* hailed the work as 'fesselnd geschrieben' (grippingly written), and few will disagree that it is, indeed, a compelling narrative.

**Martin Mauthner**



# "WRITE TO ME, FATHER"

## A POETIC REFLECTION OF TRAUMA

In 1988, Gerda Mayer, the already well-known poet, published one of her more poignant poems, "Make Believe", a personal traumatic narrative written in the first-person voice addressing her dead father.



Gerda Mayer with her father before she escaped on the Kindertransport

"Make Believe" concludes a collection of Mayer's poems – "A Heartache of Grass". The poem's final lines reconnect Mayer to her no longer existent and yet tangible past, her family and childhood hometown, through her biographical details.

The poet introduces an imaginative make-believe story, pretending her father is still alive, unwilling to accept the fact that he had so tragically faded away without a trace. Throughout the poem, there is a growing perception that Mayer's father's absence is present. More than half a century after she had been separated from her parents in Prague and sent to England, Gerda Mayer is still longing for her father. Mayer persistently preserves the memory of her former life, mourning her father's death and the loss of her family and home. The poem's message materialises in the last line, "Write to me, father".

### "MAKE BELIEVE"

Say I were not sixty ,  
Say you weren't near-hundred,  
Say you were alive.  
Say my verse was read  
in some distant country,  
and say you were idly turning the pages:  
The blood washed from your shirt,  
the tears from your eyes,  
the earth from your bones;  
neither missing since 1940,  
nor dead as reported later, by a friend  
of a friend of a friend ...  
Quite dapper you stand in that  
bookshop  
and chance upon my clues.  
That is why at sixty,

when some publisher asks me  
for biographical details,  
I still carefully give  
the year of my birth,  
the name of my hometown:  
GERDA MAYER born in '27,  
in Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia  
... write to me, father.

Gerda Kamilla Mayer (née Stein) was born on June 9, 1927, into an assimilated Jewish family in Karlsbad (known by its Czech name, Karlovy Vary), a beautiful Spa town in the German-speaking Sudeten part of Czechoslovakia.

By the end of September 1938, shortly before Hitler invaded the Sudetenland, the Stein family, Erna (née Eisenberger), her husband Arnold, together with their two young daughters, Johanna and Gerda, made the difficult decision, left their hometown heading towards Prague. By this time Prague had become home to many Jewish refugees from the Sudetenland, from Germany and Austria, searching for a safe haven.

For several months, the Steins had been running from one committee to another, knocking on doors in a vain attempt to get emigration visas. These efforts finally resulted in a place for Gerda on a flight from Prague to London. On March 14, 1939, a day before the German troops marched into Prague, a *Kindertransport* flight, under the auspices of the BCRC. (British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia), took off from Prague's Ruzyně Airport bound for Croydon. Eleven year-old Gerda Stein was among

the twenty children on board.

In her poem "Make Believe" Gerda calls upon her father, who vanished during the turbulent time in Europe. There is no closure for Gerda. There is no grave for her to mourn over her loved ones.

It was only after the war had ended that Gerda learned of what had happened to her parents and discovered their tragic fate. For a long time her family's whereabouts were unknown to her. The poet's father, Arnold Stein, was sent to an internment camp in Nisko and later deported to Lwów in Russian-occupied Poland. He then disappeared in the summer of 1940, and it is thought that he may have died in a Russian camp in Southern Siberia. No further information could be found about him and no details concerning the exact circumstances of his death were ever revealed. Her mother, Erna Stein, was deported from Prague to the ghetto of Theresienstadt in October 1942. In the following year she was transported to Auschwitz where she died.

At the age of 60, Gerda Mayer was still missing and mourning her father, refusing to accept the fact that he was already dead. "Make Believe" offers a lens through which she narrates her personal traumatic experience of separation.

Gerda Kamilla Mayer, the former *Kindertransport* child, passed away on July 15, 2021, in Chingford, East London, England. She was 94.

**Nurit Grossman**

# REVIEWS

## WHEN GLASS BREAKS

Allissa Oldenberg

Grosvenor House Publishing Ltd

The heart-rending story of two Jewish brothers who came to Britain on the Kindertransport but became accidentally separated on the journey to England is told in this innovative story by Allissa Oldenberg. The central character is Ben Lindenheim who lives a life of heroism, adventure, denial, illness, family, failure and lies, but always in the hope of one day being reunited with his sibling, something of a shadowy figure.

The novel sets the scene with two generations of the Lindenheim family living comfortably in Karlsruhe. But after the terrifying events of Kristallnacht, parents Miriam and Jakob decide to send sons Saul and Ben out of Germany to safety on the Kindertransport. The boys say goodbye to their parents at the station, never to see them again. After a long railway journey Ben stops to help a little girl, Ruth, boarding ship in Holland and in the mêlée loses Saul who ends up on another boat bound for the USA.

Ben is taken into the home of an East End family where he lives happily and enrolls at school learning English along the way. He improves his very considerable carpentry skills and also becomes a boxing champion. Ruth stays with a neighbouring family whose daughter Ben falls in love with and goes with them to the Synagogue. When war starts he volunteers, but not before marrying this young childhood sweetheart, Betty, ahead of setting off for France with the Royal Norfolk Regiment. A difficult and enterprising time follows when he is wounded and loses colleagues before travelling south where his determination to exact revenge on two Nazi officers hardens. He makes his way home via Malta to face tragedy.

Resilience shines through and he sets off for South Africa, securing a good job in Kimberley working for the mining company De Beers but is uncomfortable with segregation. Considerable adventures and romance follow but he eventually returns to England. Here he settles into a fairly humdrum life with

limited employment, blighted by the skin condition psoriasis flaring up with stress and never able to tolerate the sound of breaking glass.

Only at the end does the reader discover it is narrated by Helen Painter, as she tries to piece together fragments of her father's history. Most of this he tried to conceal from his family. She only knew he had a war pension, shrapnel injury, and lost family in the Blitz. Nothing much checked out but she filled in the blanks and gave him a past. It honoured the father with whom she shared a difficult relationship, which she came to acknowledge was largely due to the psychological scars he bore.

The story is gripping – if improbable in places – including the ease with which the Lindenheim brothers secure places on the Kindertransport or Ben is able to become part of the British army. But in particular it demonstrates the – often incredibly painful – value of being open and acknowledging the past to prevent suffering to oneself and family.

Janet Weston

## FEBRUARY 1933 THE WINTER OF LITERATURE

Uwe Wittstock

Polity Press

It took the Nazis roughly a month – February 1933 – to overturn the struggling Weimar democracy and lay the foundations of a ruthless dictatorship. How Germany's leading writers responded during those few weeks is the theme of Uwe Wittstock's widely acclaimed book, in which he brilliantly uses letters, diaries and other sources to capture the atmosphere and dilemmas of those violence-laden days in Berlin.

Some writers wavered for a while, notably Thomas Mann; some backed the Führer and hailed a new era, opportunistically or out of conviction, such as Gottfried Benn. Many of the country's leading authors, however, had long been committed foes of the Nazis. Some resolved to wait and see, in the belief or hope the new Austrian-born chancellor could soon be toppled. Others, such as Gabriele Tergit, found there was no choice but immediate flight.

The small, dark-haired, bespectacled Tergit, born Elise Hirschmann in Berlin in 1894,

had been in the limelight after she in 1931 published *Käsebier Takes Berlin*, a novel satirising the rise and fall of an unassuming cabaret singer hyped into a celebrity by the Berlin press. She'd also become Germany's first female court reporter, working for some of the capital's leading Berlin papers. Frequent street clashes between Nazis and their opponents led to Tergit covering many court cases of a political nature, presided over by nationalist judges. Berlin's Gauleiter Joseph Goebbels, about to become minister of propaganda and enlightenment, cursed Tergit as a '*mieste (lousy) Jüdin*'. On Saturday 25 February, she'd told a colleague that 'Whatever happens, I'm staying. One must observe history.'

By the following Saturday, however, she'd changed her mind. Claiming they had a warrant to arrest her, paramilitary stormtroopers – the 'Sturm Abteilung' – had forced their way into her home in the middle of the night, striking and kicking her architect husband Heinrich Reifenberg. Using her police contacts, some of whom were still anti-Nazis, Tergit managed to get the stormtroopers to leave empty-handed. She then told her husband she wasn't staying in Berlin. He noted that there was still good snow at Spindlermühle, a ski resort 300km from Berlin – in Czechoslovakia. With her son, Tergit took the hint and left the same day – her 39th birthday. From there, they went to Prague. By the end of 1933, she had joined her husband in Jerusalem, where he had found work.

The family moved to Putney in 1938. Tergit became well-known in London's refugee community, not least because of the many years – 1957 to 1981 – she ran the PEN group for German-language writers abroad. After she died in 1982, aged 88, the *AJR Information* (as the *AJR Journal* was known at the time, and to which she contributed) hailed her as 'one of the last survivors of the great epoch of Jewish writing in the Weimar republic.' Berlin today has a promenade named after her. In London her husband designed the Belsize Square Synagogue and the conversion of the banker Otto Schiff's Hampstead residence into an old-age home for refugees. Uwe Wittstock's book was originally published as *Februar 33 Der Winter der Literatur* (C. H. Beck Verlag). *Martin Mauthner*





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# OBITUARIES

## Isca SALZBERGER-WITTENBERG

Born: 4 March 1923, Frankfurt am Main

Died: 23 December 2023, London



**Isca Salzberger-Wittenberg was born almost 101 years ago in Frankfurt am Main. She was the youngest of three daughters of the well-known Frankfurt rabbi Dr. Georg Salzberger and his wife Natalie Charlotte, née Caro.**

Isca and her sisters grew up in a cultured home, where visitors included leading philosophers and thinkers. Rabbi Salzberger's grandson Jonathan later wrote, 'All through my childhood the volumes of the Talmud sat on my grandmother's shelves alongside the works of Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Mörike, Schopenhauer and the more recent poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke...'

Isca's father was the rabbi of Frankfurt's Westend-Synagogue from 1910-39. The synagogue was destroyed on Kristallnacht. The rabbi later described the scene: 'inside, it offered a picture of terrifying devastation. The great candelabrum lay on the floor smashed into a thousand pieces... The Holy Ark was broken open; the Torah scrolls had been stolen.' He was briefly imprisoned in Dachau. 'When my father came home,' Isca told one interviewer, 'he was almost unrecognisable. He had been tortured.'

The family were finally able to flee Nazi Germany on Sunday, April 9, 1939 when Isca was just sixteen. She brought a suitcase and her cello. Her father became the first rabbi of the 'New Liberal Jewish Congregation' (later Belsize Square Synagogue). In an interview with *AJR Refugee Voices* she said, 'He could speak to them in

German. Preach in German which was his language and always remained the German of his poetry. Poetic language. It felt very much like home. Very stressed people in hard circumstances with little to live on. And so had we – very little to live on. But it felt like a bit of home with a lot of tragedy hanging around us and a lot of worry. But [a] feeling of closeness and warmth and connectedness to the past.'

During the war the family lived in Hemel Hempstead. 'England was a new beginning,' she once said. 'It was so different. The English bobbies were so nice. They would see you home if you got lost. ... [But] it seemed as if ordinary people didn't know what was going on in Germany.'

Isca studied Social Sciences in Birmingham and later became a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. She was one of the first people to undertake the child psychotherapy training at the Tavistock Clinic in Hampstead, set up by John Bowlby and Esther Bick after the Second World War. She was to remain there for 25 years as a child and adolescent psychotherapist, before becoming a consultant. She was part of an extraordinary group of central European Jewish psychotherapists and analysts who came to Britain in the 1930s and helped transform psychoanalytic thinking, especially about children, in this country. She wrote several books including *Psycho-Analytic Insight and Relationships: A Kleinian Approach* (1973), *The Emotional Experience of Learning and Teaching* (1993) and *Experiencing Endings and Beginnings* (2013).

Her older sister Lore died from cancer,

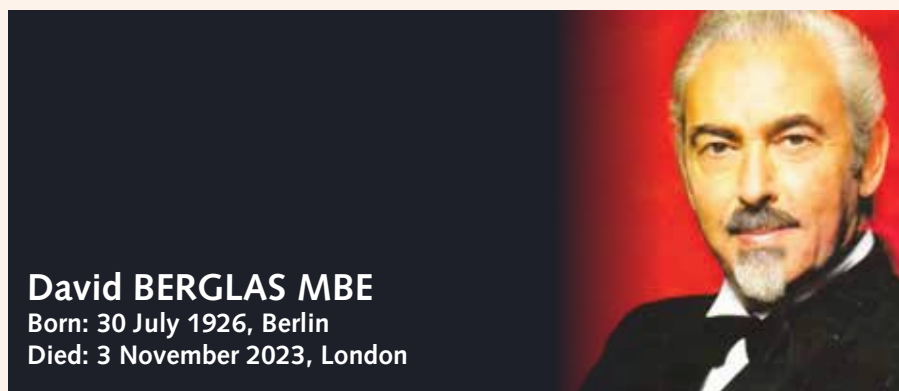
aged 44, leaving two sons, Raphael, then eight, and Jonathan, five. Following her sister's wishes, she married her brother-in-law and became a second mother to Lore's sons. According to Jonathan, 'It was she who really brought us up. Countless times when I couldn't sleep as a child she would come to our room and read to us.' Raphael went on to become an Associate Professorial Research Fellow and Deputy Director of the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre at the LSE and Deputy Director of the Centre for Health Service Economics and Organisation at Oxford University. Jonathan is the Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK and is Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue. He is a distinguished writer and thinker on Judaism and a leading spokesman on interfaith issues.

To celebrate her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday the AJR released a special film, based on the testimony duplication she recorded for Refugee Voices in 2006, <https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Isca-Wittenberg>.

In her book *Experiencing Endings and Beginnings*, she wrote: 'What makes it possible to accept the transience of life, to bear increasing losses, face the loss of one's own life, and yet go on growing, gaining, or at least maintaining emotional and spiritual strength?'

In his book, *Walking with the Light* (2013), her son Jonathan writes, 'she had borne the light of the family's culture and values from Germany to Britain.' She would say, he wrote, that what her experiences made her want to achieve in life was 'helping others to be able to help themselves'.

David Herman



## David BERGLAS MBE

Born: 30 July 1926, Berlin

Died: 3 November 2023, London

**David was born in Berlin to Emmy (née Esther Kaplan), of Lithuanian descent, and Alfred Berglas, a German from a family of industrialists with a textile mill in France. They fled the Nazis in 1937.**

David was sent to Britain while his mother and younger sister, Gaby, went to the Netherlands and older sister, Ellen, to Switzerland. The whole family was reunited in London the following year.

Berglas attended Frensham Heights school, near Farnham, and after the end of WW2, worked for US intelligence in Germany. He settled in Bradford in 1947 and started studying textiles at the city's technical college with a view to joining a textile mill established by his family in Wyke, nearby.

After meeting the conjuror Ken Brooke, he made magic his hobby for the next five years. During that time, he changed his career plans, trained at the Tavistock Clinic, London, worked as a psychotherapist and gave demonstrations of hypnosis.

But in 1952 he turned professional as a magician and illusionist, taking his show to the Windmill theatre, London, performing six times a day for six weeks, and sharing a dressing room with the comedian – and later actor – Bill Maynard.

The illusion that made his name came in 1953 when he was blindfolded and hooded while being driven around London in an attempt to locate a hidden slipper. He directed the driver to Battersea Park, switched to a boat on the

lake there and found the slipper on an island in the middle.

He followed it with performances up and down the country on bills that included stars such as Morecambe and Wise, Harry Worth, Des O'Connor and Ruby Murray. His stage show, *Meet David Berglas*, was seen across the world and he had television series in the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden.

Some of his stunts were truly terrifying. In 1966, blindfolded, he drove a car around the streets of London, with the racing driver Graham Hill, terrified, in the passenger seat. Six years earlier, he had done the same in Nairobi, Kenya.

Having firmly established himself in European television, he took his stage talents to Las Vegas, later experiencing a revival in Britain with *The Mind of David Berglas* (1985-86) on Channel 4, where he entertained celebrities including Omar Sharif, Christopher Lee and Britt Ekland.

Cited as an inspiration by the illusionist Derren Brown and the magician Dynamo, Berglas was renowned in magic circles for the Berglas Effect where he was able to find a spectator's chosen number in a deck of cards. It is regarded as the 'holy grail' of magic effects and he takes its secret to his grave, as befits a former president of The Magic Circle (1989-1998).

Berglas was honoured with an MBE in 2018 for Services to Magic and Psychology. When he stepped forward to receive his award from Prince William, the Prince said: "David is that really you or just one of your illusions?".

*Jo Briggs*



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## IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	IN PERSON MEETING	CO-ORDINATOR
Thursday 1 February	2.00pm	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 6 February	12.30pm	Leicester	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 7 February	12.30pm	Edgware/Stammore	Ros Hart
Thursday 8 February	10.30am	Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 8 February	12 noon	Birmingham	Karen Diamond
Monday 12 February	2.00pm	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Wednesday 28 February	12.30pm	Kingston	Ros Hart



### Kindertransport Lunch

THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY – 12PM – NORTH LONDON

An opportunity for all Kinder – whether 1g, 2g, 3g or 4g – to mix and meet with the AJR's Kindertransport committee and discuss plans for the future.



[susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)

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## ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 5 February @ 4pm	Jonathan Schonfield – Rabbi Dr. Schonfeld and his Rescue Missions <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81958821677">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81958821677</a>	Meeting ID: 819 5882 1677
Wednesday 7 February @ 2pm	Yolanda Benthall – Life in Ferramonti di Tarsia, Italy's largest internment camp <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86892253396">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86892253396</a>	Meeting ID: 868 9225 3396
Monday 12 February @ 4pm	Quiz afternoon <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85018772026">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85018772026</a>	Meeting ID: 850 1877 2026
Tuesday 13 February @ 3pm	Discussion with Cressida Connolly, author of <i>Bad Relations</i> and <i>After the Party</i> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81423968724">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81423968724</a>	Meeting ID: 814 2396 8724
Wednesday 14 February @ 2pm	Bob Sinfield – No Laughing Matter: What's So Funny About The News? <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84091497263">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84091497263</a>	Meeting ID: 8409 149 7263
Wednesday 28 February @ 2pm	Angela Schluter – The Nazi Officer's Wife: How my Jewish mother survived the Holocaust <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85789902376">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85789902376</a>	Meeting ID: 857 8990 2376

## KEEP FIT WITH AJR

All AJR members & friends are invited to take part in these online exercise and dance classes throughout the coming month.

Every Monday @ 10.30am	Get Fit where you Sit (seated exercise) <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439</a>	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Every Tuesday @ 11.00am	Shelley's Exercise class <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622</a>	Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622
Every Wednesday @ 10.15am	Dance Yourself Fit with Jackie Turner <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86302485494">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86302485494</a>	Meeting ID: 8630 248 5494

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