



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Similar...yet so very different

In a few days it will be the 86th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass, a pogrom carried out against Jews in Germany by the Nazis on the night of the 9-10 November 1938.



Those who experienced Kristallnacht might have found it difficult to imagine that one day illuminated Israeli flags would be flown over the centre of Berlin

The windows of Jewish-owned shops, buildings, and synagogues were smashed. 267 synagogues were destroyed, over 7,000 Jewish businesses and shops were damaged, their contents looted, and 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Almost 100 Jews were murdered. According to the historian Richard J. Evans, more than 600 Jews committed suicide. In his superb book, *The Third Reich in Power*, Evans writes, 'After 10 November 1938 it was virtually impossible for Germany's remaining Jews to carry out their normal religious acts of public worship any more.'

Two of the most moving accounts of *Kristallnacht* are by a German-Jewish

refugee and by the son of two German-Jewish refugees. The refugee was the writer Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz whose novel *The Passenger* was translated in 2021. *The Passenger* was written during the four weeks that followed *Kristallnacht*, before Boschwitz, a German Jew in his early twenties, left Germany. It tells the story of Otto Silbermann, a German-Jewish businessman living in Berlin who goes on the run immediately after *Kristallnacht* after seven Nazis come to raid his apartment and violently attacked a friend of his.

More powerful still is Jonathan Wittenberg's family memoir, *Walking with the Light*
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A MONTH OF THANKS & GIVING

We very much appreciate everyone who has written articles for this month's issue, including those who have supplied refugee-related stories set in Hungary, Belfast, Leicester and Toronto. There are also accounts of interesting trips to retread the footsteps of ancestors in Langenberg in Germany and Harwich in Essex.

Look out also for details of new online events about reclaiming European citizenship (p.11) and what looks sure to be a very special and emotional concert at Wigmore Hall commemorating the music performed at Auschwitz (p.10).

Finally, please don't forget to contact the AJR office if you would like to attend our Annual Election meeting on Wednesday 11 December at 3pm.

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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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Similar...yet so very different (cont.)

(2013), the story of a walk from Frankfurt, where his grandfather was rabbi, to Finchley, where Wittenberg is rabbi of the New North London Synagogue. It is partly the story of a Jewish family and partly the larger story of German-Jewish culture. This is how his grandfather described the devastating attack on his synagogue in Frankfurt:

'From the outside no sign of destruction could be seen. ... But inside, it offered a picture of terrifying devastation. The great candelabrum lay on the floor smashed into a thousand pieces. The benches, the lecterns, the pulpit where I had so often stood, the glorious organ, the cantor's prayer desk were all burnt. The Holy Ark was broken open, the Torah scrolls had been stolen.'

Ten years after this fascinating memoir was published there was another pogrom, just as violent, this time in Israel, perpetrated by Hamas terrorists. Civilians in 21 communities were massacred. Over a thousand people were killed, including nearly 700 Israeli civilians, among them almost forty children. About 250 Israeli civilians and soldiers were taken hostage to Gaza, alive or dead. A year on, many are still held captive under appalling conditions. Many others have been found dead. These acts of barbarism led to a war on several fronts: against Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthi rebels in Yemen, most of these terrorists armed and financed by Israel's arch-enemy Iran.

What is the relevance of *Kristallnacht* as we remember those killed and abducted on 7 October and Israeli soldiers and civilians killed in the past year? There are obvious parallels. First, the brutal violence and suddenness of both attacks. Second, how they were both the beginning not the end of a new wave of violent antisemitism, one in Germany, the other in the Middle East. Third, both events underlined the isolation of Jews in the face of antisemitic barbarism. As German and Austrian Jews desperately tried to find refuge, doors closed around the world, an indifference already symbolised by the Evian Conference in July 1938. In Israel today, more Jews are arriving than trying to leave, but the isolation is very different. The mainstream media in the UK and US have been astonishingly biased against Israel from last October when the BBC announced that its news programmes would not call Hamas terrorists; the Left, Muslims and students have joined hate marches in cities on both

sides of the Atlantic; Israel has been vilified from Ireland to northern cities in England, from Australia to many cities in North America (Canada as well as the United States).

There are significant differences also. Soon after *Kristallnacht* Jonathan Wittenberg's grandparents left Frankfurt for England. They were just a few of the many who left and other members of the family were not so lucky, a story beautifully told by Jonathan Wittenberg in his family memoir, *My Dear Ones* (2016). *Kristallnacht* was a key moment in the flight of German Jews from Nazi Germany and Austria. 7 October will not be the same for Israelis.

The second major difference is that within just over six years Nazism would be destroyed and a new Germany would emerge, symbolised by the words of the mayor of Berlin when challenged by a pro-Palestinian heckler about why he was flying the Israeli flag above Berlin's city hall and the illuminated Israeli flags flown over the centre of Berlin on 7 October. In the Middle East, however, while many of us hope for regime change in Iran, the sponsors of terror from Gaza and Lebanon to Yemen, only an optimist would expect dramatic change in the Middle East. The attacks on Israel from Hamas and Hezbollah are just the latest in a series of Islamist terrorist acts aimed at Israel.

Above all, Israelis are in a very different situation from central European Jews at the end of 1938. Israel is a significant military power, high-tech as shown by the use of exploding pagers against Hezbollah and the shield that protected Israeli cities from Iranian missiles so recently. As the Abraham Accords of 2020 between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain showed, Israel is less isolated in the Middle East than it used to be. As part of the two agreements, both the UAE and Bahrain recognised Israel's sovereignty, enabling the establishment of full diplomatic relations. Israel's initial agreement with the UAE marked the first instance of Israel establishing diplomatic relations with an Arab country since 1994, when the Israel-Jordan peace treaty came into effect. Then on 10 December 2020, President Trump announced that Israel and the Kingdom of Morocco had agreed to establish full diplomatic relations. Even after the current conflict began, Saudi Arabia made it clear it was not on the side of Hamas. In 2023-2024, reports indicated that Saudi authorities were removing anti-Israeli and antisemitic content from their

textbooks, signaling a more moderate approach towards Israel and Zionism, and acknowledging the Jewish presence in the region.

This Autumn has been dominated by two significant anniversaries of particular resonance for Jewish refugees in Britain. The similarities are important. But so are the differences. We should be sensitive to both.

David Herman



AJR ANNUAL KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE

THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2024 @ 2PM
BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

It will also be streamed live via

www.synagogue.org.uk



AJR CHANUKAH PARTIES

All AJR members and their guests are invited to join us at one or more of the following events.



LONDON

Thursday 12 December, 12pm – 2.30pm at a north London venue and including a delicious two-course lunch and exciting entertainment.



£25 per person.

Contact roshart@ajr.org.uk



NORTH OF ENGLAND & SCOTLAND

All these events will include lunch and entertainment and/or a guest speaker. Venues and timings are available from the AJR co-ordinator for each meeting.

NEWCASTLE – Wednesday 27 November
agnes@ajr.org.uk

EDINBURGH – Tuesday 3 December
agnes@ajr.org.uk

GLASGOW – Thursday 5 December
agnes@ajr.org.uk

LEEDS – Monday 16 December
michalmocton@ajr.org.uk

LIVERPOOL – Tuesday 17 December
michalmocton@ajr.org.uk

MANCHESTER – Wednesday 18 December
michalmocton@ajr.org.uk

WELCOME MR PRESIDENT

The AJR is delighted to announce the appointment of **Andrew Kaufman MBE** as our **Honorary Life President**.

Accepting the invitation, Andrew, who chaired the AJR for 25 years and will retire as a trustee next month after almost 40 years, said, "I am very proud that the AJR has honoured me in this way. I knew that having to retire as a trustee in December after almost 40 years would be a huge wrench for me. Serving the AJR for such a long time has been the honour of my life. I have met some very famous people, such as the King and the Queen and

Sir Nicholas Winton, but for me the most important people I have met through AJR have been our members".

Speaking at our Annual Tea in September, Andrew recalled being most proud of the creation of the AJR Paul Balint Day Centre, the development of our Refugee Voices testimony archive and the professionalisation of the AJR. He also added, "I was so happy that my dear



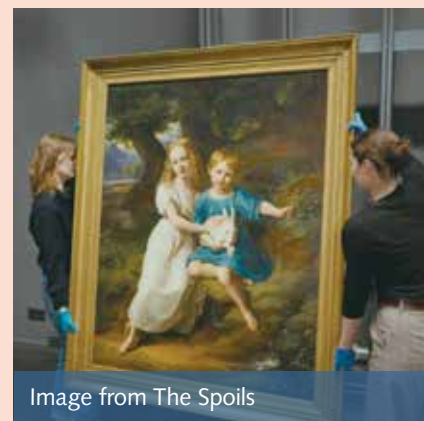
friend, Mike Karp, succeeded me as Chairman and that the AJR is in such safe hands."

Watch *The Spoils*

The Spoils follows the disputes at the Dusseldorf City Museum where they struggled for over three years to organise an exhibition, initially planned for 2018, in honour of Max Stern, who after the Holocaust became one of the most successful dealers in art restitution in the world.

The film poignantly tackles the themes of ownership, history and morality in relation to the restitution of art looted by the Nazis.

As part of the UK Jewish Film Festival and with the AJR's support the film will be screened in London's Hampstead on Monday 11 November and in Manchester on 17 November, with both screenings followed by a discussion with Anne Webber CBE, founder and co-chair of the Commission for Looted Art in Europe.



www.ukjewishfilmfestival2024.eventive.org/schedule/

MEET OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS

The AJR is delighted to introduce you to this year's volunteers from Germany, who will be working full-time with us until next September through the wonderful ARSP service.

LEO QUIEL

Leo is 21 years old and from Hamburg. As part of the AJR's Education and Heritage team he looks forward to learning new skills, getting to meet new people, and spending a year living in London. He enjoys learning about different cultures and periods of time through his main hobbies of art, travelling and reading.



ISOLDE RAPP

Isolde is 19 years old and from Stuttgart in the South of Germany where she grew up with two older sisters and one older brother. Having just left school she is excited to be part of the AJR's Volunteers team and learning more about the Jewish culture. Isolde plays the violin and sings in a choir and hopes to explore many of London's wonderful museums and theatres while she is here.

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THIS YEAR IN TORONTO

This year's conference of the World Federation of Holocaust Survivors and Descendants was held in Toronto, towards the end of September.

This was my third consecutive conference, but I found this the most exhausting, possibly due to the particularly emotional themes of 2024, encapsulated by the title *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Living in Challenging Times*.

Concurrent subjects which ran through most of the weekend were the 7 October attacks and the rise in antisemitism in the diaspora. The conference ran from Friday afternoon to Monday midday, with the days split between plenary, or keynote, speakers and a choice of workshops, panels and seminars. Not a moment was wasted and the programme continued late into the evenings, with a theatrical performance, klezmer band and DJ. I particularly enjoyed a reading by 2G Canadian actor, Saul Rubink, of excerpts from his play, *All in the Telling*, a multigenerational story rooted in the wartime experiences of his parents.

The AJR was represented on panels by myself and by two of our trustees, Danny Kalman and Joel Hockman. As chair of the AJR's Kindertransport group, Danny was well-equipped to talk about the 85th year of the Kindertransport including, with great pride, the visit by King Charles to meet the Kinder in November 2023. In fact, all three of us managed to mention King Charles during our panels (causing much envy among the Americans and Canadians) – I was speaking on the subject of *Holocaust Education and Remembrance in the UK*, while Joel spoke about *Intergenerational Dialogue*.

There were a number of standout moments for me. The first was a panel called *Perspectives from our Survivors in this time of Conflict*, with four of the 30 Holocaust survivors in attendance. As Dutch child survivor, Robert Krell said, "October 7, I can almost believe. What I can't believe, is what happened on October 8." He went on to say, "We

have to grow less complacent. Sit on every panel and committee which gives you some power. Find a friend; don't be alone. We must combat the hate together." Wise words, indeed.

The workshops were a great way of comparing notes in a room full of like-minded people who 'get it'. Whether you had over-protective parents or those who were emotionally distant, they almost certainly carried little plastic bags of food around "just in case". Among the tears we also managed to laugh. As one put it: "We put the fun in dysfunctional!" One participant had us shocked, then giggling and finally laughing out loud as the group slowly came to realise that, in her strong Israeli accent, she had described her parents' marriage as a 'Hitler Shidduch'.

The highlight for me was a sobering talk by clinical psychologist, Dr Irit Felsen, entitled *How has the Israel/Gaza war impacted the generations of the Shoah?* You may remember Irit's talk on Intergenerational Trauma for AJR's 2022 conference: if not, it's available to watch on [YouTube](#). Irit teaches at Columbia University, a campus now infamous for its high levels of antisemitism. Irit quoted Jewish poet Linda Pastan, "For Jews, the Cossacks are always coming", explaining how October 7 had turned this metaphor into a reality. She described children of Holocaust survivors growing up in the '70 good years' from the end of WW2 to the 9/11 attack, which signified the end of an era in which the world seemed more peaceful, rational and tolerant of Jews, and continued "Now, the public mind is once again guided to accept that anything is permissible when it comes to the Jew, because the Israelis and Jews are always guilty." Irit made sense of all the emotions I have been going through in the past year and received a well-deserved standing ovation from the hall.

I also had the delight of meeting Jerry Imas, a Chinese 3G whose grandmother was a Polish Jew who travelled from Siberia to refuge in Shanghai. Unlike the other 18,500 Jewish refugees in Shanghai, Jerry's grandmother did not leave at the end of the war, but married a local and had a family and hence there is Jerry – the only Chinese Jewish 3G refugee in Shanghai who proudly



Debra addressing colleagues at the Toronto convention

volunteered for the IDF when he was 18! Jerry was at the conference to represent the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum which is looking to connect with the families of the refugees.

Not so positive was a speech by the Polish Ambassador to Canada, Witold Dzielski who was certainly not 'reading the room' when he made the claim that antisemitism does not exist in Poland, causing the enraged audience to boo loudly. This was still being discussed the next morning when a suggestion of 'moving on' was met with defiance. Most agreed that 'never again is now' and we should not allow such a blatant lie to pass without protest. It felt good to be part of a defiant and energetic movement. Let's keep it going until next year when the conference will be coming to Europe. More details to follow!

Debra Barnes

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A 3G

Another year, another conference and another great success. Not only as a trustee, to have the opportunity to represent the great work the AJR does, but also doing this in the capacity of a 3G is a privilege and an honour. Being able to hear from different

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DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

SITTING, NOT
COWERING

Events come thick and fast in this part of the world, and the past week has provided the various media

outlets with more material than they seem able to cope with. Thus, in the wake of the IDF's incursion into Lebanon, accompanied by its advice to residents there to leave in order to avoid civilian casualties, the far-from-objective Sky News correspondent bewailed the exodus of the population there after having ignored the similar fate suffered by tens of thousands of Israelis in the north of Israel for the past year. Needless to say, that news channel failed to mention the tunnels and weapons stashes discovered in Lebanese villages, providing physical evidence of Hezbollah's plans to attack Israelis along the lines of the Hamas assault of 7 October 2023.

The alarm that sounded in my phone as we were watching the evening news programme a few nights ago was accompanied by a message telling us to take ourselves to the nearest shelter. Luckily, our home has a basement within which a bomb shelter with reinforced walls was incorporated at the construction stage, in accordance with the building regulations in force at the time.

Accordingly, my OH and I went

downstairs, making sure the doors, windows and shutters in the house were closed, and were able to listen to the news on the TV set in the basement (which is also my private gym). We sat side-by-side in the shelter, waiting to be told that it was safe to leave. This took almost an hour, during which time we were able to hear the distant thud made as rockets were intercepted by our Iron Dome defence system.

The next day, when the various TV news channels reported the event, it was clear that they were impressed by Israel's ability to defend itself, but the Sky reporter could not help herself and described Israel's residents as 'cowering in their bomb shelters.' Well, madam, I have news for you. We were sitting, not cowering. And so, I believe, were most of our compatriots throughout the land.

Naturally, parents of young children have a more difficult job and have to deal with the various moods, reactions, fears and nerves that a child will display. But cowering is not part of the response that Israeli parents will be displaying to their offspring. Distracting their attention, playing with them and doing what they can to soothe unsettled minds and nerves are rather what parents should have been doing, and to the best of my knowledge that is what they did.

Hezbollah's attacks by means of rockets, drones and artillery began immediately after the Hamas assault in southern Israel a year ago. Civilians, including women and children, were killed and injured, and many thousands of Israelis had to leave their homes. Ever since then the

bombardment has continued, causing destruction and devastation to the towns and villages of northern Israel. Families have been living as refugees in crowded conditions in other parts of Israel. The suffering is acute and ongoing, but not as photogenic as the vehicles standing bumper-to-bumper on the roads leading out of southern Lebanon.

When the dire situation of so many Israeli families first became apparent, two enterprising young women, Daniella Koffler, who happens to be my daughter-in-law, and Talya Tomer, wrote and illustrated a booklet aimed at helping children forced to leave their homes to understand and cope with the situation. The booklet, entitled 'A Family Without a Home,' was distributed free to as many displaced children as could be located, with the aid of the voluntary agencies set up to alleviate their plight. It can be purchased from <https://morning-sale.page/miluumbook>

It is now over six months since the booklet was published, The demand for it was so great that it is now out of print. The authors have received a great deal of positive feedback, and the booklet has been able to help many children – and their families – come to terms with the situation. Whether anyone believed that the crisis would last as long as it has – it is now a year since the assault by Hamas and Hezbollah's supporting bombardment – is open to question. Maybe it's time to produce a new booklet for children in bomb shelters.

This year in Toronto

Continued from page 4

organisations from across the world, namely China, Germany, Holland, France, the USA and Canada itself is really quite amazing. Connecting with other 3&4Gs, hearing their stories and sharing your own is quite extraordinary; being in a space with people from all over the world, some of whom you

have only met for the first time (ranging in age from 20 somethings to 90+ year olds) but having a deep rooted connection, is something that is really quite difficult to put into words and that is extraordinary. The conference really does offer something for everyone, with a range of panels and plenaries to informal discussions and being able to hear from survivors themselves. You might even discover something new about

your own family just as I did this year! More than 85 years on, there is a strong sense of never again being now; standing up against hate and preserving the past. We are after all the 'Torchbearers' and if we don't do it, then who will pass the torch on? We cannot forget. We mustn't forget. We are all tied to this community.

Joel Hockman

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.

TAKING ROOT

I very much enjoyed Simon James' recollections of Dr. Orlay, the pioneering Viennese dentist in Kilburn High Road (September). My parents became his patients in the early 1960's, when my father had several root canal treatments. They were very painful, especially as I believe he never wanted an anaesthetic. However, the procedure was successful, and the teeth lasted him until his death from bone cancer in 1980. The surgeon treating him was puzzled by what he saw on the X-ray of his neck and jaw. It seemed he had never before come across a root canal treatment.

Monica Meyer, Switzerland

AJR ANNUAL TEA

Once again I find myself being so massively impressed by the AJR staff. The musical afternoon tea at Hendon on 29 September was so well organised by Susan Harrod and her team, and on this occasion by other AJR staff too who helped everything run smoothly. I always notice how very well we members and our families are treated; indeed, dare I say spoilt. I am hugely claustrophobic and usually quite unable to use a lift, but on this occasion one of the staff coaxed me into the lift by saying she would come in with me. Once inside, she told me to close my eyes, which surprisingly I did and hey presto I made it! Then my coat was taken from me, hung up and a ticket was popped into my hand. I genuinely believe that AJR staff really care and nothing is too much for them.

What a wonderful organisation AJR is. Thank you for making the Annual Tea such a pleasant occasion. At my age, I couldn't have imagined that I would be serenaded by a singing 'waiter'! It was a lovely fun afternoon.

Susie Barnett BEM, Billericay, Essex

THE PRAGUE MUSEUM MYTH

The article *Never a Museum of Extinction* in October's AJR Journal was based on an essay of mine. But the edited version that appeared included additional material that is misleading and

from which I have to disassociate myself.

Fortunately a corrected version is published in the online edition of the October issue.

Egon Erwin Kisch was an influential Czech writer whose legacy was to have inspired the notion of a Nazi plan for a "museum of an extinct race".

The fact is that there is no documentary evidence for a Nazi plan. On the contrary, the concept of such a plan was a post-war construct that can be traced, not to the Nazis, but to a Jew – Egon Erwin Kisch.

The immense task of meticulously cataloguing more than 100,000 Jewish artefacts was not a Nazi project. It was the achievement of leaders at the Prague Jewish Community whose plan was to enable the Jews returning from this latest pogrom to reclaim their treasures and rebuild their communities as they had done after previous pogroms.

The hoard of artefacts came only from Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia, and not from Slovakia or other communities throughout Central Europe. It was only in the Czech lands that the Jews came up with an effective plan to collect and save the treasures of their centuries old culture from being looted and lost as they were elsewhere. That is why the collection at today's Jewish Museum in Prague is unique.

It is important not to perpetuate some of the serious misinformation that has characterised the myth of the "museum of an extinct race" in Prague. I am grateful to the AJR Journal for enabling me to put the record straight.

For those interested, the original essay can be found online at <https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/egon-erwin-kisch>
Michael Heppner, London N21

THANK YOU FRIENDS

In a year when many Jews have felt so isolated and abandoned it has been truly

Members of Cornwall's Jewish and Christian communities sang *Oseh Shalom* together during the commemoration



heartwarming to experience the spirit of solidarity, prayers, love and support from our Christian friends.

On Sunday 6 October thirty members of Cornwall's Christian community came together at the Three Milestone Community Centre in Truro in solidarity with fourteen members of Kehillat Kernow, the Jewish Community of Cornwall, over tea, honey and apple cake, and in prayer, friendship and song, to mark one year on from the horrific events of October 7th.

I found myself reminded of the words of Elie Wiesel, who survived Auschwitz and Buchenwald, when he wrote: "Indifference is the epitome of evil... We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

As a child of Holocaust survivors I know only too well the importance of standing up against hatred. To see our Christian friends **STANDING UP FOR ISRAEL AND STANDING UP FOR CIVILISATION**, our Christian friends who have not faltered in their prayers for Israel since October 7th, gave me great comfort. I would like to thank them all from the bottom of my heart and I thought other AJR members might appreciate reading an extract from one of the many letters we received after the event. This one is from a Christian minister:

"I want to thank you for all of your hard work to put on the meeting on Sunday. It was such a very special time together in a time of much sorrow and lament.

Let it be known that the Jewish community here in Cornwall is not alone. You have friends here in this county who love you and stand alongside you in your troubles.

I hope to maintain contact with the community and would love to see you all again one day soon.

Shalom Shalom".

Cynthia Hollinsworth, Cornwall

THREE FACES OF EMMA



Hagar's picture of Emma



Helen's picture of Emma



Susan's picture of Emma

Despite growing up within a very small immediate family Susan Hamlyn has managed to build a family tree of 1500 people who descend from her German ancestors. She explains how.

My parents were Kindertransport children. My mother came with her sister and – they were lucky – their parents followed three weeks later, arriving at Victoria Station on 1 June 1939. My father, an only child, arrived here later that month. He never saw his parents again. My parents met and married ten years later, doubtless, at least in part, drawn together by a similar troubled start in life.

We had virtually no wider family and, as a child, hearing of friends' multi-generational family gatherings, I knew something was missing. I knew a fair bit about my mother's family but virtually nothing about my father's background. So, when Covid came and kept us all indoors, I started uploading what little I knew on to *Geni*: www.geni.com. This – if you don't know it – is an American genealogy website which has been owned by MyHeritage, an Israeli company, since 2012. There are now more than 100 million living users and records of hundreds of millions more, going back hundreds of years.

A week after I uploaded my first few names and places, I was amazed to get an email from a woman in Maine, USA:

In doing research on my grandparents, I came across your information... I think we are second cousins.

She was called Helen. She had deduced

from what I had put on Geni that we shared great grandparents. They were Hermann and Emma H..... They had had three children – Helen's grandmother, Grete, another daughter called Marthe and my grandfather, Max. Helen was astonished to learn of Max's existence. She had always known about Marthe who had escaped with her family to Israel but no-one had ever mentioned their younger brother, Max. Grete had died at the hands of the Nazis but her daughter had escaped to the US where Helen and her brother were born.

Knowing nothing of these people, I was, at first sceptical, but then Helen sent me a photograph of Emma H..... and I knew at once that she was right. Among the few photographs that my father had saved was one of Emma – a different photograph but undoubtedly the same woman. I had a new second cousin!

Helen told me that she had also made contact with Marthe's granddaughter, Hagar, in Israel and gave me her contact details. Helen, Hagar and I were almost of an age – all stemming from the same small part of north west Germany – but now, one was American, one Israeli and one decidedly British.

I wrote with some nervousness to Hagar – she, like Helen, would have no knowledge of this side of her family. How might she respond? She wrote back in wonderment – attaching a photograph of our great grandmother, Emma – different photograph, same woman. We were, unquestionably, cousins.

A year or two later I visited Hagar in Israel. She had a vast collection of photographs, brought by Marthe when she left Germany. There I saw pictures of the whole lost family and, most movingly, a photograph of my own father as a baby, tenderly held by his mother who was to be murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Since then, I have continued researching and adding to Geni – as have others. I have now uploaded the details of 220 people. There are now more than 1500 people on my family tree. I am about to meet Helen for the first time. Hagar and I love each other like sisters.

Susan's great grandmother, Emma was transported to Theresienstadt in September 1942 and murdered in Treblinka two weeks later. She was 82.

Play your part in keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive

FOCUS GROUP

DISCUSSION

Help shape the future of The AJR

Rooted in delivering social welfare to Jewish victims of Nazism, the AJR keeps the memory of the Holocaust alive by galvanising descendants in the UK and funding Holocaust education

Let your voice be heard!

Why Participate?

- 1 Drive forward learning about the Holocaust and the lives/experiences of the survivors & refugees
- 2 Preserve the culture and history of this unique community
- 3 Combat antisemitism by ensuring Holocaust education and awareness is funded and has widespread reach

To register interest and for more information, contact us at gemma@ajr.org.uk

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

It is hard not to think of Vincent Van Gogh as the enigmatic artist who went mad, self-harmed and ended up in an asylum in the South of France before shooting himself. The National Gallery has chosen the last two years of his life for its first major bicentenary exhibition, in an attempt to portray the romanticism of his life, rather than the torment.



Starry Night Over the Rhône by Vincent Van Gogh

It is the gentle visionary they want to present in **Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers**, but none of the portraits and the gardens and the yellow house and the trees can disguise the turbulence of his brushstrokes, the fevered animation of his mind. Here is a great artist at odds with himself, trying to convey the romantic image of the lover in his depiction of the red-hatted soldier Paul Eugène Milliet, a man who Van Gogh envied for his success with women, but whose lustful eyes do not suggest romance but a man fixated.

Then there is the poet, in fact a Belgian painter, called Eugene Bloch, of whose work Van Gogh was quite dismissive, but who was chosen to present the soulful image he wanted to convey. In fact, The Poet's triangular face and slanted eyes are more suggestive of Van Gogh himself in his 1889 self portrait, with his red beard and introspective eyes.

Yet the show is deeply touching. His ethereal *Starry Night Over the Rhône* shows the stars dappling over the river, whose thin shards of light make the earth appear fragile, as a barely discernible couple huddle together in the foreground.

There are paintings of the garden in front of his house in Arles and within the grounds of the hospital at Saint-Rémy-de Provence where he sought refuge; there is the broken tree evoking his own broken spirit. There is a glow about these gardens and a solid Expressionist white cloud which descends as though it is made of earthly substance and could obliterate everything beneath it, almost like a bomb. There is an inevitable heaviness and a grainy quality in some of the impasto paintings, the way he slaps on the paint; his palette grinding into life; the colours brilliant but often threatening.

Yet Van Gogh was at peace here, after the turbulence of his attempts to transform the famous yellow house into an artistic haven, an idea shattered after bitter disagreements with Gauguin. There is a gentler Van Gogh in his portraits, two of *L'Arlesienne* and *La Berceuse* (The Lullaby) in which the colours are rich and the expressions pensive, if not doleful.

"Trees are very characteristic and I'm struggling to capture that. It's silver, sometimes more blue, sometimes greenish, bronzed whitening on ground that is yellow, pink, purplish or orangeish to dull red ochre.", he wrote to his

brother Theo on 28 September, 1889. You can see these colours moving under the cloud, under the sky, and this inner turbulence gives each colour meaning, while if you look deeper at the solid cloud you see that it seems to be dancing over the landscape like an angel whose beating wings are in perfect harmony with it.

In the early months of his stay in Arles, Van Gogh offered his brother a strange prophecy: "The painter of the future is a colourist such as there hasn't been before."

Yet he saw something deeper in his use of colour. His olive grove paintings share a harmony with the figures within them. It is as though this painter with great insight sees little difference between the life forms he commits to his canvas. People, clouds, trees, they all dance together under the skies.

Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers at the National Gallery until 19 January 2025.

The first exhibition of Frank Auerbach's landscapes, Portrait of London, will be shown by Offer Waterman and Francis Outred at 17 St George St, London W1S 1FJ until December 4.



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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

Leicester: the little known home of Expressionism

Readers may be surprised to learn that, thanks to an émigré friendship, the Midlands city of Leicester houses the UK's largest collection of German Expressionist art. James Glennie, who curated a recent travelling exhibition, explains.

The history of the important German Expressionist collection at Leicester Museums and Art Gallery is a combination of wartime friendships, shared artistic and cultural passions and the vision and commitment of successive museum curators and directors. But at the heart of the story, above all else, lies the Hess family of Erfurt, Germany and the collection they bestowed.

Alfred Hess (1879-1931) was a wealthy shoe manufacturer who began to collect contemporary art, many works acquired direct from the artists themselves. His collection of over 4,000 artworks was considered one of the finest in Germany.

Art historians, museum directors, critics and artists alike were warmly welcomed to the home of Alfred, his wife Tekla and son Hans. The house became an artistic hub where art and literature could be shared and enjoyed. Its visitor's books are filled with sketches, poems and inscriptions from artists such as Klee, Feininger and Kandinsky.

In 1931 Alfred died unexpectedly following surgery, aged just 52. By 1933 Hans had fled to Paris for political and racial reasons. Tekla remained in Germany and, in an attempt to protect the collection, the pictures were sent to Swiss galleries. In 1936 authorities demanded they were returned to Germany, where many of them were sold or disappeared. In 1939 Tekla escaped Germany to join her family in the UK, bringing just a few paintings.



Woman in a Café by Lotte Fishler, 1939

The Smoker, a woodcut portrait of Alfred Hess, by Max Pechstein, 1919



When war broke out, Hans had been working in London as editor of the magazines *Inside Nazi Germany* and *Germany Today*. He was interned and sent to Canada, returning in 1942.

Trevor Thomas, curator of the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery met Tekla around 1941. Thomas, Tekla and Hans became friends and created a ground-breaking exhibition entitled 'Mid European Art' in February 1944; over sixty artworks were exhibited.

It was the first public exhibition in the UK to show the work of the German Expressionist artists. Four works belonging to the family were then acquired permanently for the collection: *Red Woman* by Franz Marc, *Behind the Church* by Lyonel Feininger, *The Mask* by Emil Nolde and *View from my Window* by Max Pechstein. The latter was a gift from Tekla Hess to mark the occasion of the exhibition and in recognition of friendship.

The association did not stop here,



A full catalogue of Leicester's important collection is now available

however, and the exhibition was a springboard for Hans Hess to leave the war work he was engaged with to join Trevor Thomas at the Leicester Museum as an art assistant. Later he was to become Curator of Art at the York City Art Gallery.

Today an exhibition of a selection of the 400+ remarkable German Expressionist works in the Leicester collection are on display at the Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, where the galleries are due to be refurbished and redisplayed in the second half of 2025.

A beautiful catalogue of the collection was published last month. It contains over 500 illustrations, a map and extensive timeline and accompanying essays, over 264 pages, and is available for £30, including postage, from james@artantiquesappraisals.com.

The AJR will be visiting the collection on 13 February. To book your place contact karendiamond@ajr.org.uk.

My Mother's Memoirs

Janet Lew is enormously proud of her mother, Eva, who had her first book published last year, when she was 99.

My mother embarked on writing her memoirs after her retirement at the age of 84. She had worked for many years for the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) and the Association for European Law (UKAE). In 1995, she was awarded an MBE for promoting European Studies. In her book *Once a Refugee, Always a Refugee* she wrote, "One of my proudest moments was when I received an MBE... considering my arrival in England (from Berlin) as a fourteen-year-old girl when I could barely speak a word of English, it seemed miraculous to be conversing with the Queen..."

At the height of the Covid pandemic Mum and I were privileged to sit in on a Zoom discussion organised by AJR on writing memoirs and having them published. It was not only this talk that set things in motion. The seed had been planted years before, in 2006, when Mum and I had attended an AJR trip to Berlin, expertly led by Susie Kaufman and Carol Rossen. I brought a

camera with me and ended up interviewing Mum. I thought if I took on the role of an 'interviewer', mum would more readily open up to her feelings about being back in her hometown.

For Mum and me, it was the beginning of a dialogue about her past – something which we had never touched upon before. Later, watching the edited video at an AJR meeting after the trip, Mum said, "I'm quite surprised by how well I come across in your interview!" I believe this experience spurred her on to write her life story. I offered some help as editor. That AJR Berlin trip set the groundwork for our later collaboration despite some classic 'mother, daughter' tussles along the way about computer files, missing amendments and version history.

Mum forced herself to confront some uncomfortable truths, never shying away from the 'warts and all' of refugee and family life. "I had a completely different life to my brother and sister who were 10 years older. They had a wonderful life in Germany, but I did not because Hitler came to power and my parents were completely preoccupied with what you would call Hitler problems," she said.

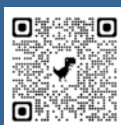
Growing up in Berlin in the 1930s, life

became increasingly dangerous for mum's family. First, Jewish students disappeared from her grammar school, then her father's GP practice was taken over, and finally he was taken to Sachsenhausen by the Gestapo where he tended to former patients living on a diet of soup.

Mum became the only Jewish pupil at her school. The rest of her Jewish friends had to go to a school for Jewish children but "because my father had a First-Class Iron Cross and was a war hero I was entitled to stay. I felt completely out of place. I was once invited to a birthday party and the father gave me a long searching look. I realised he knew I was Jewish, and that was the end of socialising, I never got invited anywhere else."

She recalls marching through Berlin in her gym kit. "Hitler loved marches and our school marched in our black shorts and white shirts to impress the neighbourhood with young womanhood. I thought it was exciting. My family were shocked that I went on a Nazi march, but I didn't realise that's what it was."

Although their quiet suburb was untouched by the terror of Kristallnacht, when Jewish businesses and synagogues were destroyed,



MUSIC IN AUSCHWITZ

To commemorate HMD2025 and the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the AJR and Holocaust education charity Learning from the Righteous are jointly staging a concert at Wigmore Hall that will focus on the music that was played at the camp and honours the musicians who were forced to perform it there.

Antony Lishak explains.

When Auschwitz was established music had become a ubiquitous tool of Nazi control throughout the camp network. The Commandant Rudolf Höss, drawing on his experiences in

Dachau and Sachsenhausen, selected musicians from the initial cohorts of Polish and Soviet political prisoners and later from Jews who survived selection at Birkenau. Their primary role was to play marching tunes that helped corral the columns of slave-labourers who left the camp in the morning and returned depleted in the evening, into easy-to-count rows of five. As the Auschwitz complex grew, prisoner musicians were required to entertain the ever-expanding SS staff. Regular Sunday afternoon performances were held in front of Block 24 in Auschwitz 1 and smaller ensembles were forced to entertain senior members of the SS in more private gatherings. Perversely, there were even musicians on hand to accompany public executions.

January's concert will feature music actually played in the camp, taken directly from

Prisoner musicians in front of Block 24 in Auschwitz 1, 1941



manuscripts only recently discovered in the archives of the Auschwitz Museum. These pieces will be punctuated by the testimony of musician-prisoners. Amongst the performers will be the internationally renowned cellist Raphael Lasker-Wallfisch, whose mother Anita played the cello in the women's orchestra at Birkenau.

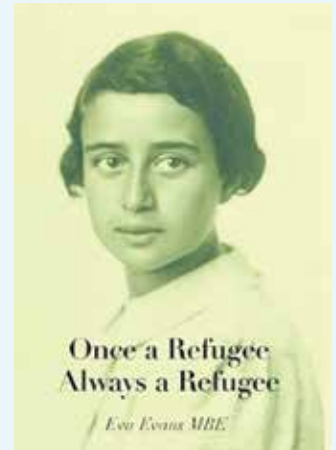
The concert takes place at 1pm on Thursday 23 January. Tickets are £25 and can be purchased directly from the Wigmore Hall from their box office at 020 7935 2141 or via this link www.wigmore-hall.org.uk/whats-on/202501231300



Eva in the fire service during WW2



Eva signing a copy of her book at her book launch



an aunt who lived centrally spent the night desperately searching for her missing son.

Once the German doctor took over her father Felix's surgery "...he was finished. He had no job. This well-known doctor in the district had to use the back stairs which were for kitchen deliveries. But he said, 'Hitler won't last, I am not worried, we have enough money to live'.

In her book she writes: "My parents didn't understand what was happening in the rest of Berlin. When the Gestapo came and took my father he wasn't prepared. His best friend always carried money and a passport, but he did not expect this could happen to him. When they took him away, my mother was completely hysterical and started screaming at this giant of a man, who said 'Mrs Doctor, it's not my fault, I was told to come and get your husband.'"

Now desperate to flee, Eva's mother Annie visited daily for three weeks to plead for her husband. When she showed them her deposit for a ticket to America, and promised to leave, they let him go. "My father wanted to emigrate to America where he could practise with German qualifications, but it

was much too late, there was a quota for Jewish people. He stood no chance."

With her older siblings Lilli and Fred safely out of the country, a UK-based uncle helped with documents, and the family left on a train for London via Amsterdam. Like all refugees, they could only leave Germany with 10 DM per person – Annie's coat seams were opened to check she hadn't hidden diamonds. But their possessions, packed into shipping crates at Hamburg dock, never arrived. The Germans said they were bombed by the allies but records which were unearthed later proved that everything had been auctioned off. After all those years, my mother had an inventory of everything my grandparents had owned: paintings, silverware, and information about where it went.

The family arrived in Belsize Park, which had such a large community of German and Austrian refugees that Finchley Road became known as 'Finchleystasse'. Eva attended Camden School for Girls with a fellow refugee who lived around the corner in Belsize Park Gardens. But when the school was evacuated in 1939, her protective family wouldn't let her go, and they all moved to Devon.

As paranoia about German nationals gripped Britain, Eva was interrogated, and her father interned for six months as an enemy alien.

"I was only interested in doing my school certificate, and I was summoned to a meeting in Exeter and questioned by a group of lawyers about what was I doing in Torquay, like some kind of spy. My father was sent to a military camp in terrible conditions, under canvas when he was 60," Eva explains.

Today, despite the challenges in her life, mum still does yoga and regularly speaks to German children in Berlin on Zoom about her early life. The President of Germany thanked her by letter at her 99th birthday and recently again on her 100th birthday, when she also received a letter from the King and Queen.

Despite all that dislocation and despair, I am stunned by what my mother has achieved.

This article is based on an interview Eva gave to Bridget Galton of the Hampstead & Highgate Express after publishing her book last year aged 99.

RECLAIMING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

This month the AJR is holding a series of online events for people interested in Reclaiming European Citizenship. During each event the respective embassy will explain the process involved and answer questions submitted in advance.

HUNGARY – 5 November at 3.30pm.
Zoom: <https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82916975193>.
Meeting ID: 829 1697 5193

GERMANY – 13 November at 10am.
Zoom: <https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81740429638>.
Meeting ID: 817 4042 9638

SLOVAKIA – 14 November at 2pm. Zoom:
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88357993939>.
Meeting ID: 883 5799 3939

CZECH REPUBLIC – 12 November at 11.30am. Zoom: <https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88693217311>.
Meeting ID: 886 9321 7311

AUSTRIA – 13 November at 3pm.
Zoom: [Hhttps://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82622789271](https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82622789271)
Meeting ID: 826 2278 9271

Each session will be recorded (except for the Slovak session) and made available to AJR members on request. To submit a question please email nextgens@ajr.org.uk making it clear which embassy it is for.

Harwich – still a safe haven

Judith Hayman recently took part in an AJR-organised trip to Harwich, the first destination in the UK for many of the children who arrived by Kindertransport.

With antisemitism on the rise it is easy to feel that everyone hates us.

Last week's AJR trip to Harwich was a reminder of how fortunate we are to live in such a tolerant country. From 2 December 1938 to the end of March 1939 the good people of Harwich welcomed 10,000 children, mostly Jewish, who fled the Nazis to find safety in the UK. And in September 2024 members of AJR, many of whom were children of the Kindertransport, were greeted by the Town Crier and the High Steward of Harwich, Sue Daish.

Sue, who acted as our guide, and fellow directors of the Harwich Kindertransport Memorial and Learning Trust, HKMLT, are determined not to forget the Kindertransport they welcomed and sheltered in the Dovercourt Bay Holiday Camp over 85 years ago. There were information boards throughout the small town giving information on the young refugees.



AJR members at Harwich Town station

Most impressively, in September 2022 the HKMLT, in conjunction with AJR, unveiled a bronze statue of five children descending a ship's gangplank. The statue is called 'Safe Haven'. As well as being a reminder of the children who found safety here, it is also a memorial to the children who perished under the Nazis. Movingly we heard that the statue will be the focus of Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations for Harwich, Ipswich and Colchester in perpetuity.

Sue walked the group over to a park bench with recordings of the rescued children. We also visited the ornate Electric Palace. Built in 1911 it is one of the world's oldest and least altered purpose-built cinemas. The organisers had thoughtfully installed a display about Nobel prize-winning immunologist Leslie Brent – who left Germany after Kristallnacht to find

safe haven in Harwich.

The same warmth was evident when we were welcomed to the Harwich Museum by curator David Whittle. We were shown films of life in the specially converted Dovercourt holiday camp and learnt about life there.

From there it was a short stroll to the station. Greater Anglia had provided complimentary train tickets and representatives from the company had accompanied the party from Liverpool Street station. The representatives were there too to welcome a tired but stimulated group on their return journey.

The efficient organisation by Karen Diamond and Nicole Valens made this an unforgettable day for all.



A GREAT TIME FOR TEA

More than 20 first generation Holocaust refugees and survivors stood together in vigil and to sing the Hatikvah during our annual tea party, when almost 180 AJR members came together to celebrate their heritage.

The AJR was delighted to welcome record numbers of 2nd and 3rd generation members to this year's party, which was held at Stone X Stadium on 29 September. Entertainment was yet again provided by the Singing Waiters, who singled out a few AJR members to individually serenade and, as their finale, led a joyous conga around the room. All agreed that the event was a great success, enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

AN EMOTIONAL VISIT TO GERMANY

The atrocities committed in Israel last October and the subsequent surge in Antisemitism has prompted many descendants of Holocaust survivors to rekindle their heritage. These include the family of the late Inge Nathan, who was a much-loved member of the AJR.

British members of the Nathan family in Langenberg's Nathan Square, named in honour of their ancestors



On 19 August three generations of Nathans made a 24-hour trip to the small town of Langenberg, 45 minutes from Dusseldorf. It was there that we were able to visit Nathan-Platz (Nathan Square), re-named 35 years ago to honour the memory of Betty and Adolph Nathan.

When their grandsons Tom and Dennis first planned the trip they expected a very low key, private visit. However, such is the love and respect for the family, it became so much more.

On Monday evening the group was hosted by a representative of the Mayor's Office and the Velbert alliance 'Active Against Antisemitism'. During the dinner Wilfried Schmidt, a teacher, historian and friend of the family, gave a slide presentation of photographs and information about eight generations of Nathans who had lived in Langenberg since 1797. Mannes Nathan was the first of the line and was a butcher, like most of the subsequent generations.

The following morning there was a special ceremony in the square attended by Velbert's Mayor Dirk Lukrafka, members of various groups working for inclusion and against antisemitism, and local press. Tributes were made by the Mayor and the family about Betty and Adolph, who were proud Germans. Adolph had served as a soldier in WW1, Betty was very charitable, giving milk every Friday to the poor and the sick, from their own cattle.

Mayor Lukrafka said that the town will always remember Betty and

Adolf Nathan, who were fine, upstanding Germans, but were murdered by the Nazis, and their sons Ernst and Walter. The brothers returned to their former homeland in 1945 as British soldiers: "Overshadowed by the loss of their parents, the Langenberg of their childhood no longer existed. It is up to us to always keep the memory of them in mind". He expressly thanked all of us for our visit: "You have chosen the path of remembrance and dialogue to deal with the past – a dialogue with each other, but also with the people of the region of Velbert today."

Tom spoke, in German, about the sadness that his grandparents never got to know their grandchildren, and that it was especially poignant that he and Dennis had returned with Adolph and Betty's great grandchildren, and with Jacob, who is their great, great grandson. Tom spoke with pride that there are now more Nathans thriving today in Israel, the UK and USA, than prior to the Nazi regime.

Tributes were also made by the granddaughter of Annegret Bluhm, who had been a good friend of Betty Nathan's

and had taken her prayer book and Kiddush cups for safekeeping before her deportation, and which she was able to return to Ernest and Walter after the war. Dr. Christian Wagner-Birmes from the group 'Zeitlos' (Timeless) recounted the story of a 92-year-old woman from Langenberg, who not only remembered Betty Nathan well, but who, as a young child, had been given a glass bowl by Betty, who was aware that she admired it every time she visited with her mother. The lady is now in a nursing home, and the bowl still sits on her windowsill today.

None of the group had expected such great interest in the history of the Nathan family eight decades after the tragic end of their grandparents: "Beyond all expectations," he said, and that summed it up. We all left Germany proud to be Jews and proud to be Nathans.

Annette Nathan

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NORTHERN IRELAND'S SAVED AND SPURNED

Noel Russell shares insights from his new book which reveals how hundreds of Viennese Jews tried to escape to Northern Ireland on the eve of the Holocaust but were rejected by the Stormont government.

The applicants had learned of an official jobs creation scheme which offered grants and factory premises to employers who could create work for Ulster's 91,000 male unemployed.

When a two-paragraph news item about it appeared in the only Jewish newspaper in Vienna, the *Zionistische Rundschau*, in August 1938, hundreds immediately wrote to the Ministry of Commerce in Belfast seeking entry.

Almost all of the 730 people named in the letters were rejected, and at least 125 of these men, women and children were murdered by the Nazis. Fewer than one hundred were admitted, but these opened factories, some of which employed several hundred people for decades, mainly in the clothing and leather goods industries.



Alfred Neumann Group Photograph, Newtownards, taken from the Northern Whig 10 Aug 1938

Based on extensive archival research, unpublished family memoirs and letters, and interviews with Holocaust survivors and their descendants, the book details the family experiences of both 'the saved' and 'the spurned'.

A key figure in the story is an Austrian Jewish businessman Alfred Neumann, who brought out 70 Jews from Nazi Austria to Northern Ireland. He was treated as a 'real Ulsterman' by the Ministry of Commerce when he brought six skilled Jewish workers from Vienna to open a factory in Newtownards, County Down, in August 1938.

But by early 1939 he had been sacked over 'differences with staff', which he claimed were unreasonable complaints about the food provided. He was detained as an 'enemy alien' in December 1939.

He was among 1200 detainees on the *Arandora Star*, which was sunk by a German U-boat on 2 July 1940 with the loss of 800 men, en route to Canada. The survivors, astonishingly, were put on another ship, the *Dunera*, within days and almost sunk by another U-boat in the Irish Sea en route to Australia. They were robbed, assaulted, and held in terrible conditions on board. A board

of inquiry awarded them compensation for their terrible treatment.

The book also describes the hair-raising experiences of some Jewish people who had family members admitted to Ulster.

A young factory owner, Otto Goldberger, was saved from Dachau by a Nazi school friend, and made it to Derry. Ernst Weiniger was arrested after trying to secure an exit visa on the black market; he was tortured by the Gestapo in Berlin but was released after a year, and survived the war in Vienna,

Ernestine Kessler, whose husband Leopold was murdered in Poland, escaped a Polish ghetto and made it back to Vienna. She also survived; their daughter Gertrude came to Northern Ireland as a Kindertransport evacuee in 1938.

Others who applied under the New Industries act in 1938 were not so lucky. Alfred Bermann, aged sixty-four, sought an entry permit for his son Otto, aged twenty-nine, who had been imprisoned for six months in a concentration camp.

'I beg you very much to be so kind to procure him a post anywhere and to render

JOIN AJR AT MARCH OF THE LIVING 2025

Come and join the first-ever AJR delegation for March of the Living UK 2025, a four-day educational journey in Poland, where you will experience the unforgettable March of the Living International event that brings people from all over the world on Yom Hashoah, to march from Auschwitz to Birkenau.

The dates are 21 – 24 April 2025. The all-inclusive prices (incl. flights, accommodation in 4* hotels, all kosher food and the programme) are: Student & Youth Movement (age 18 – 22) £499; Young Adult (age 23 – 35) £899, and Adult £2099.

We will have an AJR bus. For those interested in bringing their children, please note: March of the Living encourages participants to travel on age-appropriate buses. If you would like your children under 35 to be on the same bus as you, they will need to pay the adult

price. Also note, everyone stays in the same hotel together and can meet up in the evenings. Participants travel to Auschwitz for the actual March on their bus, but then are free to join other people (family/friends/AJR delegation) for the March itself.

March of the Living UK inform us that interest is high for 2025 so please email nextgens@ajr.org.uk as soon as possible if you would like to participate. You can also find more information, including the itinerary, on www.marchoftheliving.org.uk.



Peggy McNeill
in uniform



Otto Bermann



Otto Kisch



Hertha Kisch



Tom Finnegan

it possible for him to obtain the permission, for this would be the only possibility to get him free,' Alfred wrote. 'The unhappy old parents of this young man beg you very much to be so kind to grant their request and are waiting for your kind answer.' He received no reply.

Alfred Bermann, and his wife Mathilde, were transported to Theresienstadt in July 1942. Alfred died there in September, and Mathilde was deported to Treblinka the same month and murdered there. Their son Otto survived the war and died in Canada in July 1964.

Otto Kisch, aged forty-nine, applied for visas for himself, his wife Hertha, aged forty-two, and daughter Vera, aged eight. He said he had worked in the shoe and slipper trade for thirty years and could found a slipper factory or work for one. They were refused.

The family were deported to Riga, Latvia on 1 January 1942 and moved to the nearby concentration camp of Jungfernhof. Otto was murdered in March 1942. Highly unusually, his wife Hertha and daughter Vera survived. After the war, Hertha applied from New York for compensation to the Austrian government.

Northern Irish activists also lobbied tirelessly for Jews to be admitted to Northern Ireland.

In the spring of 1938, the Belfast Jewish Refugee Committee (BJRC), chaired by Rabbi Jacob Shachter, was set up by the local Jewish community. It was soon joined by a second group of activists, the Belfast Committee for German Refugees (BCGR), and another group in Derry.

Two young women, Peggy Fink (née Loewenthal), from a prosperous Jewish linen-making family, and Peggy McNeill, a Quaker, became key members of the BCGR, supported Jewish refugees when they arrived, and defended them at internment tribunals.

Peggy McNeill joined twelve female refugees from Germany and Austria who had been interned in Armagh women's prison as 'enemy aliens' for two months in June 1940.

Twenty-eight male refugees, several of them Jewish Austrians and Germans, were also arrested in Northern Ireland and held in Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast. Some were deported to camps on the Isle of Man.

In Derry, Professor Thomas Finnegan,

a classics don at Magee College and his wife Agnes, both left-wing pacifists, played key roles in helping bring refugees to the city.

During one visit to Berlin in 1937, Thomas secretly went to visit an opponent of the regime. He knocked on his door, which was flung open by German soldiers. Shocked, he made an excuse that he had the wrong address and left.

Hubert Butler, from Kilkenny, one of the greatest Irish essayists, wrote about his experiences at a Quaker centre in Vienna. He later brought Jewish refugees to his home.

The book also describes the efforts of émigrés to save their trapped relatives in Vienna, and the major contribution the refugees made to Ulster's economic, social and cultural life.

The Saved and the Spurned: Northern Ireland, Vienna and the Holocaust by Noel Russell, is published by New Island Books.

Noel Russell will be talking to AJR members over Zoom on Tuesday 11 February 2025. Watch the back page for details.

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REVIEW

JEWISH REFUGEEES AND THE BRITISH NURSING PROFESSION: A GENDERED OPPORTUNITY

By Jane Brooks

Manchester University Press

Jewish refugees played an invaluable part in filling the shoes of nurses during wartime, bringing culture and education at a difficult time for recruitment of British staff in hospitals. These new workers fled from the Nazis as persecution increased during the 1930s. They came over on the Kindertransport or on domestic visas and later sought more fulfilling work. Some had been doctors in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia where women were more accepted in medicine than here but were now not allowed to continue. So nursing provided a home for women forced to leave relatives behind and a means of support and training. At the time it was an unpopular role with British women with harsh conditions, arduous work and discipline so hospitals had been suffering from chronic shortages.

This was at a time when few professions other than nursing or teaching were widely open to women so nursing

provided a means of escape and financial independence. But no sooner had the new recruits settled when the international situation deteriorated as France fell in June 1940. In the paranoia that followed, mass internment was introduced which, while mainly not affecting them directly, still meant they were dismissed from their posts and livelihoods. This was especially true if working near the coast or military operations or, in one case, Croydon airport. But they mostly were soon back in harness, particularly as they were needed to replace British nurses who took up military posts. They enhanced their skills including learning midwifery and many joined hospitals which were more sympathetic to overseas nurses. These included the London Hospital and Royal Free Hospital and those supported by London County Council (LCC).

Nurses experienced antisemitism but some matrons were incredibly kind and went out of their way to help. As the dreadful fate of their families became increasingly known they experienced deep trauma which was not always dealt with sympathetically. Some were even involved in the nursing and rehabilitation of concentration camp victims. They suffered from survivor's guilt and the book recalls a suicide. Author Jane Brooks, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Health Sciences

at Manchester University, examined the impact these nurses made. She has consulted letters, articles and archives as well as testimonies, including some from AJR members who were nurses. She explains this is the first major study of the subject. Most of the nurses had at least one parent murdered, many both as well as siblings and other family members.

When war ended they could have left the profession but most chose to stay on, bringing skills to the vocation and fulfilment to themselves. Like British women, many married and had children and often preferred less restrictive jobs. At the time nurses were largely female and subservient to male doctors but things gradually changed. In 1948 the National Health Service was born and as time went on nursing became more graduate-orientated with refugee nurses continuing their invaluable role.

This is an academic book using extensive sources with conclusions at the end of each chapter. With some modesty the author recognises the limitations of a study written so long after events happened using narratives from about 20 nurses when there were perhaps 2000. But her research and perception shines a bright light on this very interesting subject.
Janet Weston

LOOKING FOR?

WILLIAM HURWITZ

Nigel Thorpe is researching the life of William Hurwitz, who served in WW1 and was very active in AJEX. After the war he set up a leather business which took him to Germany in the 1930's, where he became very concerned at the rise of Nazism and helped a number of fellow Jews to escape to England. Sadly, William was killed on 17 September 1940 when the ship he was on travelling to Canada was torpedoed. Among the condolences his family received is a letter from the then Chief Rabbi. Nigel is hoping to find descendants of any refugees who William helped.

nigeljthorpe@gmail.com



VILLA BEER

As an icon of Viennese modernism, Villa Beer will shortly be opened to the public (www.villabeer.com). Built in 1930 by Josef Frank and Oskar Wlach for the family of Julius and Margarethe Beer, the house was located at Wenzgasse 12, close to the synagogue in Eitelberggasse. The Villa Beer Foundation is researching stories about the house and its occupants and would love to hear from anyone whose ancestors lived in Vienna's 13th district at that time.

haus@villabeer.wien



TO LIFE!

**From Memory to Canvas:
celebrating the life and work
of Stanislaw Brunstein**

WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2024 at 1PM



Oaks Lane Reform Synagogue
Newbury Park IG2 7P
Closest underground station:
Newbury Park (Central line)

Pre-booking essential



karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

A TALE OF TWO HUNGARIANS



Some of the works of László Moholy-Nagy



Some of the many faces who have recorded Joseph Kosma's much loved classic, *Les Feuilles Mortes* (Autumn Leaves)

Janos Fisher introduces us to two of his fellow countrymen who made a great impact in their respective fields.

László Moholy-Nagy's name at birth was László Weisz. He was born in 1895 and changed his name to **Moholy**, after the name of the town where he spent part of his youth, and to **Nagy** after an uncle, out of gratitude for the support he received from him.

In 1915 Laszlo enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army. He was injured on the Russian front and convalesced in Budapest. In 1919 he moved to Vienna and in 1920 to Berlin, where he met and married the photographer, Lucia Schulz.

In 1923 he was invited by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus in Weimar. With Gropius, the founder of Bauhaus, he collaborated on 14 books, and was instrumental in encouraging his students not to be intimidated by tradition or by specialists' opinions or by the 'voice of authority'.

Moholy-Nagy became photography editor of a Dutch avant-garde magazine in 1927; he also designed stage sets for opera and theatre productions, mounted exhibitions, wrote articles and made films. In 1931 he married for a second time: an actress and scriptwriter,

Sibylle Pietzsch, who collaborated with him on films; they had two children.

In 1935, after the Nazis had closed down the 'decadent' Bauhaus, he moved with his family to London, where he became part of a group of émigré artists in Hampstead. They settled in Golders Green, and he made a living by working on various projects for John Betjeman and Alexander Korda.

From London he moved to Chicago, to become the director of the new Bauhaus. This only lasted a year and thereafter he made a living from commercial design work. He became an American citizen, continued to produce artworks and to teach until his death in 1946.

His lasting legacy is the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Hungary. In 2003 the Moholy-Nagy Foundation Inc., was established, as a source of information about his work and life.

In 2006 the Guggenheim Museum in New York held an exhibition of his work in painting, film, photography and sculpture and, in 2019, a documentary on his life was released.

He produced and worked in many different fields, making a great impact in them and, like his compatriot Arthur Koestler, can truly be called a Renaissance Man.

Les Feuilles Mortes (Autumn Leaves) is

a song which you have undoubtedly heard and (like me) found it beautiful. It was composed by **Joseph Kosma**, who was originally from Budapest and called Jozsef Kozma; he was born in 1905 and died in France in 1969.

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy was a relative of his, as was Georg Solti the conductor; they were both Jewish, as was Kosma.

After secondary school Kosma attended the Academy of Music in Budapest and later the Liszt Academy, where he received diplomas in composition and conducting.

In 1933 he and his wife emigrated to France. Here the popular poet, Jacques Prévert introduced him to the famous film director, Jean Renoir. Kosma composed music for some of Prévert's poems and for famous films by Jean Renoir, such as *La Grande Illusion*, *La Bête Humaine* and *La Règle du Jeu*. These films are still played in art cinemas today and he composed for many other films as well, such as *Les Portes de la Nuit* and *Huis Clos*.

During the war he was placed under house arrest in France and forced to compose using the name of others. In this Prévert helped him.

Les Feuilles Mortes has been sung by, amongst others, Frank Sinatra, Edith Piaf and the most popular interpreter, Yves Montand.

Older Jews and the Holocaust

A new project by The Wiener Holocaust Library, Claims Conference and US Holocaust Memorial Museum explores the little-known fates of older Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. It is introduced here by Christine Schmidt (Wiener Holocaust Library); Joanna Sliwa (Claims Conference), and Elizabeth Anthony (US Holocaust Memorial Museum).

During the Holocaust, older Jews were among the first to be targeted for death or deportation to killing centres, in similar ways to other vulnerable populations, like children. Yet while research, education and commemoration on children and the Holocaust is thriving, there has been very little focus on the specific fates and experiences of older Jews.

The project will result in a published collection of new research, which will be released by Wayne State University Press in spring 2026. Chapters focus on older Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai and Kobe and who came to Britain and documented the experiences of their fellow refugees in the Otto Schiff Home. Other contributors examine elderly Jews who endured the Theresienstadt and Warsaw ghettos, and those who fled to and survived in the Soviet Union. Finally the chapters turn toward the postwar period, examining the lives of older survivors who navigated the immediate postwar period in Displaced Persons camps in occupied Germany and who lived in postwar Vienna, as well as those who filed claims for compensation in postwar Hungary. The authors also explore the work of the Jewish Relief Unit, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Malben, and the Claims Conference to support older survivors.

A preview of most of the volume was



Older Jews were among the first to be persecuted during the Holocaust

provided at a well-attended, engaging international Symposium held at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC on 9 September 2024. All sessions were recorded and are viewable here: <https://bit.ly/OlderJewsSymposium>. On 5 December 2024, Prof Dan Stone (Royal Holloway) will provide a public keynote lecture for a closed student workshop on the topic, online and at The Wiener Holocaust Library: <https://bit.ly/StoneKeynote>. The workshop will engage the next generation of researchers on the importance of using the category of age to analyse the experiences of Jewish and other persecutees, in particular older people.

Finally, in autumn 2025, The Wiener Holocaust Library will stage a temporary exhibition, *Older Jews and the Holocaust*, to be launched in November and on show through to April 2026. The exhibition will feature photographs, diaries, letters, and other artefacts that explore the fates of elderly Jews as well as their own responses to persecution – and their hopes for the future. A series of exhibition events will explore different themes raised by the project, including reflections on care for ageing survivors today provided by the Association of Jewish Refugees, the Claims Conference and other partners.

The project is supported by The

Wiener Holocaust Library; the Holocaust Research Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London; the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Ernest Hecht Charitable Foundation; the Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future Foundation, or EVZ; and the German Federal Ministry of Finance.

PLAQUE AT GORDONSTOUN

On **Sunday 26 January** the AJR will unveil a plaque at the renowned public school Gordonstoun to honour the founding Headmaster Kurt Hahn.

The event will also mark HMD and the school's own Day of Solidarity.

If you have a connection to the school and would like to attend this event please contact the AJR office asap.

JOSEPH PEREIRA

(ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years) is now available for DIY repairs and general maintenance.

No job too small, very reasonable rates.

Please telephone
07966 887 485.

OBITUARY

Judith HEYMANN

Born: 1 September 1935, Danzig

Died: 5 February 2024, Cheltenham



Judith came to the UK from Danzig as a very small child in September 1939, fleeing with her mother to escape the threat of Nazi persecution. They gave away all their belongings and their beloved Alsatian dog in order to escape. All Judith had with her was a small suitcase of clothing and her favourite doll.

Judith and her mum went to Berlin to try to get a visa. By chance, they met an official who told them to get onto a train immediately and not to stop. Judith often recalled that, as the official pushed them onto the carriage, she lost her doll on the platform and became very distressed. This memory remained with her throughout her life. Judith and her mum stayed on the train and made it just in time to get the last boat to England.

Judith's father had arrived in the UK earlier in September 1939. Her brother, Siegfried, was also in England as he had been able to flee on the Kindertransport. Now that the family

were reunited, they could start rebuilding their lives. However, not long after arriving Judith and her brother were evacuated from London and her father was interned on the Isle of Man.

Judith and Siegfried were unsettled and their mum collected them as she could not bear to be separated from them. They all stayed in the countryside, where it was safer, but the family struggled to adapt after their more comfortable life back in Danzig. One day, on her way to London, Judith's mum passed through and fell in love with Cheltenham, where the family eventually settled and fell in love with the town so decided to stay there.

Judith was always very creative and went to art college to study weaving. She later followed other creative professions such as photography, window dressing, and finally work in the shoe trade. While at college she had the pleasure of meeting Princess Elizabeth, our late Queen. She curtsied and proudly handed Princess Elizabeth a bunch of flowers, before realising that the heads had all fallen off! "I'm ever so sorry," Judith said. "Don't worry, these things happen," Princess Elizabeth replied. Judith often found herself in interesting and amusing

situations and always had wonderful and engaging stories to tell.

Judith was a collector of many things; ceramics, shoes, jewellery, ornaments, you name it! She created a lot of art for her home and spent as much time as she could in her treasured garden. Judith loved going to the theatre with her circle of friends who soon became integrated into the family. She was the type of person who brought everyone together. Judith never had a lot of money but had a wonderful life with her mum and beloved younger sister Eva, with whom she lived throughout her life and shared an incredibly special bond. Judith will be remembered always for her strong mindedness, her sense of humour and her generosity.

An ode to my sister Judith

We travelled half way around the world,

Saw ancient and modern sights and enjoyed many.

Fate took its hand and old age came. As the saying goes "it doesn't come alone"

I must say my goodbyes for now, But we will meet again.

Eva Heymann

SAD LOSSES

The AJR is deeply saddened to learn of the recent passing of three of our best known and loved first-generation members.

Retired architect **Eli Abt** made the headlines five years ago, at the age of 90, when he completed a sponsored skydive to mark 80 years since his escape from Berlin via Kindertransport.

In 2021, at the age of 96, **Lily Ebert BEM** co-authored a best-selling book with her grandson detailing the life she built for herself after the war and her search for the family of the soldier who liberated her.

Albert Lester, who was miraculously reunited with his parents after WW2, having travelled to England via Kindertransport, was dedicated to preserving the record of the Holocaust,



Eli Abt



Lily Ebert BEM



Albert Lester

including being the main speaker at our Kristallnacht ceremony last year.

Full obituaries will appear in the *AJR Journal* over the coming months.

IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR
Monday 4 November	2.00pm	Hampstead Lynn Bradley will talk about Leonard Bernstein	Ros Hart
Monday 4 November	2.30pm	North Manchester Games afternoon	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 5 November	12.30pm	North Lancashire Lunch	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 5 November	12.30pm	Birmingham	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 5 November	2.00pm	South Herts	Ros Hart
Monday 11 November	1.00pm	Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 11 November	2.00pm	Bromley	Ros Hart
Tuesday 12 November	12.30pm	Yorkshire	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 12 November	12 noon	East Midlands	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 12 November	12.30pm	North London	Ros Hart
Wednesday 13 November	11.00am TBC	Sheffield	Michal Mocton
Monday 18 November	12.30pm	Enfield	Ros Hart
Tuesday 26 November	10.30am	Ealing	Ros Hart
Tuesday 26 November	11.30am	Wembley	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 27 November	12.30pm	Newcastle Pre Chanukah lunch	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 28 November	11.30am	Central London	Karen Diamond

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 4 November @ 4pm	Film: <i>Passion Callas</i> – the story of the renowned opera singer Maria Callas https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89750769175	Meeting ID: 897 5076 9175
Monday 11 November @ 4pm	Film: <i>Fabergé: A Life of its Own</i>, the story of the world's most famous artist jeweller https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85456875529	Meeting ID 854 5687 5529
Tuesday 12 November @ 4pm	Ben Barkow – My life in poetry https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86334095780	Meeting ID: 863 3409 5780
Wednesday 13 November @ 4pm	Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>INCENDIARY</i> by Chris Cleave https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85236463881	Meeting ID: 852 3646 3881
Tuesday 19 November @ 4pm	Judith Kasriel – The Soviet pianist and composer Dmitri Shostakovich https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87399770341	Meeting ID: 873 9977 0341
Monday 25 November @ 4pm	Jill Culiner – A Contrary Journey with Velvel Zbarzher, Bard https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81106681908	Meeting ID: 811 0668 1908
Tuesday 26 November @ 4pm	Lynne Bradley – The Jewish origins of West Side Story https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89555459590	Meeting ID: 8955 5459 590
Wednesday 27 November @ 4pm	David Barnett – Champion of all England: The Story of Daniel Mendoza https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89939732062	Meeting ID: 899 3973 2062

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 Mon @ 10.30am	Get Fit where you Sit (seated yoga)	https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Every Tues @ 11.00am	Shelley's Exercise class	https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622	Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622

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WITH US



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