

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Reflections on Austria

Like many of those whose parents were Jewish refugees from Vienna, I have a distinctly mixed attitude to Austria. As a boy, I learnt of the terror that had descended on my parents and their families when Hitler annexed Austria to the Reich in March 1938, of the jubilation of the Viennese, and of the despoliation and humiliation of the Jews. But I also learnt to appreciate Vienna's charm and, in more recent years, the efforts of Austrians to face up to their country's guilty past.

My maternal grandfather was one of the Jews forced to scrub the pavements of Vienna's streets in the first rush of anti-semitic excesses; he hid his damaged hands from my mother afterwards. My uncle was on one of the first transports of Jews to Dachau; a German SA-man commiserated with his group because their guard was an Austrian, who proceeded to prove the German right by beating a Jew to death on the train. My paternal grandfather had his firm 'aryanised', and the 'Ariseur' made sure that he was deported east, never to return. My mother left Vienna for London on an illegally obtained passport, but not before the concierge of the building where my parents lived had denounced her to the Gestapo (fortunately too late); when she returned to Vienna after the war, that same concierge greeted her with every appearance of delight.

So I give little credence to the image of Austria as the 'first victim of Nazi aggression', even though that phrase was used by the wartime Allies in the Moscow Declaration of 1943, when they announced their intention of restoring an independent Austria. Post-war Austria, however, traded successfully on that image, suppressing the substantial degree of its citizens' active participation and passive complicity in Nazi crimes. Austria cherished its status as a neutral country, cultivating its image as an oasis of stability and peace amidst the tensions of the Cold War. It almost seemed



Stephansdom, Vienna

to be aspiring to the status of a second Switzerland: the Austrian Schilling became known as the 'Alpendollar', symbol of a tranquil and inoffensive Alpine haven of prosperity buttressed by a reassuringly strong currency.

Having rid itself of its Jews, the creative cultural leaven throughout Central Europe, Austria seemed to be approaching Swiss levels of provinciality, as even its scandals demonstrate. Whereas the twilight of the Hapsburgs gave us the grand romantic suicide pact of Mayerling (1889), which saw the death of a crown prince, and the rip-roaring case of Colonel Alfred Redl (1913), a closet homosexual who was blackmailed into passing military secrets to the Russians and committed suicide when discovered, present-day Austria seems capable only of sordid and inverted domestic scandals like the Kampusch and Fritzl cases.

For several decades after the war, Austria's self-image rested on a feat of collective amnesia. For there were three successor states to the pre-war Nazi Reich, one of which, West Germany, acknowledged its historical responsibility, while two, East Germany and Austria, did not. East

Germany pronounced itself a 'workers' and peasants' state', by definition 'anti-fascist', and renounced any relation to Nazi crimes. Austria, separated from Germany in 1945, came to see itself first as a small, defenceless country occupied and divided into zones by the four victorious Allied Powers, then, after regaining full sovereignty under the State Treaty of 1955, as a demilitarised state outside both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and as the easternmost outpost of freedom and democracy in Central Europe.

But Austria was not just another small country that had suffered under Nazi rule. Of under 7 million Austrians, some 700,000 had been members of the Nazi Party and 1.2 million had served in German units in the war, while Austrians were notoriously over-represented in the SS, the camps and the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. Austria remained broadly loyal to Hitler till the end, notably failing to produce a significant resistance movement. Denazification, which was carried out by the Austrians themselves from 1946, was very patchy: only 27 university professors were dismissed, though the universities had been notoriously infested with Nazi sympathisers.

As in the interwar years, post-war Austria was divided almost equally between the right-wing People's Party and the Socialists, forcing both parties to woo the initially disenfranchised ex-Nazis, whose votes could decide elections. In 1947 a law was passed differentiating 'less' incriminated Nazis, 500,000 of whom were amnestied in 1948, from the 'more' incriminated, of whom over 40,000 were amnestied by 1956. The ex-Nazis were reintegrated into Austrian society, and Austria's role in the Nazi years was conveniently forgotten. Austria settled down to a prolonged period of coalition government, peaceful social consensus and unprecedented prosperity.

Austria's politicians had not forgotten the disastrous events of the interwar period,

continued overleaf

REFLECTIONS ON AUSTRIA *continued from page 1*

when irreconcilable conflicts between the predecessors of the People's Party and the Socialists had led to civil strife and had fatally undermined Austria's ability to resist Hitler. After the war, when neither party could govern on the basis of a stable, long-term majority, they decided to govern together, in a grand coalition that lasted until 1966. Throughout the public administration, which included the very sizable public sector of the economy, the system known as *Proporz* was introduced, under which jobs were divided up equally between the adherents of the two big parties, at all levels from director to night watchman. Though open to corruption and abuse, this system of two-party co-operation did provide the underpinning for the remarkable growth of the Austrian economy, for the resolution of social and economic conflicts by negotiation and compromise, and for the emergence of the stable and successful, if overly complacent, Austria of the 1980s.

The 1980s appear in retrospect as a watershed decade in post-war Austrian history. For with the election of the controversial figure of Kurt Waldheim as president and with the emergence of the extremist demagogue Jörg Haider as leader of the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), both in 1986, Austria was forced to confront its Nazi past. This, combined with the debates provoked by the fiftieth anniversaries of the Anschluss (1988) and the end of the war (1995), led to a re-evaluation of attitudes to the past across most of mainstream Austrian opinion, though it took a spell as a coalition partner in government, from February 2002, to puncture the FPÖ bubble.

Over the past 20 years, the entire discourse surrounding the Nazi period in Austria has changed. In 1987 it was still possible for the leading journalist Thomas

Chorherr to publish a history of Vienna in which Jews were airbrushed out of the chapter on the Nazi years and in which the ecstatic acclaim showered on Hitler on the Heldenplatz in 1938 was downplayed by being compared to the crowds who greeted Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia on the Mariahilferstraße in 1954 (self-irony not being Chorherr's strong point). At that time, many Austrians were indignantly decrying the anti-Waldheim campaign as an attempt by American Jewry to dictate their choice of president, while studiously averting their gaze from the implications of Waldheim's attempts to gloss over his wartime record.

But after the *Gedenkjahr* 1988 came Chancellor Franz Vranitzky's formal statement before the Nationalrat in 1991 acknowledging Austria's share in responsibility for the suffering visited on individuals and groups by the Nazis, the creation of the Nationalfonds in 1995 in recognition of Austria's obligation to compensate the victims of Nazism, and the establishment of a commission of historians in 1998 to investigate the looting of Jewish assets. Both Vranitzky, in 1993, and President Thomas Klestil, in 2004, chose to make strongly worded statements about Austrian guilt in Jerusalem, a location whose significance could not be overlooked.

That such views are now representative of a new mainstream consensus in Austria, which no longer denies Austrian complicity in the Third Reich and which questions the suppression of that complicity in the post-war decades, is demonstrated by the increasing marginalisation of voices from the unreconstructed right. For example, the controversial remarks made during the anniversary year 2005 by two FPÖ Bundesrat members, John Gudenus, who appeared to question the existence of the gas

chambers, and Siegfried Kampl, who appeared to equate the sufferings of Austrians subject to post-war denazification measures with those of the victims of the Third Reich, provoked overwhelmingly critical reactions across a broad spectrum of mainstream opinion. Twenty years earlier, that opinion would have divided far more equally.

One can also point to the many initiatives by institutions like schools and municipalities that have invited back their former Jewish students and citizens respectively, as an apology and an attempt at reconciliation. A 'Night of Silence' was organised on the seventieth anniversary of the Anschluss by the Catholic youth organisation and the action group 'A Letter to the Stars'; on 12 March 2008, 80,000 candles were lit on the Heldenplatz in memory of the 80,000 Austrian victims of Nazism, mostly Jews, and a list of their names was projected onto four white screens in a ceremonial act of commemoration that lasted until dawn.

Anthony Grenville

In my article 'From police chief in Berlin to refugee in Britain' in the May issue of the journal, I drew for some of the detail on Joachim Rott, *Bernhard Weiß, 1880 Berlin - 1951 London* (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2008). I am glad to acknowledge this helpful source. AG

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY — JULY

Wed 2 Bridget McGing reads from *My Father's Roses*, a memoir of a Bohemian-Jewish family. Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

Mon 7 'End of term': Informal evening with readings in English and German and refreshments Club 43

Thur 17 Dennis Hart, 'My Life as a Fleet Street Photographic Journalist' B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Kenton Synagogue Hall. 8.15 pm. Tel Tom Heinemann on 07973 137 718

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360

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How Austrians learned to love ... democracy

The Austrian Ambassador to the UK, Dr Gabriele Matzner-Hölzer, told a packed meeting of Club 43 that Austria was now 'a normal country' - despite 'another bout of Austria-bashing', especially in the UK media, over the Kamputsch and Fritzl affairs. Speaking on the subject '70 Years after the Anschluss: How the Austrians Learned to Love ... Democracy', the Ambassador pointed out that Austria had learned some painful lessons since the Second World War. Among the strengths of present-day Austrian society were, she said, the country's economic success,

its independence from Germany, and the modernised role of the Church.

Speaking to Club 43 a week earlier, the organisation's Chairman, Hans Seelig, discussed the works of Chopin, dispelling much of what he described as the nonsense written, and filmed, about the composer. Having refuted the commonly-held view that Chopin had written music in the Polish, as opposed to the wider European tradition, Hans stressed Chopin's craftsmanship and the enormous technical complexity of his works. Chopin was 'no dreary Romantic', he concluded. **HS**

Memories of my aunt, Dr Else Borchard

Ten kilometres upstream from Heidelberg, among the mountains of the Odenwald, is the small town of Neckargemünd. From 1934 to 1936 I spent all my summer holidays in Neckargemünd travelling on my own from England with a German passport not yet marked with a J. I stayed with my aunt, Dr Else Borchard, who was the local doctor and who lived and practised in a house painted bright red and sited, to my great delight, exactly opposite the railway station.



work at the Samariterhaus in Heidelberg before settling down in general practice in Neckargemünd. She specialised in cardiography and was quick to recognise the significance for the general practitioner of the new technology of electrocardiography, in the practical application of which she was one of the first in Germany. She was strongly encouraged in this development by

Heidelberg University, where she had continued to give part-time service. In 1937 she finally had to give up her practice under pressure from the Nazis and spent a final year in Germany running a small practice in Heidelberg while working at the university, assisting Professor Albert Fraenkel, a heart specialist of international repute, and lecturing to post-graduate students.

On arrival in England in 1938 my aunt, like so many others, had to be content with doing domestic work as her professional qualifications were not then recognised in the UK. But, following internment on the Isle of Man in 1940, she was asked to take charge of fellow internees, for whose wellbeing her qualifications were apparently considered acceptable. After her release, and in the light of a shortage of doctors, she worked in a couple of hospitals in eastern England before settling down as resident house physician at the New Sussex Hospital for Women and Children in Hove, where her knowledge of electrocardiography was particularly appreciated. In 1948 she returned to general practice and quickly built up a busy practice in Hove until her retirement in 1959.

After the war she returned repeatedly to Neckargemünd and each occasion was in the nature of a triumphal progress. Former patients and friends flocked to her, celebrating the safe return of their former GP and welcoming someone whose contribution to this small community had never been forgotten. She died, aged 76, in 1965 in the house she shared with her colleague, Dr Marjorie Hubert, in the Sussex village of Henfield.

Eric Bourne

Her practice extended well beyond Neckargemünd and she drove in a small Opel car around this lovely area. I frequently accompanied her on these drives and was particularly entranced by her visits to the local sanatorium, the Kümmelbacher Hof, overlooking the river Neckar, on the edge of pine forests and run on benevolent lines by sisters Hanna and Dörte.

The family that owned the house in which my aunt practised, the Kecks, were Nazis; their eldest son frequently paraded around in his SA uniform. The fact that a Jewish doctor rented their first floor didn't seem to worry them at all. Similarly, the husband of one of my aunt's best friends was in the SS, which did not prevent me from playing with their son in the large garden of their house just beyond the town gate, while the adults were enjoying their afternoon coffee. And the town's main baker, the Schnellbachs, were my aunt's most ardent admirers. In fact, the town council had difficulty in finding a suitably inoffensive but vaguely antisemitic slogan to grace the inevitable *Stürmer* display case in the market square. They came up with 'Neckargemünd has been free of Jews for a thousand years' – inaccurate but sufficient to satisfy the Nazi authorities.

Whenever her work allowed, my aunt would go for long walks in the forests and mountains of the Odenwald, with me reluctantly in tow. She easily managed the ten kilometres to Heidelberg, the one consolation being that we then returned on one of the bright blue trams that, in those days, connected Heidelberg with Neckargemünd. Alternately, she might walk to one of the four castles overlooking Neckarsteinach, thus confirming in me a lifelong aversion to hiking.

My aunt had qualified as a doctor from Freiburg University in 1922 at a time when women doctors were still something of a rarity. Until 1924 she did post-graduate

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

Back to Vienna

Through the eyes of three former Austrians

Vienna – 70 years on

George Vulkan

The first week of May was a moving, memorable period for many former Austrians. Some 250 of us had been invited to Vienna to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Anschluss as well as Austrian Holocaust Memorial Day, which marks the liberation of Mauthausen. The lobby of the Park Hotel in Schönbrunn became a centre for exchanging reminiscences, not only of the horrors of the Nazi time but also of the earlier pleasures of childhood and teenage years.

The visit was superbly organised by a team of young non-Jews from 'Letter to the Stars', an organisation dedicated to establishing contacts between survivors and present-day students as well as remembering individual victims of the Shoah.

The highlight of the week was our attendance at a special session of parliament, which included speeches by leading politicians, readings and music. We were then escorted by schoolchildren to the Heldenplatz for a truly moving commemoration. In the presence of pupils from over 200 schools, and numerous other participants, the proceedings were opened by the President of Austria and were followed by dramatisations, music and – most important – by survivors telling their stories.

On Friday we attended the evening service in Vienna's main synagogue, followed by wonderful Shabbat meals in the adjoining Alef Alef Restaurant or the Chabad Centre.

Another event was the dedication of a memorial in the 9th District to those deported from there. We also visited *Stolpersteine* set in pavements in front of houses from which relatives of those attending had been deported.

Contrasting with the sad memories, we joined the Vienna Jewish community in celebrating Yom Ha'Atzmaut in their impressive new Hakoah sports centre. It was wonderful to see there so many young children with their parents.

Throughout the week, the dedication with which the people from 'Letter to the Stars' looked after us was outstanding and many new friendships were established. As we said our 'Auf Wiedersehens' in the VIP lounge at the airport, we felt that their work and that of many schools is achieving a great deal

in showing that the new generation of Austrians is far removed from the evils of the Nazi time and the post-war period of amnesia.

'No to racism'

Martha Blend

This concludes the article which appeared in last month's issue of the Journal.

It was a beautiful day in May. I was sitting on a bench in the Schönbrunn Park when a middle-aged woman asked me the way to the Tiergarten. I told her, adding: 'Really I'm a visitor to this country.' 'But you speak good German,' said her husband. 'Yes,' I replied, 'I was born here.'

It was my fifth trip to Vienna. The first I have described in a previous issue of this journal as a painful experience, finding the places I had known as a child but none of the people. The second time was different: I was invited back for the launch of the German translation of my book *A Child Alone*. The next two occasions were sponsored by the Jewish Welcome Service and included an opportunity to speak to schoolchildren.

This time I had come as part of the 'Letter to the Stars' project. There had already been memorable events: in 2003 20,000 people released 80,000 balloons in memory of the departed; in 2004 there was a memorial ceremony at Mauthausen; in 2005 25,000 people, including 15,000 schoolchildren, brought white roses to the addresses of deported Viennese citizens.

This year, there had already been meetings between students and some of us former refugees at the Austrian embassy. When we arrived we were taken to the grand Schönbrunn Park Hotel. There were speeches of welcome and a traditional Austrian meal of goulash and Kaiserschmarren.

The next day we were taken to the Belvedere Palace, which houses the largest collection of works by the Austrian painters Klimt and Schiele. We saw a copy of the famous gilded Bloch-Bauer portrait by Klimt – the original has been returned to its Jewish owners, from whom it was looted by the Nazis. In the evening there was a synagogue service, then a traditional Jewish meal of soup with dumplings and chicken served in a handsome new community centre. At the weekend we were left to do

whatever we wished.

Monday was the 'big' day. At the parliament building, the Vice-Chancellor and other prominent Austrians spoke, acknowledging the country's willing participation in the Holocaust and pledging themselves to work to improve attitudes towards minorities in the future. A searing item was the showing on a screen of the names of a selection of Jewish children killed by the Nazis.

At the Heldenplatz, the scene of Hitler's triumphant appearance after the Anschluss, we were surrounded by children from schools which had elected to take part in the scheme. Some survivors told their stories, and there were more speeches from government officials, some dramatic performances and music. Finally, there was a line-up of teenagers whose T-shirts spelled out the message 'No to racism'. We were invited to look around the Heldenplatz, where there was a vast display of messages we had sent, written on placards, and hundreds of drawings and paintings by schoolchildren from all over Austria. We were impressed by the efforts made by the younger generation to understand the past and, hopefully, to avoid repeating its mistakes.

An unforgettable week

Paul Samet

This year, the 'Letter to the Stars' project, set up about five years ago with government support, invited over 250 survivors and their companions for a special one-week visit to Austria. There was to be a commemoration at the Austrian parliament on the day of the liberation of Mauthausen. Many of us had been invited to speak to schools throughout Austria. For me, this entailed a visit to the school across the road from where I had lived – and where I had been expecting to go when I reached the age of 11.

It was an emotional visit. All who went had lost family members. That so many were prepared to come from many parts of the world (the USA, Australia, Canada, Argentina, Israel and, of course, the UK) was impressive in itself. That these survivors were prepared to support the Austrian drive to stamp out racism and persecution was equally impressive. For many there were reunions with long-lost friends. The

Quaker Tapestry Centre sheds light on tragic tale

Imagine our family's surprise when a researcher from the Quaker Tapestry Exhibition Centre in Kendal, Cumbria contacted us after more than 60 years with new information about a cousin who tragically died shortly before the war ended!

Julian Abraham has produced a CDROM entitled *These Houses Hold Secrets* which features Second World War stories of courage and determination in the Netherlands. Made for use in schools and centres, it describes the work of the Quakers, who were pacifists, many of them risking their lives to help beleaguered Jewish families.

Following Julian Abraham's phone call to my father Hans Meyer (whose details he had obtained from Yad Vashem), I visited Kendal in the same week as a special exhibition was launched. The exhibition, *Weapons of Spirit*, documents the Quakers' response to conflict. It is displayed alongside a series of 77 beautiful embroidered panels. The panel in which I was particularly interested was *Friends in the Netherlands – Jewish Children Hidden in Quaker Homes*.

When Hitler came to power, our family was forced to leave its native Germany. People went where they could. Some crossed the border into the Netherlands, although it soon transpired that that was not far enough.

A cousin, Ernst Rudolf Reiss, was sent to the Eerde Quaker School in Ommen in the eastern Netherlands – it was thought to be safer than remaining where he was in Hamburg. During this time he made friends with Klaus Seckel, who had arrived from Hanover at the age of eight. Klaus was encouraged to keep a journal. In it he mentions his friend Ernst Rudolf.

Ernst's father Adolf was the brother of my grandmother Ellen (née Reiss). He was an engineer and scholar who had fought bravely during the First World War. Sadly



Tireless researcher Julian Abraham reviews the CDROM

he died of peritonitis at the age of 35 in 1928 leaving a widow, Marie, and two children, Ingeborg and Ernst.

My grandfather, Martin, tried to persuade Marie to leave Germany when he was about to set off for Palestine with his own family in November 1936. He had also been urged to try to convince her to go to Palestine by relatives who had settled in England to escape persecution. But Marie, from a well-to-do family, could not face the wrench of leaving, with fatal consequences.

Inge, said to have made a derogatory remark about the Nazis in 1942, was



Friends in the Netherlands – Jewish Children Hidden in Quaker Homes © Quaker Tapestry Centre

deported with her mother to Auschwitz, where they died later that year. Ernst Rudolf arrived in the Netherlands in September 1938, a few months after Klaus. At first they

lived at the Eerde School. The former castle building was surrounded by a large estate with moats, gardens, an orchard and an orangery. Klaus describes Ernst as his best friend and as having 'many intellectual interests'.

Three years later the Jewish children were moved from the rest of the school to another building on the Eerde estate. Here Klaus records in his diary that Ernst Rudolf had told him about the 'new order of things', including the need for frugality 'on account of the finances'.

The Nazis promised they would be safe, but it was not to be. In April 1943 they were sent to Vught concentration camp, then to Westerbork, where Ernst came across my father's sister Käte. Käte miraculously survived her terrible ordeal and is now nearly 99.

Meanwhile, both boys were sent to Theresienstadt. Klaus was soon deported to Auschwitz, with Ernst Rudolf following 12 days later. With the approach of the Soviet army, many prisoners were forced to march westwards. Both perished. Ellen records in her journal: 'The treachery of the departing Nazis meant Ernst was shot together with five other young men when they shouted "freedom".'

The date of Ernst Rudolf's death is shown on the memorial in Ommen as 28 January 1945, the day after Auschwitz was liberated. He was 17. Klaus died exactly a month later. It is a desperately sad story.

Janet Weston

The Quaker Tapestry is a modern embroidery of 77 fascinating panels. Made by 4,000 men, women and children, this international community project explores three centuries of social history. The Exhibition Centre in Kendal is open to the public from April to October each year. For more information, telephone +44 (0)1539 722975 or visit www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk

BACK TO VIENNA continued

prevailing attitude was a determination that events like the Holocaust must never be allowed to happen again.

The session in parliament was a sombre affair, with speeches by senior politicians stressing that Austria had learnt from the past. Displaying the names of many children during the

session was a chilling experience. All of this was broadcast live on Austrian television. Later, we had a more relaxed, but no less emotional, project session in the Heldenplatz, where several survivors spoke about their experiences and their hopes for the future. A very clever item was an excerpt from the Charlie Chaplin

film *The Great Dictator*, showing the scene in which the barber/dictator look-alike makes an impassioned speech for tolerance, democracy and respect. This had been dubbed into German, in a good imitation of Hitler's oratory – but the words were totally different. An unforgettable week.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

INDEXING THE AJR JOURNAL

Sir – I have collected the Journal and its predecessor since 1956. The Journal contains a wealth of information on all aspects of the lives and achievements of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. Over the years, the letter columns give an insight into the changing attitudes of former refugees. I have tried to use the Journal for my writings, mainly on refugee manufacturers. Without an index, this proved at first to be difficult (when the number of issues was still small), but became increasingly impossible with the years.

Accordingly, I discussed indexing with the late Dr Rosenstock, who agreed that it would be highly desirable but was not able to get a project started before he retired.

I am now 85 years old and am attempting to find the right homes for my books, magazines and documents. That is why I have sent the issues of the Journal from 1956 to 2006 to the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, who had requested them. They will receive further copies during my lifetime or from my executors.

The Centre is mounting a major project on the available archival material on German and Austrian refugees. It is my opinion that the collection of Journals I have sent to Sussex University would provide most valuable sources for serious studies in this field if the contents of the *AJR Journal* were readily accessible, i.e. if they were indexed. Can anything be done about it?

Dr Herbert Loeb OBE
Newcastle upon Tyne

Sir – Having been a keen reader of the *AJR Journal* for many years and finding it extremely useful for my research on German-speaking Jewish refugees, I am wondering whether there are any plans to index all available issues. This would make this excellent resource even more valuable for anyone interested in the history of the AJR and Jewish refugees in Britain.

Dr Andrea Hammel
Centre for German-Jewish Studies
University of Sussex

This issue is currently being given serious consideration – Exec. Ed.

HAKOAH SPORTS CENTRE RE-OPENING

Sir – Re Peter Phillips's letter (May), I have mixed feelings about the use of Holocaust money for purposes for which it was not designated – not only in Vienna in relation to sport facilities for the few Jews remaining there, but elsewhere too.

In 1933-38 my father, Martin Exiner, and some fellow members of the Maccabi Sports Club built with their own funds and ran a ski sports lodge on Keilberg Mountain near Wiesenthal just over the Czech border. As soon as the borders opened, I went there and found it had been used for many years by Czech sports organisations.

I tried to find my fathers' friends, who by then had mostly perished. I contacted the Maccabi organisation in Munich and Israel but never had a reply. I contacted the Jewish community in Prague but never received any help. Ultimately, when the restitution laws in the Czech Republic were published, this lodge was one of 13 buildings allowed to be restored to their 'original owners', which, in the view of the Jewish community in Prague, was them. I think it has since been sold and is no longer used as the sport facility for which it was designated.

At least when the Bauhaus-type rowing club building in Friedrichshagen near Berlin was restituted after the wall came down, some of the proceeds were awarded to rowing clubs in Israel to further the sport there.

Susanne Dyke, Eastbourne

Sir – I was recently invited to Vienna under the 'Letter to the Stars' project. On our last night, we were invited to the Hakoah Centre to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Israel's independence. There was a wonderful, happy atmosphere. There were welcoming speeches by Chief Rabbi Eisenberg, the Israeli Ambassador and Ariel Muzicant, the head of the Jewish community. There were many young and old people dancing the *Hora*. We all joined in. They are building a Jewish school and old-age home on the land adjoining, as there is now quite a large Jewish community in Vienna.

Josie Dutch, London NW2

'A GIFT OF LIFE'

Sir – In giving the title 'A questionable claim' to her review of *A Gift of Life: The Deportation and the Rescue of the Jews in Occupied Belgium (1940-1945)* by Sylvain Brachfeld (May issue), Emma Klein exposes her bias and lack of awareness of well-established historical evidence.

In support of her unsubstantiated speculations, she quotes unquestioningly a paragraph from an anonymous obituary in a national broadsheet (dated 27 March 2008) of the Belgian author Hugo Claus, whose sensationally titled fantasy novel *The Sorrow of Belgium* was published in 1982.

The first historical study of rescue in Belgium, 'The Committee for the Defence

of the Jews in Belgium', by Lucien Steinberg, was published by the National Centre for Advanced Jewish Studies, ULB (Free University of Brussels) in 1973. A documentary film, *As if It Were Yesterday* (1980), by Myriam Abramowitz and Esther Hoffenberg interviewed ordinary rescuers as well as members of the above committee, which included not only Jews but also non-Jews from all sections of the Belgian population – priests, nuns, young Catholic workers, socialists, communists, agnostics, monarchists, liberals – opposed to Nazism and the persecution of Jews and Roma. This film inspired the first World Gathering of Hidden Children in New York in May 1991, an event attended by 1,600 hidden children with another 1,500 unable to attend.

The actual number of Jews deported from the transit camp Caserne Dossin in Mechelen is listed in 'Memorial of the Deportation of the Jews of Belgium' by Maxime Steinberg and Serge Klarsfeld, both academic historians of the Holocaust, as 25,475, of whom 5,430 were children, in 27 transports between 4 August 1942 and 31 July 1944. The Nazis left their lists when they fled Belgium at liberation in early September 1944 with all names recorded.

Maxime Steinberg has written a meticulous history in four volumes published in 1984 with carefully checked references, quotations and footnotes on the Nazi persecution and the resistance and rescues by Jews and non-Jews in Belgium as well as, sadly, the compliance of prominent members of the Jewish Council, which the Nazis ordered to be set up in 1941. They were tasked to list all Jews in Belgium for the SD Kartei – approximately 56,187 (another 3,000+ avoided being listed).

Belgium was unique in that 94 per cent of Jews were non-nationals who had arrived in the 1920s as economic migrants mainly from Poland and later, like me aged four alone in an orphanage in August 1939, refugees from Germany. They were mainly artisans and often could not communicate well in French and/or Flemish. Yet more than 31,700 – of whom 4,000+ were children under 16 – survived, almost all by being hidden. Nearly 3,000 children were hidden, like myself, through the Committee for the Defence of Jews (CDJ) and well over 1,000 by priests, nuns or non-Jewish friends or neighbours. All the names of the children hidden by the CDJ – their old addresses, their new names and the names and addresses of their hidiers – were listed in four secret notebooks kept in four different places, with a number code. Mine was 122.

All children hidden by the CDJ had fictitious birth certificates produced in Bruges franked with official stamps declaring that they were born in Ostend – the registers there had been destroyed during the Nazi invasion in May 1940. Ration stamps were sent anonymously in the post.

As for 'barely a whisper of protest' from the Belgian population, this is completely refuted in two telegrams from Herr von Bargaen, the delegate of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels, to his superior

Ribbentrop, the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 24 September 1942 stating that 'many Jews have abandoned their homes and made efforts to find shelter with Belgian Aryans. These efforts are sustained by a considerable section of the Belgian population ... very many Jews possess false Belgian identity cards.' The second telegram, sent seven weeks later, stated: 'At first an order for work was distributed by means of the Jewish Association to those who were listed for deportation. However, in the meantime, because of the rumours about the massacre of Jews, etc., the orders for work were no longer complied with and the Jews were rounded up through raids and individual actions' (Nuremberg Document NG5219 f 2 (from Lucien Steinberg, 'Le Comité de défense des Juifs en Belgique, 1942-1944, p.79)).

The account of my rescue and hiding appears in the chapter on Belgium in Martin Gilbert's *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust*. The distortions in Emma Klein's review grieve me deeply. She could have consulted the Wiener Library. They have a link with the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance in Mechelen. There is also a very large Hidden Child association in Belgium, of which I am a member.

Bronia Veitch, Yorkshire

Sir – Marion Schreiber's fascinating book *Silent Rebels* contains a foreword by Paul Spiegel, then President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. He writes: 'Four thousand children like myself survived the Holocaust living under false identities with families, in boarding schools, monasteries and children's homes. Sixty percent of the sixty thousand Jews living in Belgium at the time were not deported because they were able to escape the clutches of the German racial fanatics with the help of neighbours, friends and strangers.'

The book tells the story of a Jewish resistance group operating in Belgium that successfully managed to attack a train transporting Jews to Auschwitz, from which more than 200 people, including children, escaped. Their survival is said to have been due to the Belgian people who sheltered these escapees.

An aunt and uncle of mine survived the war in Brussels, where they were hidden by Belgian people.

Bronia Snow, Esher

Emma Klein replies: In response to Bronia Veitch's letter, I would like to point out that I did not provide the title to the review of Sylvain Brachfeld's book. I also did not dispute Brachfeld's findings. I merely mentioned the work of Hugo Claus as an interesting counterpoint without endorsing his point of view. My main problem with Brachfeld's book was not the valuable information he provides but the quality of the writing or the translation.

This was a short book review, not an extensive research project on the fate of Belgian Jewry during the war. Of course, the information provided by Bronia Veitch is most interesting and I thank her for it.

I would also like to thank Bronia Snow for her most interesting and informative letter.

ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Sir – Inge Trott says it all (June) by declaring she belongs to Jews for Justice to Palestinians (JJFP) and to Alternative Jewish Voices. Both these organisations espouse the Palestinian cause at the expense of Israel.

It was the JJFP who not long ago shamelessly displayed large posters in front of the Golders Green clocktower comparing Palestinian towns with places of Jewish martyrdom in Europe. I engaged one young woman holding up a sign equating Warsaw with Jenin – the massacre that never was. I told her I was in Warsaw during the war and asked how she dared make such a hurtful comparison, tantamount to trivialising the Holocaust. She replied that she was fully conversant with the Holocaust, as her grandmother was a refugee from Nazi Germany! I got nowhere: people like that are all too consumed by their doctrinaire beliefs.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir – Were Ms Trott and her ilk as assiduous in their condemnation of other states and societies – Darfur for example – her bona fide as a champion of the oppressed might be more believable.

*Ernest G. Kolman
Greenford, Middx*

Sir – We saw here in Toronto an excellent BBC programme entitled 'Birthright – Israel', a very fair reportage from both sides from the beginning of the State of Israel until today. It made you think that if the Arabs had accepted their state then maybe some of today's problems might not have arisen. But then the game of 'If' is always wishful thinking.

*Kitty Schafer
Toronto, Canada*

PS I wonder if some of your readers, especially Inge Trott, would be equally concerned regarding, for example, the generals in Burma or the dictator in Zimbabwe.

Sir – George Schlesinger (June) describes those who wrote in the May letters columns, myself included, as 'Israeli hawks'. Recently, a group of British Jews took out a large ad to sympathise with the Palestinians, who teach schoolchildren to hate Israel and encourage them to become suicide bombers. Can any reader imagine a group in an Arab country taking out an ad to sympathise with Israeli civilians on whom rockets are being rained? If it were not for the Israeli armed forces, the country would have been wiped out by its hostile neighbours.

Henry Schragenheim, London N15

MORE ABOUT THE PIONEER CORPS PLEASE!

Sir – I enjoyed the army memories of Victor Ross (May-June). Let's have more about the Pioneer Corps. Not all of us made it to officer. He is a good writer – he makes me

look forward to my monthly journal and back to old times.

*Herbert Renton
Corporal, ex-Pioneer Corps,
London N16*

BRIGHT SPARK

To: The Technical Director
AJR Journal
Aeronautical Section
Propeller Department

Sir – May I enlarge on Bruno Jablonsky's invention of extra speedy propellers for the Spitfire, as mentioned by Laura Selo in your April issue.

After the withdrawal from the Battle of Britain, the Germans had developed by September 1941 the Focke Wulf 190, which was 30 mph faster than the existing Spitfire at all altitudes up to 25,000 ft and had a faster roll.

Spitfire Mark VI was the answer. It was fitted with a Merlin 47 engine, a pressurised cabin and a four-bladed Rotol propeller with 'Jablo-blades'. Jablonsky had invented a method of mass-producing wooden propeller blades by compressing boards to half their original thickness, thus increasing density, and applying his special patent enamel to the finished blade and a brass sheath to the tip. US Patent 2477375 is also in his name and refers to this process.

*Frank Bright
Martlesham Heath Aviation Society*



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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The dawn of a modern nation is captured by the **British Museum** in a comprehensive collection of American prints from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. **The American Scene: Prints from Hopper to Pollock** (until 7 September) is a confess-



Robert Gwathmey (1903–1988), *The Hitchhiker* colour screenprint, 1937 © DACS, London/VAGA, New York 2007

ional view of the American dream and its accompanying nightmare, as the US develops its indigenous artistic identity. The vitality and rhythms of American history are strikingly captured, even when the ideas are deliberately grotesque to enhance their message. **George Bellows's** 1917 boxing matches and mental asylums are later developed by Satirical Realists like **Adolf Dehn**, whose 1941 *Swinging Savoy* shows the tormented and demented residents of a mental home, or **Robert Riggs's** powerful *Psychopathic Ward*, which indicates hapless people in eternal torment.

Early twentieth-century artist **Dox Thrasch** highlighted social inequalities in his portrayal of black miners hauling a coal trolley from an open seam. Thrasch was the first Afro-American artist to join the fine print workshop in the Philadelphia Federal

Art Project, an innovative wartime programme which put screenprinting on the artistic map.

The same theme is depicted in **Blanche Gramb's** coarse aquatint *Miner's Head*, with its hint of coal dust over the face. The miner's helmet light emphasises the set of his nose and the hardness in his eyes.

One artist who identified closely with the suffering of the black and poor itinerant workers during the 1930s was **Robert Gwathmey**, from Virginia. The raw, blatant, imagery of these American artists contrasts starkly with the refinement of their European counterparts. Gwathmey's cartoon-style colour screenprint *Hitchhiker* (1937) shows a bloated, nonchalant man in shirtsleeves thumbing down an unseen vehicle, while an itinerant worker sits on the roadside beneath a glamorous Hollywood poster.

Julius Bloch's *The Prisoner* was dedicated to Eleanor Roosevelt. Life eased with the New Deal, but left-leaning American artists like him faced new threats. The challenge of European Fascism had led to conflict between the isolationists and those artists who had championed leftist causes after Pearl Harbour. Socialist ideas, so popular in the battle against Hitler, were suddenly viewed with suspicion in the McCarthy era following the rise of Soviet Communism, and many socialist artists were put under FBI surveillance.

Etchers working between the wars often turned their attention to their urban environment. From **John Sloan's** much earlier New York etchings onwards, many immigrant artists mirror a sense of alienation in portraying a city that never sleeps. **Stuart Davis's** kosher sign on a building in *6th Avenue El* conveys this high-rise loneliness in his geometrically eerie New York prints. **Edward Hopper's** *Night on the El Train* is a black-and-white etching of a romantic couple oblivious to the movement of the train, yet it is that very movement which captivates you. The train's open window is a metaphor for interior and exterior worlds.

But the haymaking heartlands of rural America enthral **Jackson Pollock** in two untitled works between 1944 and 1951. There are several 'wild west' touches by **John Stewart Curry**, who also depicts John Brown's anti-slavery campaign.

REVIEWS

Autobiography of an Austrian refugee who fought back

EMIGRATION INS LEBEN: WIEN – LONDON UND NICHT MEHR RETOUR

by Eric Sanders

edited by Peter Pirker

Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2008, 376 pp. hardcover, 24.80 euros

The story of how thousands of young Austrian and German refugees fought for the Allies during the Second World War has been well documented in Helen Fry's excellent book *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens*. One of those mentioned in that book is Eric Sanders and in this new autobiography he relates his story from childhood in Vienna, via his wartime adventures, to his new, post-war life in London.

Eric Sanders, or Erich Schwarz as he was then, was born in Vienna at the end of 1919. In the early part of the book he describes his life as a Jewish child, growing up in a relatively poor area in Vienna and later in St Veit. As well as displaying an early interest in music he was active in Zirenu, a Jewish youth organisation. The many anecdotes of that period indicate a happy childhood, in spite of experiencing antisemitism in school well before the Anschluss. With excerpts from his daily diary the author describes the difficulties and bureaucracy involved in trying to get out of Austria after March 1938, but he and his parents were relatively lucky as eventually all were able to find refuge in England.

When war broke out, Eric was keen to help in the fight against the Nazis but, like most other refugees, this initially involved being in the unarmed Aliens' Companies of the Pioneer Corps. This did, however, give him the first taste of war as he was sent to France in 1940, before having to be evacuated after its fall. With many amusing and wry memories, he describes his efforts and eventual success in being transferred to the Special Operations Executive (SOE) for work behind enemy lines. His training included parachute jumping and radio communications but, although by 1945 he was in northern Italy awaiting action, this never actually materialised. After the war he became an interpreter for the British Army Legal Unit in Austria and used his time there to become involved in the redevelopment of the Social Democratic Party.

After returning to England, he qualified as a teacher and describes his experiences of teaching in comprehensive schools. Following early retirement, he started a new career including writing plays and even scripting a film about Nasser. He retained his interest in politics and was active in the work of the Labour Party, including trying to encourage it to support the Austrian

Social Democrats.

Peter Pirker provides a foreword and an informative 17-page postscript to the book. One part of the latter covers the work of the SOE in Austria towards the end of the war, which sadly involved the loss of several of Eric's colleagues. He also discusses postwar political developments in the country.

The book is a fascinating story not only of one individual's life but also of the dedication of many young Austrians in fighting back against their oppressors. My only regret is that the book is in German – I hope a translation will follow.

George Vulkan

The poison of Nazification

MAGDA AND THE RAT CATCHERS

by Netta Murray Goldsmith

Trafford Publishing, 2008, 264 pp.,
orders@trafford.com, tel 0845 230 9601

It's July 1932. The Senger family and friends gather to celebrate Magda's 11th birthday. Magda is especially thrilled with the bicycle her parents give her – something she's wanted so long.

Life is idyllic. The family is affluent, secure in its German-Jewish identity, imbued with German culture.

Subtly, the atmosphere begins to shift. A word here, a word there. For some reason, the elderly gardener secretly pities Magda for being Jewish. An antisemitic remark by a stranger makes Magda a tiny bit uncomfortable. Who is this upstart Hitler? Is he to be taken seriously?

Magda's school teachers are showing pro-Nazi sentiments. Her non-Jewish school friends are distancing themselves from her. The poison of Nazification is seeping into the life of Nuremberg, described by the author of this novel as 'more than Berlin ... the Nazi capital'.

The years go by. Magda's friends and their families are leaving Germany for wherever they can get visas. But her father, Anton, remains stubborn. Her mother, Lisel, does whatever Anton thinks best. The Sengers remain in denial, in part fearful of beginning a new life elsewhere.

In romantic sub-plots, the American journalist Jacob implores Magda to come to the US and marry him. But she, now 17, is scared of the commitment of marriage and confused about her feelings. Similarly, Magda's cousin Fritz, to whom she is especially close, is uncertain of his feelings for the half-Jewish Rachel. Just as Fritz feels an intensifying Jewish consciousness, so Rachel cannot bear her Jewishness and seeks to conceal it.

Following vicious attacks on the Senger family on Kristallnacht, Anton finally sees there is no option but to leave. His father in Buchenwald, Fritz too feels he has no choice but to flee. In desperation, the Sengers make their way to Portugal. Having reached Switzerland after a nightmarish journey, Fritz is rejected by Rachel for a wealthy non-Jewish man she doesn't love.

En route from Portugal to Chile, for which they have obtained visas at great cost,

the ramshackle boat carrying the Sengers capsizes in a storm off the US coast. The conclusion of the novel is deeply ironical.

The writer says that her novel 'reminds its readers that folk are nice or nasty, irrespective of their racial origin'. It is true that acts of kindness are performed, sometimes by total strangers at great risk to themselves. Yet the novel portrays much more graphically than anything else the astonishing ease with which, as the title implies, mankind can descend to bestiality.

The writing throughout is fluid, minimalist. There are passages of striking beauty. There is little that doesn't ring true in the novel, while it remains unclear to what extent, if any, it is autobiographical. It would make a superb movie.

Howard Spier

A story from the female perspective

WE ARE STRANGERS HERE: AN 'ENEMY ALIEN' IN PRISON IN 1940

by Ruth Borchard

London: Valentine Mitchell (tel 020 8952 9526), 2008, 160 pp. paper
introduction by Professor Charmian Brinson

Written 65 years ago but published now for the first time, this is a social history/memoir/romantic novel from the female perspective. The story is that of protagonist Anna Silver's internment in Holmdale Prison. Ruth Borchard was briefly in Holloway Prison before being interned on the Isle of Man.

The Silver family – Gentile Anna, married to Jewish Bert, baby Nele and Bert's mother Ida – are refugees from Germany. Anna's happy English existence is destroyed by Bert's infidelity and the couple's subsequent imprisonment as 'enemy aliens', when they are separated for the first time since their marriage.

Anna experiences numerous instances of kindness from fellow inmates, but is worried that Nele may be taken from her. Despite an almost Kafkaesque bureaucracy in Holmdale, Anna manages to contact Ida, who takes the child. Although initially upset at their separation, Anna begins to enjoy aspects of her incarceration, such as more sleep, regular exercise, time for inner mediation. She writes letters of appeal for other prisoners and notes the kindness of prison staff, who are overwhelmed by the sudden increase in the prison's population and having to deal with so many distressed women at once.

Prisoners and internees share cells and, as on the outside, it's not what you know but who you know that helps. Anna discovers that many of the recently arrived internees are penniless and reduced to searching for food in dustbins while food parcels from outside are left to rot. They organise a food-distribution system.

The internees fear a German invasion; Anna is even more fearful that the Germans will land in the Isle of Man and wonders

whether she is putting her daughter's life at even greater risk by wanting to take her there.

The book ends abruptly, with Anna and Nele's arrival at the camp, and a shocking discovery. Unfortunately, the planned sequel was never written so we are left in suspense, although Ruth Borchard's own story had a happy ending.

The book is well written and I enjoyed it, both as a novel and as a social history. It has a novelty value as very little work is published in English on this aspect of the experiences of women refugees. For this reason, it deserves a wider audience.

Laraine Feldman

FILM

Dark secret

UN SECRET

directed by Claude Miller
starring Cécile de France, Patrick Bruel and Ludivine Sagnier
at selected cinemas

This haunting film is eloquent testimony to the impact of the past, even on those who are determined to bury or ignore it. François is in his late thirties in 1985 when he receives a call telling him his father is missing. This triggers a series of flashbacks to his childhood and adolescence culminating in scenes from pre-war Paris and France during the Nazi occupation. The director skilfully intersperses black-and-white scenes from 1985 into colour scenes from the past, emphasising the crucial significance of what has gone before.

In one flashback, François, a delicate child unable to emulate the athletic prowess of his diving-champion mother Tania and his bodybuilder father Maxime, is conscious that he is a disappointment to his father and fantasises about an older brother who possesses the skills he lacks. He consoles himself by imagining the romantic circumstances that brought his parents together as well as by confiding in a family friend. The friend, Louise, will years later reveal to him the family secret that shatters his illusions.

In a further flashback, François has just had his fifteenth birthday and has recently been baptised. It is apparent that his family – the Grimberts, originally Grinberg – are reluctant Jews, whereas Louise embraces her Jewishness with pride. François tells Louise of an unfamiliar toy he has come across at home and of the bewilderingly confused reaction of his parents to his find. Now, as Louise divulges the secret which lies at the heart of the film, the spectator shares with François glimpses of his parents' earlier lives that have never been revealed to him. At a party in pre-war Paris, the engagement of Maxime to Hannah, whom we have not previously met, is being celebrated. In the background are Hannah's brother Robert and Robert's wife Tania. Maxime, while displaying every sign of affection for his fiancée, is clearly besotted by the beautiful

Continued on page 10

'How much has changed and yet how little', AGM told

'How much our world has changed – and yet how little, when antisemitism is sadly all too common!', AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman told this year's AGM. Yet the AJR remained 'as relevant and its services as essential as in the dark days of the 1940s,' he added.

The organisation's resources were limited, Andrew reported. While in the last year investment income and membership income had been just over £700,000, we had spent over £2.4 million. This enormous gap was bridged by the generosity of the Claims Conference, which gave us just over £500,000, and by members' legacies, which provided around £1.2 million.

The AJR's priority was to look after the First Generation, a task essentially undertaken by the Social Services team. Andrew also drew attention to the nationwide groups (their number now standing at 41); the volunteers; the AJR Centre; the Journal; the Refugee Voices

project; the Kindertransport; and the Child Survivors' Association. He paid tribute to the 'amazing support' of the staff.

David Rothenberg, the AJR's Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, also stressed that the AJR's resources were limited. He too noted that the AJR was dependent on legacies and emphasised that 'Where the need is, we will be there! We don't sit on a pot of money!'

David stressed that some members were experiencing 'very difficult – even tragic – times. We do help at every possible level. No one is turned away.'

Appreciation of the services provided by the AJR, including the Centre, was echoed passionately by members present.

Members of the Management Committee who were standing, as well as officers, were re-elected unanimously. Ms Karen Goodman and Mr Tim Schwarz were elected as new members.

AJR Trustees stepping down

Theo Marx and Peter Dannenberg are stepping down as AJR Trustees.

Theo Marx has been involved with the AJR since its inception and is its longest-serving chairman – from 1976 to 1994.



Theo Marx

When the AJR started in 1941, Theo's father became a member of the Board. Theo took his place on the Board on his father's death in 1958. In the early 1960s, he began to take a more active role. In 1974 he was elected Vice-Chairman of the Executive Management Committee and in 1976 Chairman.

Theo was a rock from which good advice and quiet authority flowed. Among many other things, he strongly supported the creation of the Day Centre. He ensured that the AJR remained a worthwhile and relevant organisation and attractive to

donors and legators. It is no wonder that the AJR remains in good financial order to this day.

As a second-generation member of the AJR, Peter Dannenberg well understood the issues which were involved in running the organisation's operations. He also gave the AJR the benefit of his City/stockbroking experience and the Association is delighted he is prepared to remain on the investment committee so it can benefit from his over 30 years of experience.



Peter Dannenberg

The success of its investments is the key to the AJR's ability to provide for its members over the crucial period of the next 10-15 years.

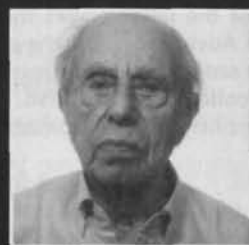
Peter has had to retire as an AJR Trustee and as a member of the Management Committee due to his business commitments.

Eventually, François finds his missing father sitting inconsolable on a park bench – his dog has been killed after he let it run free. This sorrow – a displacement of survivor guilt his father has never truly acknowledged – inspires François to investigate and write about his family's past.

Un Secret is based on Philippe Grimbert's autobiographical novel. The acting is of the first order, with Ludivine Sagnier giving a stellar performance as the tormented Hannah.

Emma Klein

105th birthday party for Ernest Jacob



Ernest Jacob, an AJR member for 50 years, is celebrating his 105th birthday this month by taking his entire family to a rented cottage in the Cotswolds for a three-day party.

A highly successful international metals trader, Ernest left Germany for the UK in January 1938. In 1951 he started his own company here, eventually retiring on his 80th birthday.

Modest and good-humoured, Ernest has established a charitable trust and spends much of his time looking after his grandchildren's investments. He also likes attending classical music concerts and art exhibitions – the walls of his north-west London home are lined with paintings and art books – though he regrets it's not so easy getting out to such events these days.

An amazing story

Almost everyone in the Newcastle Jewish community knows that my cousin George Loble was honoured by Queen Elizabeth with an MBE for his half-century of social work and, particularly, for his work for the Womens' Cancer Society.

What neither he nor I knew at the time was that a second cousin of ours, Anne Shearer of Birmingham, was honoured by the Queen on the same day and at the same time and place with the same medal as George.

It was the more amazing that George was unaware of her award because he came to Britain in the spring of 1939 (before his parents) in the care of Anne's uncle and aunt, Dr Ludwig and Frederike Hammelburger, and in the company of their children.

To celebrate Anne's award, Birmingham City Council threw a party for her in the Council House, to which 200 guests were invited.

I wonder what our common great-great-grandfather Meyer Löb b. Isak Schloss (b. 1792) would have thought had he known that three of his descendents in the same generation were honoured by Queen Elizabeth of England.

Dr Herbert Loeb OBE

This article originally appeared in the North East Jewish Recorder on 23 November 2007.

REVIEWS continued from page 9

Tania. After a lavish Jewish wedding, Maxime and Hannah have a son, Simon, a budding Olympic champion from his early years.

The Nazi occupation brings to a head the tensions latent in the family, particularly after Robert is incarcerated in a PoW camp and Maxime alienates Hannah's family by his refusal to register as a Jew. Eventually, Maxime finds a hiding place in the Free Zone and expects his wife and son to join him. But Tania is there too and it is Hannah's wilful and self-destructive reaction on learning this that is crucial.

We are Strangers Here

An 'Enemy Alien' in Prison in 1940

Ruth Borchard

The novel vividly describes the plight of a young German refugee, Anna Silver, as an 'enemy alien' in Britain in 1940, and her subsequent detention in Holloway Prison, a situation made more complex by her young child.

20% discount available to AJR readers. Call 020 8952 9526 ext.22, quote AJRKH and get the book for the reduced price of £12 (RRP £15), p&p free in the UK.

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Berlin days

I owned a cosh – a de luxe model, encased in finest pigskin, a covered steel ball at one end, a leather thong at the other to slip over your wrist. The spring-loaded handle had the kind of stitching you'd see on the most expensive shoes. It could have had only one previous owner: my dodgy Uncle Stefan, who was quick to slap faces but liked to over-prepare against retaliation. He had long been dead when I found the cosh among my grandmother's possessions; I doubt she would have known what it was.

The year was 1935, the place Berlin, and the idea of a Jewish boy walking the streets with a cosh was suicidal folly. At that time I had just joined a small private youth club, the brainchild of an enterprising young man in his early twenties. Heinz B. started with just a few local boys and girls in his mother's spacious apartment in Wilmersdorf – initially just a place for us to go to, play table tennis and fool around. Of course, sex was high on the agenda – we were bursting with surplus hormones and acne and the heat we generated made the air shimmer. But Heinz was a leader who wanted to inject purpose into our blighted lives. One of his ideas was that we should perform a Purim play. I was allowed to write and act in it. Guess who had the best lines! Heinz not only hired a real miniature theatre for three performances; he also persuaded Julius Bab, dramaturge of the Kulturbund, to attend the first night. (For those who need reminding, the Kulturbund was the only theatre Jews were able to visit.)

My ambition was to be a playwright and actor. It was in the family, and I had already started to accept professional engagements as a stand-up comedian at bar mitzvahs and other social gatherings. My audiences must have been very indulgent or cowed by the cheek of a 15-year-old. Bab was more critical. The way he put it was that I showed more promise as a playwright than as an actor; he may have meant 'even less promise as an actor'. It was many years and a stern no-no from Conrad Veidt before I gave up the dream of acting. The flow of bad plays took even longer to dry up.

Heinz was endlessly ingenious. He decided that we older ones should be taught the rudiments of self-defence and persuaded the then German featherweight champion in ju-jitsu (was his name Wittgenstein?) to coach us. He was barely taller than I, but he threw me round our improvised gymnasium

like a dog playing with a rag doll. I don't know whether Heinz had an ulterior motive, but one afternoon he told us about some younger boys who were being attacked on their way home from Hebrew lessons at the local synagogue. Not physically attacked, but threatened and abused by Nazi hooligans from the nearby Oberrealschule. What did we think of escorting them home after lessons and delivering them to their parents? The reactions were interesting. The girls were quickest to volunteer. The boys from the 'best' families were a bit hesitant; the most enthusiastic response came from

My ambition was to be a playwright and actor. It was in the family, and I had already started to accept professional engagements as a stand-up comedian at bar mitzvahs and other social gatherings. My audiences must have been very indulgent or cowed by the cheek of a 15-year-old. It was many years and a stern no-no from Conrad Veidt before I gave up the dream of acting. The flow of bad plays took even longer to dry up.

us ruffians. I was feeling eager and heroic, asking to take charge of a boy whose sister I happened to be keen on at the time. As her brother's saviour I could hardly miss.

'Of course,' said Heinz, 'you must ask your parents for permission.' I had no intention of doing anything of the sort, lovingly fingering the cosh in my pocket. Heinz was meticulous and careful. He worked out different routes which we were to change randomly, one boy escort to walk a little behind the protégée, the other on the opposite side of the street. The idea was not to get into fights, but to provide moral support and prevent the disruption of Hebrew studies. So we kept our heads down, and our spirits up, following Heinz's strict rules: no eye contact with the enemy, no change in walking pace when they hove into sight.

One afternoon, on escort duty, I came face to face with a boy from my own school. He had changed into Hitler Jugend uniform but

had the same runny nose he had in the classroom. There was no way I could just walk past him. He stopped and said: 'We know what you are up to.'

'Taking a walk,' I said. 'Want to come?'

'Jews are not allowed to form groups of more than two,' he said, looking across the road to my two companions.

'There is no such rule,' I told him. 'And anyway, I am a foreigner so it would not apply to me.'

'Clever,' he said. 'But we'll get you one day.' He turned heel and motioned his friend to follow him. I suppose this was one of the rare moments when being an Austrian had done me any good.

For me the story ended suddenly in the spring of 1936, when our flat in the Regensburgerstrasse had been emptied into packing cases, leaving the bare walls with the dusty outlines of paintings I had known all my life. My mother and I travelled to stay with relatives in Holland, en route to England. Heinz B. survived by emigrating to Australia. Wittgenstein was murdered. I don't know what happened to the cosh.

Victor Ross

SOUTH YORKSHIRE AND MIDLANDS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL BOOK

The Sheffield and Midlands AJR groups are collating a register of names from people in the South Yorkshire, East Midlands and West Midlands areas whose family members perished in the Holocaust.

The names, together with photographs (where possible) and short histories, will be included in a Memorial Book which will be on permanent display in Sheffield and Birmingham. Copies of the book will be distributed to members and used for educational purposes, ensuring that those who perished will not be forgotten.

The Imperial War Museum considers the Memorial Books 'important historical records'. Yad Vashem and other museums have requested copies of the AJR Memorial Books for their archives.

If you would like your family names (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) to be included in the South Yorkshire and Midlands Memorial Book, please contact Anthony Kaddish (Sheffield and South Yorkshire) on 0114 2367958, Bob Norton (Nottingham and East Midlands) on 01159 212494 or Fred Austin (Birmingham and West Midlands) on 01384 252310.

We can help you complete the forms for however many names you have, e.g. on your family page we can include 1 name or 50 names.

INSIDE the AJR

Sheffield: The effectiveness of Holocaust teaching

An innocent question by a new member, 'How effective is the teaching of the Holocaust to 12-14-year-old schoolchildren?', sparked a lively discussion. Are a few sessions by teachers (however well or not well qualified), even if supported by a survivor's talk, adequate? What is the alternative? What should be its link to present-day race relations in the UK? To be debated at our next meeting on 31 August.

Steve Mendelsson

Pinner: The problem of deafness

In his daily work, audiologist Robert Beiny deals with the many hearing problems faced by (mostly) older people; in his 'spare-time' work he helps deaf children in Romania. Sixteen per cent of the population suffers from hearing loss, while an astonishing 80 per cent never have a hearing test, Robert told us.

Ernest Simon

Next meeting: 3 July. Helen Bamber, 'Survival of the Next Generation'

Dance and song in Ilford

Over 40 members celebrated Yom HaAztmaut with an Israeli lunch and a surprise performance by a young Tel Aviv dance group, who gave us a wonderful and zestful session of dance and song. We drank to Israel's 60th birthday.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 2 July. Richard Stone of Jewish Care

Harrogate CF Get-together

We heard details of Rosl and Marc Schatzberger's recent visit to Vienna as guests of the Austrian government. Together with many other continental friends, as well as those from farther afield, they were treated as honoured guests. Sharing their trip with us made the afternoon a very special one.

Inge Little

Next meeting: 22 July. Tba

HGS birthday party

Our fourth birthday was celebrated by a fine cake and a talk by two Golders Green PCSOs. We were given valuable advice on how to protect ourselves and our property in the street, at home and when travelling abroad.

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 14 July. 'Coram's Children'

An accordionist in Essex

We were entertained magnificently by Tony Compton on the accordion. Some of the girls even danced to the entrancing tunes! It was a morning none of us is likely to forget.

Ken Ward

Next meeting: 8 July. Chris Bailey, Bank of England

Successful meetings in Glasgow

We have held two very successful meetings recently. In April, Sharon Baron gave an interesting talk on her research into the history of Jewish Care in Glasgow for a commemorative book soon to be published. In May, Glasgow held its first smaller Continental Friends meeting at the home of Ingrid and Henry Wuga. Fourteen AJR members enjoyed an informal social afternoon.

Susanne Green

Next main meeting: 7 September

Wembley's first birthday

We celebrated our first birthday and, as it was Israel's 60th birthday, we indulged in recounting memories from our past. Myrna provided a generous supply of lovely party food, including a birthday cake.

Next meeting: 9 July. Social Get-together

South London overview of South African history

Dr Sheila Marshall gave us an overview of South Africa's development since the 1600s. Nelson Mandela's role and the Jewish involvement were also explained.

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: 7 July. Alan Bilgora, 'Great Jewish Opera Singers'

Temple Fortune: 'Safety in the community'

Two representatives of the local Police Community Support Team gave us very useful crime prevention advice. If required, a local Crime Prevention Officer would visit us at home to give specific advice.

David Lang

Next meeting: 17 July. Bertha Leverton

Brighton & Hove Sarid: The second generation of survivors

Rabbi Charles Wallach, himself the son of survivors, sought to assess the impact of people's tragic experiences on their offspring.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: 21 July. Ladislaus Löb, 'Rezső Kasztner: A Jewish Schindler'

Hendon: The story of Renee Goddard

We heard the interesting life story of Renee Goddard, who came to England in 1934. After the war, she became a Glyndebourne student, an actress and a dancer. She also worked for BBC radio and television.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 28 July. Edward Josse, 'A View from the Cells'

Hull CF: A visit to the European Parliament

Rose Abrahamson gave an interesting account of her recent visit to the European Parliament, a visit sponsored by the Socialist Party. The afternoon was greatly enjoyed by all, and we look forward to our next meeting on 5 October.

Olive Rosner

West Midlands (Birmingham):

Projects and Memorial Books

Susanne Green spoke about the Projects and Memorial Books produced in four Northern cities under her wing. Her aim was to see whether we, possibly along with the Sheffield group, might wish to produce something similar for a launch in Coventry at a Holocaust Memorial in 2009.

Fred Austin

Next meeting: 13 July. Annual Garden Party

Edgware: History of Jews in England

Once again we were treated to a very interesting and informative talk by Susannah Alexander on the history of the Jews in England.

Eve Glicksman

Next meeting: 15 July. Hendon and Radlett groups invited

Radlett: Jews and jazz

Alf Keiles used illustrations from his extensive record collection to show how great the Jewish contribution to jazz has been. To some of the audience, perhaps more familiar with the classics, the talk will have opened a window on a new, attractive aspect of modern music.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 16 July. Genealogist Alice Joseph

Welwyn Middle East briefing

Robin Hamilton-Taylor from the Israeli Embassy gave us insight into the current situation in the Middle East and readily answered ensuing questions.

Monica Rosenbaum

Cleve Road: History of the Royal Free Hospital

Dr Eva Blumenthal told us that William Marsden founded the hospital in 1828 in Hatton Garden as the London General Institution, which operated as a dispensary with a home visiting service. In 1835 the name was changed to Free Hospital. Under Queen Victoria, it became the Royal Free Hospital, the name by which it is known today as a leading NHS teaching hospital.

David Lang

Next meeting: 29 July. Tba

Edinburgh: Vienna today

Lilian Bell (née Heller) told us about her recent visit to Vienna with her brother John. The main reason for the trip was to visit the old Heller Printing Factory – owned by Lilian's family but confiscated in 1938. Most harrowing was seeing for the first time where her parents had lived next to the factory and then visiting her mother's childhood address. Happily, Lilian also met up with family still living in Vienna.

Philip Mason

Weald of Kent talk on English-Jewish history

We enjoyed a fascinating talk on 'Jews in England from the time of Disraeli' by Susannah Alexander, former Education Officer of the Jewish Museum. The session covered immigration, Zionism and Judaism today.

Janet Weston

Next meeting: 22 July. Tba

Leeds HSFA meetings

Dr Dolf Mogendorf's subject was 'Bystanders', an account of the experiences of Jews during the German occupation of the Netherlands. Some groups among the general population, he said, attempted to help Jews or to thwart the Nazi occupation in other ways. There were many examples of resistance but also many examples of compliance.

At a second meeting, Dr David Goodall explained that after WWII tourist travel to Germany was not possible until 1953. During his visits to Germany in 1955, 1956 and 1957, he heard remarks expressing antipathy towards the Russians but considerably less so towards the Nazis. Indeed, many of the Germans he met told highly implausible stories of being of Jewish descent and having suffered persecution under the Nazis.

Martin Kapel

Bristol/ Bath: Childhood in Vienna

Following a delicious lunch, thanks to Mr and Mrs Balint-Kurti's warm hospitality, we heard Otto Deutsch's moving recollections of his childhood in Vienna and his report on a recent visit to the city. This led to a stimulating discussion of our experiences with the present-day generation of Germans and Austrians.

Walter Finley

Oxford, Radlett and Welwyn joint trip to Wiener Library

The visit opened with a talk on the history of the library by its archivist, Howard Falksohn, and this was followed by a conducted tour. The Wiener Library collection is one of the world's most important archives on fascism, racism and antisemitism, particularly the Holocaust.

Fritz Starer

Gone With The Wind

It was the 90th birthday of my mother-in-law, Elisabeth Havas, and my wife Marianne and I took her to join 42 other AJR members and friends on a trip to a matinée performance of the controversial new musical version of the film *Gone With The Wind*.

As we were shown to our seats at the New Theatre in Drury Lane, we gazed up at an incredible set representing Confederate America in the 1860s. The set seemed to fill half the theatre, and our seats were right in the front so that we were practically a part of the show. My head was buzzed by the ladies' crinoline dresses more than once.

The story was familiar but no less involving for that. The two leads, Darius Danesh and Jill Paice, were stunningly handsome and sang very well. All right, the music was mostly unmemorable, and the show probably half an hour too long, but the audience all seemed to enjoy it – certainly we three did. Our thanks to the organising committee!

Fred Kornhauser

OTHER JULY MEETINGS

Regional Get-together in Radlett, 1 July
NE Kent Continental Friends, 3 July. *The Cardiff* 7 July. Details to be sent out separately
Norfolk 8 July. Lunchtime Social Get-together
Outing to Hatfield House for Hendon, HGS and Cleve Road Groups, 10 July
East Midlands (Nottingham) 14 July.
Lunchtime Social Get-together

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)
Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

Hertfordshire
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Iford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS

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Sunday 27 July 2008

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'Enemy aliens' meet for friendly fire

Once a month, a select group of ex-servicemen and women gather at the Imperial Café in Golders Green to reminisce about the wealth of experience they gained as 'enemy aliens' in the Second World War. Under the wing of Harry Rossney, this remarkable group has kept in touch in a very special way – looking out for each other. Plus, they are lucky enough to have Helen Fry, the author of *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: Germans Who Fought for Britain in the Second World War*, who has now become an honorary member. For Hazel and myself, it has certainly been a history lesson. Delighted to have been welcomed in. Thank you, Harry.

Esther Rinkoff

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Norfolk (Norwich)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

Oxford
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Radlett
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Sheffield
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Temple Fortune
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent
Max and Jane Dickson
01892 541026

Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road, London NW6
Tel: 020 7328 0208

KT-AJR

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Wed 2	Sheila Games
Thur 3	Margaret Opdahl
Mon 7	KT Lunch – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 8	CLOSED
Wed 9	Paul Coleman
Thur 10	Jen Gould
Mon 14	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 15	CLOSED
Wed 16	Jack Davidoff
Thur 17	Mark Rosen
Mon 21	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 22	CLOSED
Wed 23	Anita Elias
Thur 24	Ian Pirie
Mon 28	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 29	CLOSED
Wed 30	William Smith
Thur 31	Roy Blass

DIARY DATES

Sunday 20 July – Sunday 27 July
St Annes Holiday (Fernlea Hotel)

Sunday 21 Sept
AJR Tea at Hilton Watford

Sunday 26 October – Sunday 2 Nov
Eastbourne Holiday (Lansdowne Hotel)

For further information, please call us
on 020 8385 3070

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone
Linda Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an
appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merriem Avenue,
Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3070

Myrna Glass, London South and Midlands
Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birth

Congratulations to Linda Kasmir on the birth of another granddaughter.

Death

Lilly Kahn (Vogel), born in Charlottenburg, Berlin. My lovely mother passed away peacefully at Nightingale House on 7 April 2008. She always looked forward to Cleve Road meetings, so thanks to her friends and the organisers at the AJR. She will always be in our memory. Barbara and son-in-law Giorgio.

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THE HOLOCAUST CENTRE INVITES AJR MEMBERS TO THE POST-OPENING VIEWING OF 'THE JOURNEY' AT BETH SHALOM, THE HOLOCAUST CENTRE

in Laxton, near Nottingham
on Sunday 14 September 2008

'The Journey', partly created with a grant from the AJR Charitable Trust, tells the story of the Kindertransport - the refugees' escape from Nazi-occupied Europe to resettlement in Britain.

To reserve a place, please contact Susan Harrod at AJR head office on 020 8385 3070 by the beginning of August.

There are 60 invitations, which we are making available to members throughout the country on a first-come first-served basis.

Please let us know if you are concerned about travel - transport can be arranged from main centres.

Members who have already received invitations from Beth Shalom for the opening of 'The Journey' should reply directly to The Holocaust Centre.

HOLIDAY IN ISRAEL

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KINDERTRANSPORT 70TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ELY EVACUEES

In order to create a small exhibition on 23 November at JFS, we are looking for memorabilia - letters, pictures, photographs etc - from Kinder who were evacuated with JFS to Ely.

Please contact Andrea Goodmaker at the AJR on 020 8385 3070 if you have anything that might be suitable.

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OBITUARIES

Ruth Anderman, 1912-2008

Ruth Anderman was for many years a member of the Executive of the AJR. From the very beginning, she became devoted to the social work of the Association. When the AJR was asked to take responsibility for the selection of applicants wishing to become residents in the homes in The Bishops Avenue, Ruth Anderman became one of their most regular visitors.

She soon realised that help was needed for the elderly of the community, who wanted to retain their independence in their own homes. She conceived the Meals-on-Wheels scheme of the AJR, which started to become effective in 1972, and, with the help of dedicated volunteers, ran on a shoestring a successful and popular operation from Adamson Road in Swiss Cottage. The meals were cooked, packed, frozen and delivered under supervision. The drivers were instructed to ask customers if they had special needs.

Several years later, this operation extended to a Luncheon Club, which met in Adamson Road until the opening of the Day Centre



in Cleve Road.

There was a happy, cheerful aura about Ruth. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Marianne Hasseck

In the 1980s Ruth Anderman was responsible at Hannah Karminski House on a voluntary basis for the AJR's Meals-on-Wheels service. When the Day Centre at Cleve Road opened, the meals were cooked there and Ruth and her team continued to pack and deliver the meals.

Ruth also regularly visited the residents in Eleanor Rathbone House to see if they needed help and reported her findings to the AJR's Social Work team.

Ruth was extremely caring, very considerate and always approachable. She was full of vigour and was youthful for her age. Above all, she was a most generous person who was always willing to help others. A truly remarkable lady who was loved by all.

Sylvia Matus

Charles Danson, 1920-2008

Charles Eric Danson, who has died peacefully in Hampstead, was born Karl Erich Danielsohn in Berlin in 1920. His mother, Marga Neufeld, a professional concert pianist, was Arthur Schnabel's first pupil; his father, a physician, was passionate about opera. He adored his older sister Evi.

His childhood was blissfully happy. Visits to the opera were such a highlight of his young life that, aged 8, he decided to become an opera singer.

He emigrated to England at the age of 16. In 1937 he matriculated from the Quaker School in Great Ayton to study at the Royal College of Music.

In 1940 Charles volunteered to join the Pioneer Corps to secure his father's release from internment. In 1944, then in the Royal Tank Regiment, he was the 'sole survivor' whose tank was blown up during the Battle

of Arnhem' mentioned in the *AJR Journal's* October 2007 article 'The Legacy for Posterity'. He lost an eye. In Stalag XI B his life was saved by a surgeon who advised him to speak German with an English accent when translating for his German captors.

In 1946 he completed his studies at the Royal College of Music. In Charles's first professional engagement, Ralph Vaughan Williams chose him to play Master Slender in *Sir John in Love* at Sadler's Wells. Achieving his life's dream, he sang leading tenor roles with the Imperial Opera Company and was regularly engaged at the Edinburgh Festival and at Glyndebourne, where he also understudied Richard Lewis. His engagements encompassed a wide



range, including lieder and oratorios.

A progressive hearing loss forced Charles into an alternative career. In 1957 he joined the Ibbs and Tillett Concert Agency, where he managed the travel of internationally renowned musicians and eventually became a director.

Following his retirement in 1985, he worked for many years as a volunteer for the Wiener Library.

He was married to Ruth for 58 happy years. He enjoyed music, literature, theatre and travelling. Later, he gave others much pleasure with 'master classes' at home.

Good food, drink and witty conversation were integral to him. He is remembered for his erudition and sense of humour and as a quintessential gentleman.

He is deeply mourned, with love and gratitude, by Ruth and their daughters Jacqueline and Helen, and Helen's three sons.

Hans Freund, 1910-2007

I should like to add the following to the obituary of my father which appeared in the May issue.

For many years my father was closely connected with the AJR Day Centre. He gave numerous popular concerts on a regular basis, bringing a variety of artists with him and always selecting a wide range of familiar songs and music that endeared him to his audiences.

As he grew into old age, he attended the

Day Centre, which he so enjoyed and which cared for him so well. He attended until his last few days.

Members have asked for more details of his fortuitous escape from a PoW camp in the North African desert campaign during the Second World War. The South African 1st Brigade Headquarters was captured by Rommel's forces. Hans was wounded and imprisoned in a field hospital when a soldier

in the next bed was fatally hit. Later, Hans disabled a troop carrier by removing the distributor, only to replace it once 16 New Zealanders had hidden aboard. Hans donned a German soldier's desert cap and drove the troop carrier behind a convoy leaving camp, shouting vociferously in German to the Italian guards as he did so. And so they made their escape. 'It showed ingenuity and great bravery.'

David Freund



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



A tale of four chickens

This story was told to me by one of the *dramatis personae*, so I can vouch for its veracity.

It was the day before Pesach, and all over Israel people were preparing for the Seder (in Israel we have only one Seder – which is another good reason to live here). Almost everyone holds, or attends, a festive meal of one kind or another. For weeks before the festival a frenzy of preparations descends over the country. Houses are scrubbed, recipes exchanged, explanations brushed up. In effect, Pesach and the Seder become the focal point of life.

The turkey which friends had ordered for the festive meal from the local supermarket had failed to materialise. 'Choose any meat you like, and you'll get it at half price,' the manager said. So the friends, who originate from the USA (possibly explaining the decision to plump for turkey), decided to take four chickens instead. Yes, they decided, they would roast four chickens and that would constitute the main course for the Seder, providing sufficient meat for them and all their guests.

Once the four chickens had been brought home, *quelle horreur!* It transpired that they could not all fit into the oven. Actually, you would be hard put to find an oven in any home in Israel large enough to take four chickens at once. Panic. Visions of a Seder with no main course passed before our friends' eyes.

'I know what to do!', said the husband, whom we will call Robert in order to protect his identity. 'I'll take two of the chickens round to Susan and Mike, who will be our guests at the Seder, and ask them to cook them in their oven. When they come in the evening they can bring the chickens with them, and that will solve the problem.'

Robert's wife – let's call her Ilana – agreed to this solution. Susan and Mike

were duly informed of their luck and accepted readily. After all, isn't that what friends are for? Ilana got the chickens ready, put them in a roasting pan and sent her husband on his way.

Wearing the ragged shorts and T-shirt in which he had been helping with the last-minute preparations, Robert jumped into his car and sped over to their friends' house. The round trip was not expected to take long. Susan and Mike live not far away from them, in the same dormitory suburb just outside Jerusalem.

As fate, or policy, would have it, this was just the time, day and place that the police had decided to check drivers' licences. In Israel, it seems, drivers who have had their licences revoked because they have accumulated too many serious traffic violations tend to carry on driving regardless. A terrifyingly large proportion of accidents appear to involve drivers whose licences have been revoked.

Robert was stopped by a policeman and asked to show his licence. He did not have it on him, as he had just popped out of the house for a minute to take the chickens to the friends' oven and had not thought to take his documents with him. Driving without a licence is a grave offence. What was he to do?

'But, officer, this is an emergency,' Robert said, pointing to the chickens and explaining the situation – the possibility of a Seder with no main course and the host in the lock-up looming large before his eyes.

The policeman listened patiently while Robert told his sorry tale. 'Yes, you're right, it is an emergency,' he agreed at length and waved Robert on, wishing him *Chag Sameach*.

I wonder whether an English copper would have seen matters in quite the same light.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

Polish woman who helped Jews escape Nazi occupation dies aged 98

Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker instrumental in rescuing 2,500 Jewish children from the Nazis by smuggling them out of the Warsaw Ghetto and giving them false identities, has died at the age of 98. In 1965 she was one of the first Righteous Gentiles to be honoured by Yad Vashem. Recently, Polish President Kaczynski backed a campaign that put her name forward for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Shanghai database of refugees

Shanghai's Jewish community has celebrated the launch of a database that will document the stories of the thousands of refugees who fled there during the Second World War. At the present time, the database lists the names of some 600 of the 30,000 Jews who fled to Shanghai to escape Nazi persecution.

Germany sets up anti-Nazi hotline for parents

Germany has created a hotline and website for parents concerned that their children are associating with far-right extremists. The project is part of a campaign to curb rising neo-Nazi and hate and race crime in Germany.

German and European studies centre opened in Haifa

Germany's Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has opened a centre for German and European studies at the University of Haifa. The centre is meant to support a tradition of academic exchange between Israel and Germany and to honour Israel's 60th anniversary.

Holocaust conference in Albania

Israeli and European historians have gathered in Albania to study the Holocaust in that country. The conference was opened by Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha. According to official records, some 1,200 Jewish residents and refugees from other Balkan countries were hidden by Albanian families during the Second World War.

Hitler wax figure condemned

Plans to include an Adolf Hitler figure in the new, Berlin branch of Madame Tussauds wax museum have been attacked by critics. Johannes Tuchel, of the Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, said Germany had many historical museums which informed citizens about the Nazi regime and the Holocaust and that a waxworks exhibition could not provide the necessary explanation to treat this chapter of history.