



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Is it happening again?



On 14 May His Majesty The King visited Golders Green to show his solidarity with the Jewish community

David Herman looks at the alarming rise in antisemitism across Britain and calls for more British institutions to show their solidarity with British Jews.

Of course, there has been antisemitism in modern Britain from Cable Street in the 1930s and the antisemitic riots just after WW2 to the National Front in the 1970s. But this hardly compares to the alarming rise of Jew-hatred we have seen recently, and not just with the terrifying number of antisemitic hate marches and student demonstrations.

A number of leading figures have responded to the crisis, perhaps none more convincingly than the Royal family. On 14 May Prince Harry wrote a piece for *The New Statesman* warning of a 'really troubling' rise in antisemitism in Britain which has led to 'lethal violence' against the Jewish community. 'Nothing,' he wrote, 'whether criticism of a government

or the reality of violence and destruction, can ever justify hostility toward an entire people or faith... Hatred directed at people for who they are, or what they believe, is not protest. It is prejudice.' In the King's Speech in mid-May, King Charles – who just a few days later visited Golders Green to visibly show solidarity with the Jewish community – said, "My government will take urgent action to tackle antisemitism and ensure all communities here feel safe." And during the same week, while presenting the AJR's own Dr Bea Lewkowicz with her OBE, Prince William thanked her for all her work in recording Holocaust testimonies, especially in this current era of distortion, saying "It's important to preserve the truth."

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TOUGH TIMES

It can be difficult for a monthly magazine to stay abreast of developments in this fast-moving climate. In our lead article by David Herman we have tried to reflect the current mood, balancing this with our usual blend of Holocaust legacy and debate.

We are sure you will have your own views about the current situation and we encourage you to share them with other AJR members through the medium of this Journal. We also urge you to follow the AJR's social media accounts, for up to date news about what we are doing to promote Holocaust education and foster greater understanding and, hopefully, support for our special community.

We look forward to hearing anything you personally wish to share.

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

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Is it happening again? (cont.)

The Met Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, has said that the threat to British Jews is greater than it has been at any point in our history. The Prime Minister has spoken of “a pattern of rising antisemitism that has left our Jewish communities feeling frightened, angry, and asking whether this country, their home, is safe for them.” But what are they doing about it?

British Jews have even been made to feel unwelcome in the arts. The Royal Court Theatre was reported to the Charity Commission for allowing its staff to wear ‘Free Palestine’ badges. People working at Kings Place, which hosts Jewish Book Week every year, objected to the very idea that such a Jewish event should even be allowed to take place there. Then there is the story of Candida Gertler OBE, a German art philanthropist who has donated millions to help struggling young artists, who publicly resigned from all her voluntary art positions – including the Tate – as “...an act of principled protest against the alarming rise of antisemitism”.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism responded to Gertler’s decision by writing, ‘When a patron of the art scene like Ms Gertler feels as though she has no other choice..... this must be a wake-up call for all of those not yet aware of what is happening in this country.’

Shockingly, more than a thousand artists and ‘art workers’ signed an open letter calling on The Tate to cut ties with Gertler’s charity. Signatories include the current Turner Prize nominee Jasleen Kaur, as well as past Turner Prize winners Helen Cammock, Lawrence Abu Hamdan and Charlotte Prodger, according to *Art Newspaper*.

Another high profile incident concerned a display at the British Museum which referred to ‘Palestine’, which the Museum justified by writing (in response to a complaint) that ‘...the term ‘Palestine’ is well-established in Western and Middle Eastern scholarship to refer to this historic region, without particular reference to individual cultural groups or political entities that have developed in the region in the past or more recently.’

The historian Simon Sebag Montefiore

responded, ‘Here is a classic, somewhat absurd case of progressive presentist inversion and distortion of history in the captioning at the British Museum... Canaan is probably the right word here. Or even Judea. Or even Holy Land. But not Palestine since Hadrian redesignated Judea as part of Syria-Palestina around 135AD which is over a thousand years later and in a different world.... But we do expect high standards from The British Museum.’

There have also been numerous anti-Israeli protests and sit-ins at some of our leading universities, including at the Oxford Union, where one observer later commented ‘never in my lifetime have I seen such appalling mob-incited unbridled Jew hatred’.

This is quite a range of cultural institutions: The British Museum, The Oxford Union, The Tate and The Royal Court. And more recently, of course, there have been a number of disturbing acts of violence against Jews in Britain including a murderous attack on a synagogue near Manchester, ambulances belonging to a Jewish charity in north London being firebombed, and Jews being physically attacked in the street. Not long after the murders in Manchester a car drove past with its passengers chanting “Babykillers” at the Jewish worshippers. Not at Israeli politicians, but at Jews at worship.

Writing in *The Jewish Chronicle* on 8 May, the Chief Rabbi told how, during a recent meeting at Kenton United Synagogue, many attendees said, ‘Our parents always told us that we were the lucky ones. We would never in our lifetime see the Jew-hatred which was so rampant when they were growing up, Sadly, that was not to be.’ Sir Ephraim Mirvis went on, ‘Over recent weeks, something has changed. Most of us feel it, even if we struggle to describe it. It is the feeling that the ground we thought was solid has moved beneath our feet. Our country that we love and cherish no longer feels safe.’

There has been consistent anti-Israel bias on BBC TV and radio programmes and Sky News. Reporters and presenters have spoken frequently and emotionally about “genocide” and “famine” in Gaza, they have conducted uncritical interviews with spokesmen and women from NGOs and doctors working in hospitals in Gaza

and Palestinian civilians. And have the executives at the BBC and Sky News taken action? Have they publicly called for greater balance in their reporting? Have they reminded presenters and reporters of their obligations as the public face of TV and radio news programmes?

In the meantime, how have they covered the effects of all this on Jewish life in Britain? The security people outside synagogues, Jewish schools and Jewish cultural organisations and the huge financial and emotional burdens of this?

Many MPs also speak frequently of “genocide” and “famine” in Gaza. For sure, some do this out of principle and belief, but I wonder whether they are also canvassing Muslim votes in borderline constituencies? They have long been careful what they say about grooming gangs and illegal migration, now many are careful what they say about antisemitism.

I have never seen anything like this in my lifetime. Hate marches against Israel, violent attacks on Jews and synagogues, the marginalisation of Jews in our art institutions, Jewish students made to feel unsafe in our universities.

The King’s recent visit to Golders Green is exactly the type of leadership the Jewish community has been calling for: to recognise that this is a time to demonstrate backing for British Jews. He brought a feelgood factor from which we can all derive great comfort and reassurance.

It coincided with a letter published by The Together Coalition that similarly expresses support for the Jewish community and states – in plain language – that Jews are integral to British society. The list of signatories, from across the breadth of the nation and the fabric of society, is impressive and I hope represents sentiment felt by the vast majority of this country.

Surely it is time for our leading politicians, from all parties, our universities and other leading cultural institutions, to join with the Royals and The Together Coalition to show solidarity with Britain’s Jews before things get much, much worse? So far, many of their responses have been weak and disappointing. This is not good enough.

Cooking up a storm

Thousands of people are now enjoying cooking with the AJR thanks to our new series of Instagram posts featuring AJR members sharing their skills and experiences with younger people.

The first post features AJR member Ruth Sands, who is French but was born in Vienna, teaching influencer Ben Rebeck how to make a chicken schnitzel sandwich. Within just a week it had been watched over 150,000 times, been liked by over 8,000 people and reposted 1,500+ times.



HOLOCAUST GALLERIES REACH ALMOST TWO MILLION

A group of AJR members recently visited the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Galleries and learned about the Museum's Holocaust Learning Programme, which is supported by an educational grant from the AJR.

Since reopening in 2021, the galleries have attracted over 1.9 million visitors, including 40,000 secondary schoolchildren. The IWM's Head of Public History, James Bulgin, described how the galleries were revamped, while Clare Lawlor, Clore Holocaust Curator, explained how their accompanying educational programme aims to strike the right balance between museum and classroom learning, and provoking thought.

The AJR party was certainly impressed with the written materials, which are both thorough and easy to understand, and how thoughtfully the galleries are presented. The IWM is keen to hear from any additional AJR members willing to donate letters, diaries, documents, objects or photographs – please contact clawlor@iwm.org.uk

Janet Weston



ABE FOXMAN ז"ל

The AJR was sad to learn of the passing of Abe Foxman.

Abraham Foxman was a former hidden child who grew up to become a chief warrior against antisemitism on the world stage. Born in Belarus in 1940, he was left with his nanny when his parents were taken away by the Nazis. She protected him and together they made their way to the United States.

Under Abe's leadership the anti-hate watchdog, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), became one of the most influential advocacy organisations in the USA.



Abe Foxman being honoured during an ADL gala dinner in 2014

JOIN US IN POLAND THIS OCTOBER

This Autumn the AJR will be running our first heritage tour of Poland.

Join us between 11-15 October to visit once the largest and most vibrant Jewish community in the world, home to 3.3 million Jews before the Holocaust.

We will look at Jewish history from the Middle Ages to today, learning how our ancestors lived, thrived, resisted and perished. Expert educators and guides will aim to strengthen our knowledge of our cultural heritage and carry its legacy forwards. In Warsaw we will be welcomed by the Chief Rabbi of Poland and enjoy dinner with the local Jewish community. We will then travel by coach west to Lodz, the city with the second largest Jewish population pre-war, and south to Lublin, to learn of Jewish life in the middle ages. We will also visit the Majdanek and Treblinka

death camps, learn of pre-war Jewish life in Tykocin, and of the tragedy at the Lopochowa mass grave. Back in Warsaw we will follow the Path of Heroism to the POLIN Museum.

This is a unique opportunity to experience Poland in the company of fellow descendants, and maybe even extend your trip to include Auschwitz or Krakow or other places not on our itinerary.

Places are limited, so priority will be given to those with a Polish family history or who have not yet participated in an AJR heritage trip.

Email nextgens@ajr.org.uk for price information and booking.

A Lifelong Search for Sigmund

MY JOURNEY THROUGH HOLOCAUST MEMORY

AJR member Peter Phillips has spent years wondering about the fate of his long lost cousin.

I am 90 years old, and my story begins in Vienna in 1939. At just three years old, I had to flee the Austrian capital with my parents, Dr. Marcus and Betti Pfeffer, arriving safely in London on 21 February. At the time, Vienna was home to around 170,000 Jews. By the end of the Second World War, only 800 remained.

Throughout the war years, my family lived in constant fear and uncertainty, wondering whether their relatives had managed to escape Nazi persecution. My mother, Betti, was especially anxious about her sister Erna, her brother-in-law Adolf, and her beloved niece – whom I remembered as Sarah. She was my first cousin.

As the war drew to a close, efforts to trace missing family members began. The news was devastating. First, the family was told that my Aunt Erna and her husband Uncle Adolf had perished in Auschwitz. Later records revealed that in 1942 they were deported to Maly Trostenets in Belarus, where they were forced to dig their own graves before being shot.

But the fate of their daughter – known at the time as Sarah – remained unclear.

A breakthrough came when my Uncle Abraham, Sarah's father, travelled to Bergen Belsen concentration camp immediately after its liberation by British forces. There: he found Sarah's husband, Wilhelm Bieler, known as Willi. Starved and gravely ill, Willi died shortly after being found. However, before his death, he revealed one crucial detail: Abraham had become a grandfather.

This discovery marked the beginning of a decades-long mystery – what had become of the child?

Further investigation revealed that 'Sarah' was in fact born Sonya. (Under the Nazis all Jewish women had to be called "Sarah" and all Jewish men called "Israel"). She and



Peter, together with his grandson Josh

Willi had married in Vienna shortly before the Anschluss in March 1938, when Nazi Germany annexed Austria.

Following the violence of Kristallnacht in November that year, and the deportation of Jewish men to Dachau, the couple fled to Tarnopol, then part of Poland. They had visited there and thought it was a safe haven. Soon after they had a child.

Their refuge was short-lived. Within two years, Sonya and Willi were arrested and deported to Auschwitz. Despite the horrors of the camp, both initially survived.

But as Soviet forces advanced, prisoners were forced on brutal death marches toward Germany. Many perished along the way – I believe Sonya was among them.

Willi survived the march and was sent to Bergen-Belsen, where he was kept alive temporarily because he was a doctor and could assist other prisoners. Starvation eventually claimed his life.

And what of their child? For decades, the question lingered unanswered. Did the child die in the camps, or survive?

It was my grandson, Josh – an enthusiast of ancestry and historical research – who provided a vital lead. Through meticulous examination of records, Josh uncovered the



The only surviving photograph of Peter's uncle Abraham

child's name: Sigmund.

There had once been hope. Uncle Abraham, who would have been the child's grandfather, considered adopting the boy.

The child had attached himself to my uncle and Abraham felt there was a definite bond between them. Besides, the boy had red hair just like his daughter Sonya.

However, Abraham's wife, my aunt Berta, opposed the idea, believing they were too old to raise a child – especially one whose identity could not be fully confirmed.

From that point on, Sigmund's fate disappeared into the shadows of history.

Today, I continue to ask the same haunting questions: Did Sigmund perish in Bergen-Belsen, like his father? Was he adopted by another family? Could he still be alive somewhere in the world?

With over 70,000 refugees admitted to the United Kingdom during and after the war, I cannot help but wonder – was Sigmund among them? Might he even be living amongst us?

After nearly nine decades, the search for answers continues.

Peter Phillips, born Peter Pfeffer.



COMING HOME TO NOTTINGHAM

This April, with the help of a grant from the AJR, a Czech theatre group from Brno performed *The Story of The Book* at the Nottingham Liberal Synagogue (NLS), the venue central to the play's plot.

The play tells of Cornelius Strach's prayer book being returned to his granddaughter, decades after Cornelius and his family were deported in 1942 from their home in Brno to Theresienstadt. Cornelius and his wife were later murdered in Auschwitz.

Seventy-two years later, a curator at the Jewish Museum in Prague was examining the museum's collection of prayer books that had been retrieved from concentration camps when he noticed an inscription in one of the books. The unusual surname of Strach struck him, as his wife knew someone with that name. The inscription also included references to a block in Terezin, where Strach must have been held at the time, and the dates of that year's High Holy days.

A series of remarkable coincidences then occurred, stretching from the Czech Republic to Israel and then to Uxbridge, where Cornelius Strach's granddaughter, Angela, finally welcomed the prayer book back into her family.

Angela later spoke about the book's improbable return at one of Nottingham Liberal Synagogue's annual Czech Scroll services,

where the NLS community honours the lost Jewish communities from which their two Czech Memorial scrolls came – Slavkov (formerly Austerlitz) and Kamenice. Angela's paternal family originated from Slavkov and her father, Eric Strach, a retired orthopaedic surgeon from Liverpool, spent childhood weekends and holidays there with his grandparents. Upon discovering an article that Eric had written for his own synagogue in Liverpool, NLS members reached out to him, and Eric became an honorary member of NLS and worked with its community to honour the memory of the Czech Jews who were murdered. After Eric's own death Angela embraced her father's passion and she too became a friend of NLS.

A Czech playwright spotted something that Angela had written about the prayer book and it inspired him to write a play: *The Story of the Book*.

The Brno Jewish theatre group, organised by Stetl Fest, has performed the play many times in the Czech Republic, and also in New York, Germany, France and London, but had always wanted to 'bring the story home' to Nottingham. The NLS' Czech Scrolls group enthusiastically agreed, resulting in the local premier in April. After the performance, Angela spoke movingly about her father, Eric, using the presentation she has created with the help of the Generation to Generation (G2G) charity.

The performance in Nottingham was supported by local sponsors as well as the AJR.

COLLECTING ANTIQUES

AJR members in Pinner brought a wide range of different heirlooms and memorabilia along to our recent meeting, to be examined and valued by Andy and Ryan from the Antique Collective in nearby Chorleywood.

Andy and Ryan work closely with Eric Knowles, whose main interests are in ceramics and glass and who appears regularly on the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow*.



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication and respectfully points out that the views expressed in the letters published are not necessarily the views of the AJR. Please address any letters to editorial@ajr.org.uk.

OF NOTE

As a Holocaust Survivor I gave a talk on behalf of the Holocaust Education Trust at the Foreign Office last year and was welcomed by the Permanent Secretary, Olly Robbins, in his office with a cup of coffee and biscuits.

He then introduced me and listened to my talk. At other government ministries I have always been welcomed by a Junior Minister or deputy. Olly Robbins also sent me a hand written letter of thanks. I have been giving my talks for some time and this has never happened before!

Ivan Shaw

THANK YOU AJR

Having just returned with my daughters after an exhausting, enervating and exciting pilgrimage to Vienna. I am writing to thank all the AJR colleagues who are helping me so generously with time and funding.

We found the addresses where I was born, where we lived, to where we were shunted before our escape. We also visited the plaque which memorialises my aunt, who was murdered in Auschwitz, and the graves of my paternal grandparents and aunts in the Jewish cemetery. Our wonderful guide Stefan, who was recommended by you, escorted and gave us such detailed information about our family which he had carefully researched and visited various memorials and without whom we would have been lost.

The hotel you also recommended was central and perfect for us, thank you.

Finally may I thank you for the generous payments you have just made to me. They couldn't have come at a more fortuitous time.

You are a truly wonderful organisation – no family – for which we all must be grateful.

Peter Gildener

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

I was delighted to see the tour of the 'Between Life and Death' exhibition

mentioned in the May edition of the AJR Journal.

I was privileged to visit the exhibition in Worcester in February, and found it extremely interesting and moving.

The information and photos brought the stories to life, sometimes feeling emotional at the kindness and bravery of those who rescued and those who were rescued; at other times feeling harrowing emotions, looking at video footage of the atrocities perpetrated on those innocent victims.

I would highly recommend to the readers of the *AJR Journal* to visit the exhibition if possible, in Salford or London.

It will stay with you for a long time.

Heidy Hague

HOW MANY ARE WE REALLY?

The recently published annual report of the AJR, for the year 2025, showed 465 'first generation' members. If I remember rightly, there were more than 600 in 2024, showing how many passed last year. But I wonder how many more refugees and Holocaust survivors there really are in the UK? As many are not AJR members or may not even think of themselves as refugees or survivors.

For example, I have a 100-year-old friend who rejects the refugee label. She came to England as the young child of a family who moved to England in the mid-1930s with their wealth and possessions before the anti-Jewish policies of the Nazis were implemented. Others came to the UK to go to school.

For many years – married to a non-Jewish, English wife – being a Jewish refugee played very little part in my life. I did not join the AJR until I was 69 years old and have only participated in their activities more recently.

During the war I was fortunate to be a member of a small Reform Jewish Community in Amersham, where I celebrated my barmitzvah. But during the last eighty years I have not participated in Jewish worship except for weddings,

funerals, barmitzvahs and commemorative events, and I have no involvement with any local Jewish community.

Many refugees who came to Britain moved on – to the USA, Israel, Australia and elsewhere. Others don't consider their origins to be that relevant to their current identity. Some, taken in by non-Jewish families, may not even be aware of their origins. Some years ago, I attended a conference that showed much academic research and information about all the refugees from the Nazis. And now, working for the AJR, Dr Amy Williams is revealing amazing information.

We are a very diverse group.

John Farago

MICHAEL SPIRO Z" L

Michael Spiro's family and I are very grateful to the AJR for publishing his obituary in your April edition.

I have just renewed my AJR membership and, as usual, have made an extra donation. This year it's by way of a thank you!

Arthur Fleiss

JOSEPH PEREIRA

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LOOKING FOR?

PHOTOS NEEDED

AJR Life President Andrew Kaufman is compiling a book of obituaries for the AJR which have been included in the AJR Journal. He is keen to obtain further information, and especially photos, about the following: **Ruth Berlak, Owen Franklyn, Henry Grant, Ilse Joseph, Ludwig Koch, Lieselotte Montague and Rolf Schild.**
ackaufman7@gmail.com

ILSE PRAGER/KESSLER

Jenny Lavey is hoping to trace the wonderful family, or their descendants, who so generously took her grandmother, Ilse Prager (later Kessler), into their home. Ilse – top left in the picture – travelled via a Kindertransport from Berlin. She lost her entire family in the war, including her sister Marianne Prager Joachim who was a member of the Herbert Baum Resistance Group.

Ilse herself eventually settled in Baltimore, USA, where she passed away in 1995. Jenny would love to be in contact with the family who first gave her grandma a home here in Britain, and also to know who the other people are in this photo (she believes that one may be called Rudy).
jenny@jennylavey.com

KOL HAKOVOD CYNTHIA

The AJR wishes to congratulate our Cornwall-based member **Cynthia Hollinsworth, who was a finalist in the recent Magen David Adom Bridge to Israel Community Organiser Award.**

The daughter of two Holocaust survivors, Cynthia has channelled her personal history into a lifetime of community action in Cornwall. For many years she has been at the forefront of Holocaust education across the county, visiting schools, speaking at public events and working alongside faith leaders, communities and interfaith organisations to ensure that the stories of survivors are remembered and understood by younger generations.

In a part of the UK with a tiny Jewish community, this work has required both dedication and creativity. Since the Hamas attacks on 7 October, Cynthia has mobilised that same network of Jewish and Christian friends and allies in a remarkable show of solidarity. In towns across Cornwall – from Truro to St Ives – small groups gathered regularly, sometimes on windswept beaches or in public squares, to raise awareness of those who were taken captive and the families left behind.

Cynthia is also founder of Cornwall Friends of Israel, which grew from a WhatsApp group into a network for advocacy and solidarity, and has given several interviews to radio and TV in this guise. Most recently, on Yom HaShoah, she was



Cynthia Hollinsworth on Revelation TV

interviewed on *Revelation TV* about her parents' remarkable stories of surviving the Holocaust, as well as the fate of her mother's precious Shabbat candlesticks. She also spoke about the AJR.

Watch Cynthia's full interview on <https://revelationtv.com/watch-video/the-middle-east-report-the-story-of-the-holocaust-shabbat-candlesticks-149183>

SOLLY'S CENTENARY

The AJR wishes a hearty mazeltov to our member **Solly Ohayon, who celebrated his 100th birthday last month.**

AJR Trustee Danny Kalman visited Solly at his home in Hampstead Garden Suburb, where Solly told him how much he has enjoyed participating in various AJR trips around Britain.

Solly was born in the UK and met Bertha, his late wife, in Buckingham at a camp for young people preparing for Aliyah. Bertha was born in Poland but her family moved to Vienna. After sending Bertha on a Kindertransport Bertha's mother was shot in Riga and her father was murdered at Buchenwald.



Danny Kalman and Solly Ohayon

Solly and Bertha married in 1948 and lived in Haifa for a number of years before returning to the UK where Solly joined the family engineering business. Married for 72 years, they had two daughters and a son, and Solly now has eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN @ 75

The 1951 Festival of Britain was a nationwide exhibition and celebration aimed at boosting national morale, showcasing British industrial design, technology, and the arts, and promoting recovery from post-war austerity. Held from May to September, it featured a major exhibition in London, showcasing mid-century modern design, and events across the UK covering every aspect of British culture.

It was the brainchild of Labour minister, Herbert Morrison, who wanted to give the people a feeling of successful recovery from the devastation caused by the war. The Festival's centre was London's South Bank around the new modernist Royal Festival Hall (the refugee Peter Moro played an important part in its construction as its detail designer). But there were also events in Poplar (Architecture – The Lansbury Estate), Battersea (the Festival Pleasure Gardens), South Kensington (Science) and Glasgow (Industrial Power). Celebrations also took place all over the country, including Cardiff, Stratford-on-Avon, Bath, Perth, Bournemouth, York, Aldeburgh, Inverness, Cheltenham, Oxford, Norwich, Canterbury.

The Festival of Britain played a crucial role in the emergence of a new generation of Jewish refugees who made such an impact on post-war British culture. Part of the story is told by Owen Hatherley in his recent book, *The Alienation Effect: How Central European Emigres Transformed the British Twentieth Century* (2025). For example, Bill Brandt's last story for *Picture Post* was in 1950, on the new world of the Festival of Britain. '[T]he émigré contribution to the Festival was significant,' Hatherley writes. 'In fact, the Festival can be seen as an immense showcase for émigré artists and sculptors, though this was hardly stressed by its organizers.'



Leaflet promoting the 'Anglo-Jewish Exhibition 1851-1951', held at University College London between 9 July and 3 August 1951 as part of the Festival

Hatherley describes two large-scale works by refugees which were prominently displayed in the Festival. One was Feliks Topolski's famous *Cavalcade of the Commonwealth* and another was Josef Herman's radiant mural of coal miners, still on display at the Glyn Vivian Museum in Swansea, arguably his best-known work and the one that established his reputation. There was also, Hatherley writes, 'a playful Guinness-sponsored mechanical clock at Battersea Pleasures Gardens, designed by two other Polish refugees, Jan Lewitt and George Him.'

Hatherley continues, 'Two of the largest of the monumental, almost Soviet modernist-realist hybrid sculptures displayed at prominent places on the South Bank were by émigrés: *The Islanders* by the Viennese Siegfried Charoux, a gargantuan, slightly cubistic concrete family in high relief on a vast concrete slab; and *The Sunbathers* by the Hungarian Peter Peri, again featuring massive, slightly abstracted realist figures, this time naked...'. These paved the way for later publicly commissioned sculptures by refugees, such as the Croatian-born Oscar Nemon, the Jewish-Estonian sculptor Dora Gordine, and the German Uli Nimpf.

In his unpublished book on *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, written during the Festival, the German refugee



The enormous sculptural relief *The Islanders* by Siegfried Charoux, a refugee from Vienna, was installed on the South Bank where it was viewed by thousands of people

art historian Nikolaus Pevsner argued that 'the great European importance' of the Festival of Britain was that '...it revealed, in rigorously modern architectural terms, the rebirth of this English concept of the picturesque', where planning is '...intricate, complicated and full of surprises'.

The Festival's 'official Church', St. John's Church, near Waterloo, included two murals by the refugee artist Hans Feibusch. According to Hatherley: 'These are straightforwardly the brightest works to have been placed in a British church since the Middle Ages...a strange combination of anguish and sweetness'.

An even better guide to the role of refugees in The Festival of Britain is *Insiders Outsiders: Refugees from Nazi Europe and Their Contribution to British Visual Culture* (2018), a book of essays edited by Monica Bohm-Duchen. In Daniel Snowman's Introduction, he mentions the structural engineering of the Festival's famous 'Skylon', by Felix Samuely, how the young Lucian Freud received one of his earliest commissions from the Festival and "contributions from a wide variety of émigré designers and engineers."

Then there are refugee graphic designers. Dorrit Dekk received graphics commissions for the *Land Travelling*

Exhibition at the Festival, while the Viennese graphics designer George Adams (né Georg Teltscher) also received commissions from the Festival. Artists like H.A. Rotholz and FHK Henrion did a great deal of graphic work for the Festival and the work of Viennese textile designer, Jacqueline Groag, also featured prominently.

According to an essay by Harriet Atkinson, *Artists, Refugees and the Festival of Britain* (p.223-229), the number of refugee artists contributing to the Festival was partly due to the sheer scale of the Festival. 'Hundreds of artists,' she writes, 'were engaged to work on the festival's multifaceted, nationwide endeavour: as model-makers, mosaicists, muralists, sculptors and painters.'

Then there was the physical expanse of the Festival which facilitated the creation of huge works, like Peter Peri's *The Sunbathers*, and Siegfried Charoux's *The Islanders*, which stood outside the Sea and Ships Pavilion on the South Bank.

The Festival not only gave many artists and sculptors the opportunity to exhibit their work at major venues, but also encouraged new collaborations, resulting in lasting design consultancies and architectural practices, in commissions and lifelong friendships. The Arts Council commissioned 60 paintings to mark the Festival, including work by refugees Martin Bloch and Hans Feibusch.

Many architects were hired to work on the Festival's buildings, most famously The Royal Festival Hall, the only South Bank building made which remained on the site after 1951. German-born architect HJ Reifenberg designed the imposing Power and Production Pavilion on the South Bank. The Hungarian Modernist architect Ernő Goldfinger, who had arrived in 1934, was hired to design small sales kiosks to be dotted around the site. Polish-born architect Broniek Katz designed a stone-clad building for the Homes and Gardens Pavilion.

Though many of these refugees were Jewish, their Jewishness was barely

acknowledged except in the Jewish press. One major exception was the *Anglo-Jewish Exhibition 1851-1951*, mounted at University College London by the Ben Uri Arts Gallery as a contribution to the Festival. The exhibition aimed to show the historic roots of the Anglo-Jewish community and how it had contributed to British national life. It especially emphasised the Jewish contribution to charity and to British public life. It was a sign of the times, but one which is unlikely to get much attention in the wider media coverage of this very special anniversary.


TRIP TO ST. ANNE'S
TUESDAY 4 AUGUST



Join AJR for lunch in the shul and an afternoon by the sea. Transport provided from Salford and, potentially, from Liverpool.

 michalmocton@ajr.org.uk


** NEW **
AJR ART CLASS
MONDAY 22 JUNE 2026
11am – 12:30pm



Try your hand at watercolours in a friendly and sociable setting, in our new, monthly art class in Finchley, North London

Cost per session: £10

 karendiamond@ajr.org.uk


AJR RAMBLERS CLUB



Our next walk will take place on:
MONDAY 20 JULY 2026 at 11am

Meeting at a North West London station
There is no charge to come for a ramble.

 karendiamond@ajr.org.uk


KINDER LUNCH
THURSDAY 18 JUNE AT 12PM



With guest speaker
Nicola Strauther
Director of Learning and Education
The National Holocaust Museum

We would be delighted for all Kinder and their descendants to join us for an informal lunch at a North London venue, details to be advised upon booking.

 susan@ajr.org.uk


**TRIP TO THE
IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM
NORTH**



17 JUNE 2026 – 2PM

**THE QUAYS,
TRAFFORD WHARF ROAD,
MANCHESTER M17 1TZ**

Introductory talk,
then free to go round the exhibitions.
No charge Onsite parking

 michalmocton@ajr.org.uk


**WALKING TOUR OF HOVE
– WITH A JEWISH TWIST**
TUESDAY 14 JULY



Join AJR at the seaside for a fascinating insight into local Jewish history, led by an accredited tour guide, and while enjoying Hove's magnificent promenade and elegant Regency architecture.

An easy train journey from London,
with lunch by the sea

 roshart@ajr.org.uk

Annelly Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street
(off New Bond Street)
Tel: 020 7629 7578
Fax: 020 7491 2139

**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

All thanks to a ph

A chance meeting outside a café in rural France led Jo Briggs who was saved from the Holocaust and who went on



Walter & Ilse with Ruth before they left Germany



Walter behind the counter at Wallace Heaton



Inez with her Opa



"It belonged to my mother, she was a refugee from Nazi Germany," said the lady at the next table, when I cheekily asked about her necklace, having been surprised to see a *magendavid* in the lush agricultural Dordogne region, where signs of Jewish life are these days very few and far between.

It turned out the lady – Inez O'Hara – is British, and was born to a German Jewish mother and an Irish Catholic father. Her mother, Ruth, had arrived in England in December 1938 together with her parents, Walter and Ilse Emanuel.

According to his obituary in *The Photographic Journal*, Walter Daniel Emanuel – whose mother's family once owned the large Lowenstein outfitters in Munich – was 'the doyen of the British photo trade for half a century' whose name became '...a household word to millions of photographers worldwide'. He had caught the photography bug as young boy and, on leaving school, studied at the Munich State Technical School of Photography and Cinematography until straitened financial circumstances prevented him from furthering his formal education. Instead he was apprenticed at a photographic company in Frankfurt, then moved to the Munich store of a leading German photo chain. There he

showed his promotional flair, rapidly rising to become their leading technical, sales and marketing man. In order to market the first Leica cameras he arranged a Sunday promotion in Munich Zoo, borrowing 100 cameras which were then loaned for the day to potential customers. It was a huge success. During this period Walter also made what is believed to be the first-ever documentary film about photography, *Amateur Photography in 60 Minutes*.

But on a cold November morning in 1938 the future for him and his new wife, Ilse, who he had married in 1936, looked bleak. A visit from the Gestapo led to the brutality of Dachau. Their saviour was photo dealer Jack Turner of Newcastle, who secured Walter's release, claiming that he had already contracted him to work for him as a photo instructor. Walter, Ilse and three-months-old Ruth fled to England, complete with their household belongings, although all valuables were confiscated at the border.

They settled in Whitley Bay, just north of Newcastle, and Walter commenced work at Turner's Photographic. The local tiny émigré community met every Friday evening at their house, with each couple contributing a shilling to help with the cost. Their time there was short-lived, due to Walter being interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man, but the family remained forever

grateful to Jack Turner, who established one of the North East's most successful photographic businesses. Turner was not himself Jewish, but clearly had strong links with our community, selling his business in 1962 to the Jacobson Family Trust.

Meanwhile the Emanuel family settled in Wimbledon after the war, and Walter began his 32 years with leading camera shop Wallace Heaton. The famous store at 127 New Bond Street saw many famous visiting celebrities and was appointed to the Royal Family. Even after being bought by Dixons Group in 1972, the Bond Street shop continued to operate under the Wallace Heaton name and retained its Royal Warrant for several years.

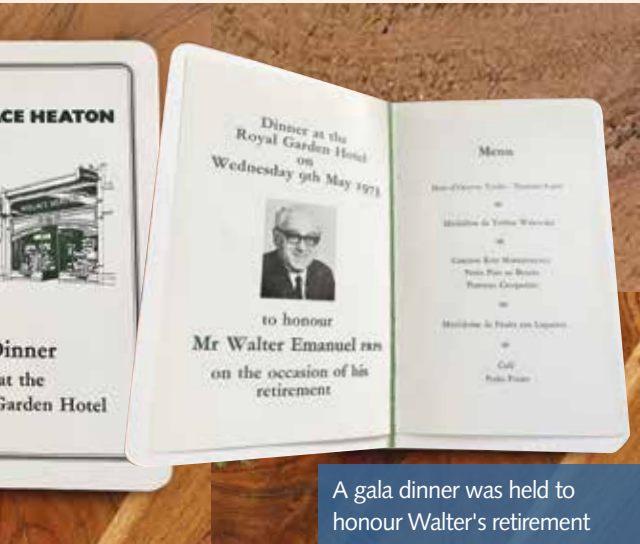
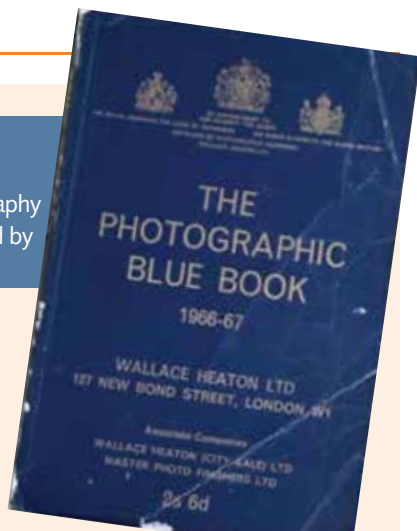
Walter gradually rose from salesman to joint managing director. He wrote every advertisement for the store and edited its quarterly magazine. He also authored the firm's regularly updated *Photographic Blue Book*, which sold close to two million copies during the quarter-century of its existence. Separately, in Walter's own time and under his pen name of W.D. Emanuel, he wrote 74 books for the Focal Press, which led to him being offered a Fellowship to the Royal Photographic Society.

But perhaps his greatest legacy was his unflinching customer service and contagious

Photographer's vision

to discover this wonderful story of a German photographer
to inspire generations of aspiring British photographers.

The Blue Book of photography authored by Walter



A gala dinner was held to honour Walter's retirement



Inez's tattoo charm bracelet



One of the many adverts for Wallace Heaton written by Walter

enthusiasm. As one grateful customer recalled, he made sure his customers bought exactly the right camera for their particular needs and left the store with a thorough understanding of how to use it and how to become more creative with their photography. 'Today, I find I cannot get assistants to even acknowledge my existence... without a gold American Express card or a fistful of yen,' wrote one David Coan after reading of Walter's death in 1992. 'W.D.Emanuel was an exceptional man. I am glad I met him'.

The Emanuels' relationship with religion was complex. After the war Walter professed himself to be an atheist, while Ilse actively practiced Catholicism and insisted on educating Ruth at a local Catholic convent. Nevertheless Ruth, who passed away in 2019, was very aware of her Jewish heritage. Although she herself married a Catholic and sent her two daughters to a convent school, she proudly wore a *magendavid* – the same one that drew my attention to Inez.

In fact Inez has gone one step further, prominently featuring a Star of David within the 'charm bracelet' that she had tattooed around her wrist for her 60th birthday. Alongside the *magendavid* are other tattoos relating to her identity, including an emblem and the flag for the Republic of Ireland and Ghana, where she was born.

"I am very proud of my mixed heritage," she told me. "I think it's great to be the product of so many different races and nationalities. My bracelet tattoo is a constant reminder that people are all the same underneath, irrespective of where they were born or raised. In my opinion, there should never be any place for racial intolerance."

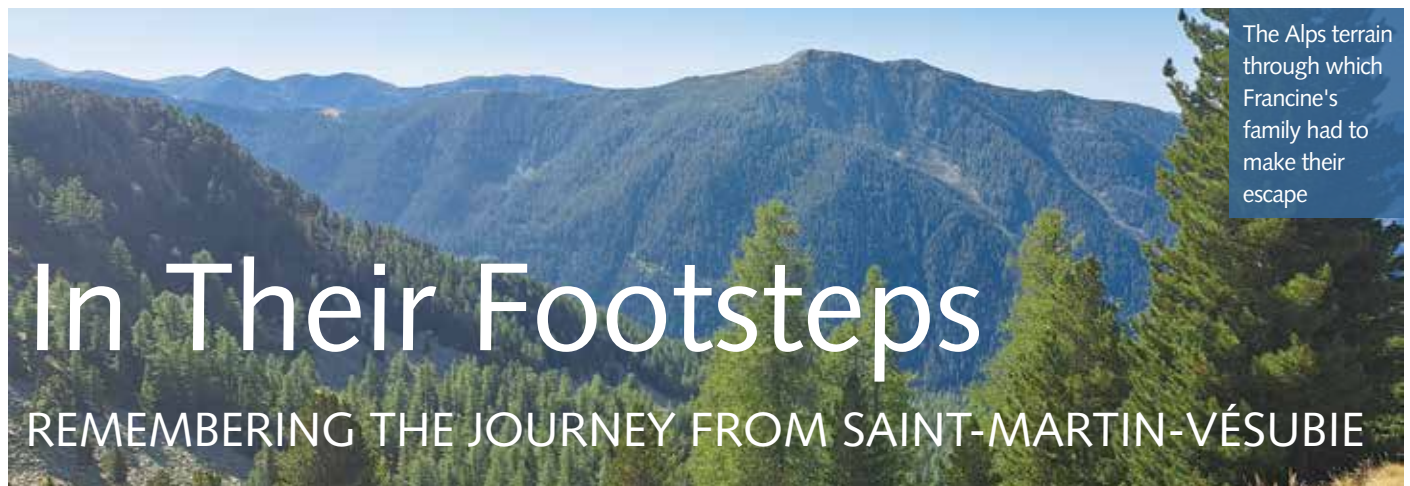
I asked her how her mother's and grandparents' lived experiences of the Holocaust had affected them. Walter & Ilse always kept a very warm and welcoming home and made monthly donations to various charities, but never spoke about what happened in Germany. They had no desire to live there again but were happy to visit. In contrast, Ruth was adamantly anti-German and suffered from anxiety even as a young girl. She was fastidious about her appearance and made sure her home always looked like a showhouse. Mess was not tolerated and her daughters were allowed to have only one playmate to visit at any one time. Yet if any genuinely big problems arose, she would take them in her stride.

Inez – who is named after her mother's cousin Ines – has visited Germany herself, including Dachau, which she found "very eerie". She has yet to visit Israel, despite having several members of her extended

family there. Other members of the Emanuel-Lowenstein families are dispersed throughout the world, while still more sadly perished in the Shoah.

Inez' father, Frank O'Hara, was a civil engineer who, after getting engaged to Ruth, was appointed to oversee the construction of a new harbour at Accra on Africa's Gold Coast, now Ghana. Ruth persuaded her parents to allow her to join and marry him there. They waved her off with a cine camera to record the wedding day, in anticipation of later watching their only daughter's wedding on a screen at home. Sadly no-one remembered to load the film in the camera before filming! On their return to England in 1961, two-year old Inez met her grandparents for the first time. They settled into suburban life in Strawberry Hill and a second daughter, Ilse, arrived in 1968. Inez and Ilse both married, and have five sons between them.

Walter lived to meet his first great-grandchild, and today is survived by five grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren and five great-great grandchildren. Inez tells me that, so far, none of his descendants seem to have inherited their Opa's talent for photography, although she herself has recently bought an SLR camera with a view to learning how to use it without the auto function!



The Alps terrain through which Francine's family had to make their escape

In Their Footsteps

REMEMBERING THE JOURNEY FROM SAINT-MARTIN-VÉSUBIE

AJR member Francine Barsam recently took part in an event in the French Alps in honour of her family's escape from the Nazis.

High in the Alps above Nice, lies the village of Saint-Martin-de-Vésubie. During WW2, under Italian rule from 1942 to 1943, it became a haven where more than a thousand Jews lived in relative freedom. Among them were nine members of my own family, including my mother, just five years old, and her four-year-old sister.

Each September, the *Marche de la Mémoire* retraces the journey taken across these same Alps in 1943, when the German army advanced on Nice and the Jewish community fled with the retreating Italian troops. For a brief moment, life in Saint-Martin had been almost normal. But when the Germans arrived, normality vanished overnight. Families gathered what they could carry and climbed into the high passes, not knowing what waited on the other side.

As the years passed, I felt an increasing urgency to understand what my family had endured, not just the facts, but the emotional truth, and to pass that understanding on to my children. My grandfather's testimony is preserved in the Spielberg Foundation archives, but there were gaps, silences, and unanswered questions. This felt like a chance to step into those missing spaces.

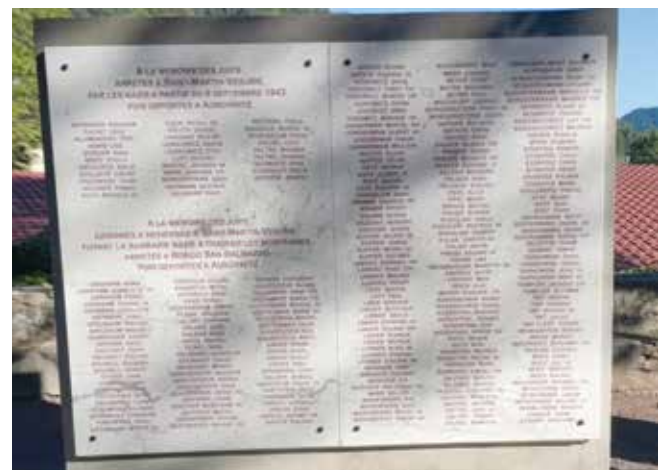
Around a hundred people joined the weekend. It began with a Friday night dinner in the village hall, where second – and third-generation families gathered from Hong Kong, the United States, South America, the UK, and across France. Each family introduced themselves and shared

their story. Two non-Jewish groups were there: a family from Ireland whose relatives had sheltered a Kindertransport child, and local residents who felt a deep connection to the history of their village. Their presence was unexpectedly moving, a reminder that memory belongs to all who choose to carry it.

Throughout the evening, I met people whose family stories mirrored my own. The recognition was immediate and grounding. Bonds formed quickly, as though we were all piecing together fragments of a shared past.

The march itself began early on Sunday morning. We set off at 7.00am, climbing steadily through the rugged terrain. It took five and a half hours to reach the summit, a fraction of the time, and none of the fear, that defined the original journey. At the top, the Rabbi of Nice blew the shofar, followed by a small ceremony honouring those who had walked this path in 1943.

Even standing there, it was almost impossible to imagine what it must have been like for my family, walking across unforgiving terrain with no preparation, no equipment, and no certainty of survival. They had none of the comforts we take for granted. What they did have were the acts of courage and kindness that saved them: priests, farmers, diplomats, and strangers who risked everything to help them reach Switzerland.



A plaque marks the names of all those in Saint-Martin-de-Vésubie who, unable to escape, and were instead tragically deported to Auschwitz

My mother and her sister were separated from their parents in Genoa because it was deemed too dangerous to cross the border with such young children. They were taken in by nuns for more than nine months before being reunited with their parents after the war. I tried to picture my grandparents making that decision, handing their daughters to strangers, not knowing if they would ever see them again. The emotional toll is hard to comprehend.

After descending from the mountains, we gathered in the village square for a final ceremony. The names of all those deported to Auschwitz were read aloud, followed by tributes led by the Mayor and local dignitaries.

This was a life-changing weekend. I still cannot fully comprehend what my family endured but now feel closer to their experiences. Walking in their footsteps did not give me all the answers, but it brought me nearer to the truth and that, I think, is the beginning of understanding.

THE NATIONAL TRUST BENEFACTORS WHO ALSO SAVED LIVES



Janet Weston has been researching the humanitarian efforts of the former owners of some of Britain's best loved country estates.

Ninety years ago several owners of country houses which were later bequeathed to the National Trust played a major part in rescuing Jews from Nazi threat. The strength of character of these individuals and their tireless efforts, together with the prestigious connections they fostered, ensured their work was a success and saved countless lives. Two leading lights were Lord Bearsted of Upton House, Warwickshire, and Maud Russell of Mottisfont, Hampshire.

During the 1930s wealthy philanthropist Walter Samuel, the second Lord Bearsted, realised German Jews were imperilled and sought sponsorship from America. Lord Bearsted was Chairman of Shell Oil, which had been founded by his father, Marcus. As one of the richest men in England and a leading member of the Jewish community, Walter was quick to recognise the threat posed by Hitler's regime and to commit to helping refugees fleeing persecution.

In early 1936 Lord Bearsted began campaigning to raise money from elsewhere. He became a key figure on the British Council for German Jewry, the organisation behind the Kindertransport. Together with businessman Simon Marks and Liberal politician Herbert Samuel he visited every important Jewish community

in the United States. They made five nationwide radio broadcasts and met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

On returning to Britain Lord Bearsted and Anthony de Rothschild secured a loan from the Prudential Assurance Company for £356,000 (worth approximately £22m today). This provided vital aid to the Jewish refugees who were already arriving in Britain.

Lord Bearsted was among the delegation which met Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain after Kristallnacht to urge the government to approve the rescue scheme. He also intervened to help individual Jews and their families, including Austrian-born Jewish sculptor Artur Immanuel Loewental, who had fled to England with his wife Rosa in November 1934. As well as commissioning several bronzes from him, Lord Bearsted used his contacts to try to help the sculptor's relatives escape from Germany. His work is still on display at Upton House.

Lord Bearsted, who was awarded a Military Cross in WW1, became a Colonel in the Intelligence Corps and worked with the Special Operations Executive during WW2. As well as administering extensive Jewish philanthropy from the house, he kept a holiday cottage on the estate for the family rabbi. The National Trust later accepted Lord and Lady Bearsted's 1930s country retreat. Upton House's dramatic terraced gardens and wonderful collection of paintings and exquisite porcelain delight visitors today.

Over in Hampshire, the last private owner of Mottisfont was Maud Russell, daughter

of wealthy German Jewish stockbroker Paul Nelke, who had moved to London in the 1880s. A glamorous socialite and renowned art collector, Maud was drawn by Henri Matisse and John Singer Sargent and photographed by Cecil Beaton. She also commissioned the artist Rex Whistler to paint a Gothic-inspired scheme in the Drawing Room, although they had their differences. She was a close friend of James Bond creator, Ian Fleming, who – although much younger – talked about marrying her after her husband Gilbert died in 1942.

But she never forgot her roots and, with many Jewish relatives in Germany, was well aware of the perils under Nazi rule. In the years leading up to WW2 she helped several Jewish families escape, organising their accommodation once they reached England. After Kristallnacht her efforts intensified. Her diary vividly records her trip to Cologne in December 1938, where she witnessed the impact of Nazi racial laws on Jewish people and heard first-hand stories about the atrocities from members of her own extended family.

As the refugees arrived she tried to arrange jobs for the adults, as well as training for Jewish youths for clandestine warfare. Tragically Maud was unable to get all of her relatives out in time and several were murdered. Towards the end of the war Maud worked on secret propaganda activities in the Admiralty. Today, Mottisfont is celebrated for its wonderful rose garden and its important collection of 20th-century art.

THE MOTHER OF

This month we pay tribute to a Dutch resistance fighter who brought



Truus, centre in black, with children at the Amsterdam orphanage

On 10 May 1940, Geertruida Wijsmuller-Meijer – known as ‘Truus’ to her family – was in Paris, taking a child to safety, when she heard of the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands.

She immediately returned to Amsterdam where she was promptly arrested by the Dutch police, on suspicion of spying. After her release she went to the orphanage, taking a total of 74 children to the very last boat, the *SS Bodegraven*. She had paid out of her own pocket for it to sail into the North Sea. Minutes later the Dutch government surrendered. The *Bodegraven* sailed for England, where the German children were initially denied entry. Eventually the ship moored at Liverpool on 19 May.

Wijsmuller stayed in the Netherlands and continued her amazing fight. Up to 1943 she worked with Jewish Aid groups and the Red Cross to help reunite Jewish kids with their families. She worked with Benno M. Nijkerk to forge false identity cards, assisted by the Resistance and the Committee for Defence of Jews.

Negotiating with the SS she accompanied and partly paid for Jewish groups to escape Europe through Spain and Portugal. Thanks to Wijsmuller’s and other heroes’ efforts, a total of 341 people fled Nazi persecution this way.

In May 1942, she was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned but, miraculously, was released after a few days. As late as 1944 she sent food parcels to prisoners in Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt.

After the war Truus was a member of the Amsterdam city council for the liberal party, helping to found a hospital in Suriname and the Anne Frank House. She died on 30 August 1978. A notice of her death called her the “Mother of 1001 children” who devoted her life to saving Jews.

A statue of Truus Wijsmuller and the “1001 children” she helped save was unveiled on 1 July 2020 in her hometown of Alkmaar.

A LORE UNTO HERSELF

One of the 74 children rescued and brought to Liverpool on the *S.S. Bodegraven* by Truus Wijsmuller was 13 year old Lore Bernstein, originally from Dortmund in Germany.

In 1940 Lore and her brother Norbert had been sent to the “safety” of Holland but had been separated by the time Holland fell to the Nazis. Lore was in the Jewish orphanage in Amsterdam when she was rescued by Truus.

Lore’s first address was the girls’ hostel at 40 Heaton Road, Manchester, where she rebelled against the Victorian discipline. On one occasion she refused to eat her dinner, a plate of boiled onions.

As Lore began to master English she trained as a secretary. She went through a variety

1001 CHILDREN

many Jewish children and adults into safety before and during WW2.



The Kindertransport monument in the Hoek van Holland shows Truus with some of the children she saved

of employers including Blonde brothers, Pochin the builders and a firm of solicitors called Lichtenstein Lindsay, Longbottom and Stretch. Lore would always add after a pause “and Stretch was the SLEEPING partner!”

She briefly joined some cousins who had settled in what was then Southern Rhodesia but it was not a success. Returning to Britain, she married Jack, who had been invalided out of the army. There followed a period of intense left-wing activism which took the young couple from Hungary to Paris via Hampstead.

In the early '50s, at a conference of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, Lore met Ariana, who had fled Bolshevism in her native Russia and was working as a translator in Bulgaria.

Ariana and Lore fell madly in love, and managed to secure a temporary visa for Ariana to teach Russian at Salford University. The ladies then plotted a sham marriage to one Janis Udenis so that she could remain in perpetuity.

With Lore's two sons, Danny and Nick, traumatised by their parents' split and unwilling to accept Ariana as another parent, times were tough. Money was

tight and the atmosphere in the house was often strained. Yet Lore retrained as teacher in French and German, and she and Ariana stayed together for 40 years.

Despite all obstacles Danny went to Stoke, to study ceramics, and Nick to Cambridge, to read history. After graduating, Danny travelled around Germany and Holland, and eventually to Greece where he was tragically murdered. This was the third great hammer blow for Lore, who was devastated at the loss of her first-born. Her granite will and the support of her family helped her to survive.

The 20 years Ariana and Lore had left together were rich in friendship and travel. At their separate houses the shy Lore would dance an awkward waltz around Ariana's exotic Russian, Polish, French and Bulgarian friends. Ariana was equally bemused by Lore's teacher friends.

At 65 Lore retired and life in Didsbury continued calmly until Ariana's death in 2008, another massive knock for Lore. The years and loneliness took their toll so, when Covid hit in 2020, Nick and Miranda brought her to London, where she and Nick re-bonded over music.

In October 2025, with her ill health necessitating full time nursing, Lore moved to a care home in Tunbridge Wells, where she died peacefully this January. She remained generous, loving and selfless to the end, and always aware of how close she had come to being murdered during the Holocaust. She was an optimist who saw the best in people until she had no option but to see the worst in them.

In her later years Lore Bernstein tried hard to bring her saviour's attention to a world which knew little of Truus's extraordinary heroism. She even wrote to Martin Gilbert asking him why Truus was not named in his book as 'One of the Righteous'. He replied that it was an omission he would address. She also wrote to the Mayor of Amsterdam to ask why there was no memorial to honour one of the city's greatest daughters. In 2019 the Mayor invited Lore to attend a ceremony for the unveiling of a plaque. Sadly Lore by this stage was already over 90 and felt too frail to go.

If you would like to know more about Truus there is a video on YouTube, *Aunt Truus: The Kindertransport Hero who defied the Nazis and saved 10,000 children*

REVIEWS

SURVIVING MENGELE'S AUSCHWITZ

**Kalman and Leopold Eyewitness
Accounts as told to Richard K Lowy (Son
of Leopold)**

Foreword: Michael Berenbaum

This is a captivating and compelling eye-witness narrative that celebrates the sanctity of friendship, the robustness of human resilience and underscores the imperativeness of hope in the bowels of abject, unforgiving darkness.

Kalman Braun and Leopold 'Lipa' Lowy are two Jewish boys, 14 and 16 respectively, each with their own twin sibling, who meet as helpless subjects of Josef Mengele's horrific and inconceivable twin experiments. Disparate in personality but bonded by an unrelenting will to survive, their friendship is the glue to their eventual salvation. Conjoined by being selected to work in the guard shack within Mengele's notorious hospital camp and endure the savageries of the barbarous SS stationed there, they bear witness to the inconceivable horrors of Auschwitz Birkenau. Eyewitnesses to the human extermination machine, their survival was made possible by the mutual gestures of support integral to human connection.

Their days are spent polishing boots, cleaning the ovens, and fetching meals, all executed with meticulous precision to avoid a savage beating. Despite the beatings they were subjected to, Kalman and Leopold were in a privileged position due to being a twin to Judith and Miriam respectively and the prolongation of life that it afforded them. As Kalman expressed: 'In the craziest sense we exist because of this. It makes us special. I've heard others in the camp call him the 'Angel of Death' but Lipa says he is the 'Angel of Life'. We're not burned straight away because Mengele decides twins should not be burned'. This was in stark contrast to the over one hundred members of their families murdered there.

Another advantage at their disposal was the opportunity to smuggle food scraps for themselves and their twin

sisters. Astonishingly, Kalman discovered his distant uncle L'udovic Feld, a dwarf, in the barracks and rewarded his wisdom and kindness with food stolen from the guardhouse parties. L'udovic was a gifted artist and conscripted by Mengele to draw his portraits and scenes of the camp.

Kalman and Leopold had stark and naked insight into the daily functioning of the extermination machine that few other prisoners had. They were able to run between blocks, run errands and enter the women's compound. They saw the transports arrive and the prisoners disembark as they unknowingly hovered on the precipice of their death. They were unwitting witnesses to every stage of the killing process. Significantly, they also witnessed the only uprising at Auschwitz Birkenau when the Sonderkommando destroyed Crematoria IV. Regrettably, they also witnessed the horrific reprisals that culminated in the piles of corpses waiting to be burned.

Both boys developed a working relationship that enabled their survival: Leopold was streetwise, pragmatic and astute, whereas Kalman was fluent in German and able to translate the sadistic henchmen's demands. Together, this unspoken pact of survival enabled their ultimate freedom and preservation of life. Leopold would protect Kalman from beatings at work when he would return from Mengele's experiments weak and injured. He served as protector to Kalman's naivete, innocence and playfulness.

At the time of liberation by the Soviet Red Army, both Kalman and Leopold's twin sisters, Miriam, and Judith, were alive. Only 120 sets of twins survived out of the estimated 3,000 Mengele sadistically experimented on. The boys parted ways, Leopold to Canada and Kalman to Palestine. Leopold eventually married, had children and established a thriving clothing business. Kalman served in the Israeli Air force during the 1948 War of Independence and built a civilian career with El Al. He was indefatigable in his search for his 'Lipa', unaware that his proper name was, in fact, Leopold. It was the airing of Leopold's son's documentary about his father which brought Kalman's search to a fortuitous and jubilant end. Seeing it on the television from his home in Tel Aviv and a picture of 16-year-old

Leopold, he recognised his 'Lipa'. The two friends were reunited in Vancouver in 2002. Sharing their memories with Richard, they would often revert to the boys that they were. Sadly, Leopold died in Vancouver six months after their reunion followed later by Kalman in December 2019.

Richard Lowy's book is a beautiful and captivating testament to Kalman and Leopold's unbreakable bond and the synergy that co-existed between the two boys in their fight to survive the savageries of the inexhaustible killing machine that was Auschwitz Birkenau. It is also testimony to a son's love for his father in the meticulous transcription of twenty hours of testimony that was carefully cross referenced against records at Auschwitz, Yad Vashem and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. It is a story that stands apart in its uniqueness and an imperative addition to the exponential library of Holocaust records that reminds us of the necessity for human connection and never more so than in times of inhumane and indefensible savagery. Through his writing, Richard Lowy transports us into the world that Kalman and Leopold inhabit, and in so doing, invites us to be a witness not just to the industrial killing machine that was Auschwitz Birkenau but to the power of companionship in extremity.

Michele Jowett

HOTEL EXILE: PARIS IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

**By Jane Rogoyska
Allen Lane**

When life became increasingly difficult in Germany many Jews sought refuge in nearby France, where intellectuals congregated at Paris's Hotel Lutetia, the only "grand hotel" on the city's bohemian Left Bank. Miraculously it remained intact when hostilities finally ceased, with its fine wines still preserved.

The building had always served as a meeting point for artists, musicians and politicians. Once Hitler came to power the hotel attracted the intelligentsia and political activists who met there hoping to form an alternative government. André Gide took his lunch here, James Joyce lived in one of the rooms, in precarious health, and Picasso and Matisse were regular

guests. Heinrich Mann was photographed by Fred Stein at the hotel in 1935. Heinrich always stayed in a suite, where he corresponded with his more famous younger brother, Thomas Mann, who was exiled in Switzerland and who based his famous debut novel, *Buddenbrooks*, on Lübeck, their birthplace.

But as author Jane Rogoyska explains: "A hotel is neutral territory upon which friends and enemies may meet. It does not judge its clients as long as they behave with appropriate discretion and pay their bills." Throughout the book she paints a vivid picture of these extraordinary, complicated and dark times of treachery and bravery. Even though we know the history of the period one never quite knows what is coming next, as the wealth of lively and disparate material keeps the reader in suspense.

Hotel Exile is about what happens on the edges of a war. At first the refugees had a relatively easy if impoverished time but once Hitler invaded France in May 1940, life changed. The book covers the periods before, during and after 1933, when Hitler came to power, to 1945 once prisoners and deportees were released.

During the war itself the building became the headquarters of the German military intelligence service, the Abwehr and the centre of their operation to root out enemies of the Reich. Although Parisians fled in the face of enemy bombs, people gradually returned, resistance networks grew and increased after the tide turned against the Nazis. But nothing was quite as it seemed and many résistants were betrayed including those by the seemingly trustworthy but treacherous priest Robert Alesch. He denounced dozens including Germaine Tillion of the Gloria network who was deported to Ravensbrück. Here she was imprisoned with General Charles de Gaulle's niece Geneviève. The two women survived, Germaine being saved by a German friend.

In 1945 the Lutetia was requisitioned again and transformed into a reception centre for deportees returning from concentration camps. Heart rending scenes occurred as husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and children waited

often day after day in vain with placards naming loved ones hoping against all odds they would come back. Author Irène Némirovsky died in Auschwitz in August 1942 as did her husband Michel Epstein in the November. But a rare act of kindness from a German officer enabled their two daughters to survive with her unpublished manuscript and they were amongst those waiting in vain outside the hotel. Amazingly Irène's much-acclaimed wartime novel *Suite Française* was eventually published 62 years after her death.

When the deportees arrived back they were nursed at the hotel and gradually allowed to eat and build up their strength to recover. The hotel itself proved incredibly resilient and still exists today.

Janet Weston



HENLEY-ON-THAMES
WEDNESDAY 29 JULY 2026



Please join us for a relaxing boat trip down the river and free time to meander around the beautiful riverside town of Henley-on-Thames.
Coach pick-up from Northwest London
Cost per person: £40 including coach travel

 karendiamond@ajr.org.uk



TRIP TO SANDWICH IN KENT
WEDNESDAY 22 JULY 2026



AJR member and Kitchener Camp author and expert Clare Ungerson will lead us on a visit to the historic Bell Hotel (where an AJR blue plaque has been installed) and the local museum, and tell us all about the history of Sandwich and the camps based there. We will travel together as a group by train from St Pancras.

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Jonathan Fishburn
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May there be peace

The senior German journalist Daniel Zylbersztajn-Lewandowski, who is the UK correspondent for *Taz: die tageszeitung*, has just self-published a fascinating two-book series about his family history in the shadow of the Holocaust. He shares some reflections.

Growing up in Munich in the 1970s, with a dad who had survived four labour camps and escaped from a death train, and a mum of mixed Jewish and Christian background, who had lived in fear in occupied Amsterdam, was never going to be ordinary.

Dad lived in Germany as a strange type of revenge. "The damned dog Hitler is dead. I, who was supposed to be murdered, still live", he used to say. Nearly all my parents' friends were Jewish survivors, but nearly all of my friends descended from former German perpetrators.

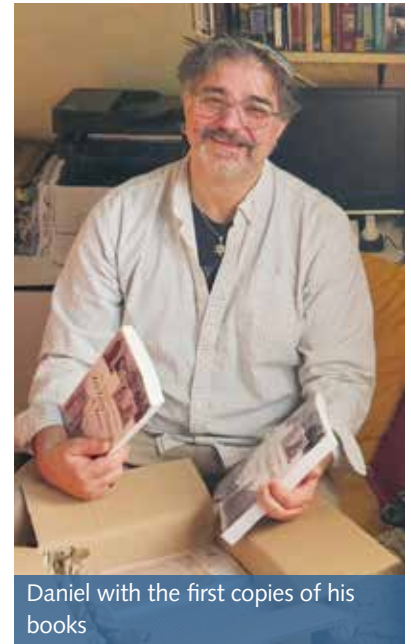
Life was full of contradictions. I grew up in the Munich Olympic Village where Mum and Dad had purchased a flat before the Games, promised a new Germany not associated with the murder of Jews. That all changed on 5 September 1972. Photos show me, aged five, together with my uncle Abraham, who lived in Tel Aviv, and my dad in front of where the drama surrounding the Israeli Olympic team unfolded.

Many younger Germans attempted to empower children and foster a tolerant and kinder world. But there were unrelenting Nazis about too. My biology teacher repeatedly spoke of his "heroic flights" in a fighter plane over Berlin.

My Dad had mostly given up on Judaism, finding it impossible to believe any god cared for us, given what he had witnessed. In contrast my aunt, who had survived Bergen Belsen, insisted that 'G-d' had saved her. Having been taught through the Bavarian education system more about the Christian faith than Judaism, I was later forced through a rushed version of a Barmitzvah, nowhere close to a real coming of age.

Later, during a fun trip to Israel organised

Young Daniel with his father and uncle in the Munich Olympic Village where the Israeli team was attacked



Daniel with the first copies of his books

by the German Zionist Youth Federation, I discovered that I could study for A-levels in an Israeli youth village. I was glad to leave my often difficult dad and his bitter sweet world behind, only to find out that I had been sold half-truths about school in Israel. It took me a year to make peace with the situation, but I returned to Germany three years later with good grades.

Turned down by the Bavarian Education Ministry for university because of my Israeli A-Levels, I applied to SOAS, University of London. I left Germany again, for ten years refusing to speak or have anything to do with German, especially after studying the mechanics of the Shoah. Years later, becoming a parent and being offered the job of a correspondent to Germany, made me take up the language I had shelved.

It was in London where I would experience hard left antisemitism, would marry my Kreo Sierra Leonean wife, where – both together and individually – we were physically attacked by British anti-Black racists and antisemites. The last time was in front of my then synagogue, on the day of my daughter's Batmitzvah and one year before 7 October. It was also in London where, almost by accident, I was diagnosed with referred PTSD, which can be a symptom amongst second generation survivors, and began to understand the issues that had challenged me throughout.

In the first volume of my books, *Zol Zayn Shulem, 1 and 2* (May there be Peace, 1 and 2), I painstakingly reconstruct known family history. On one side is a poor family from a Yiddish-speaking Polish shtetl. On

my mother's side there is a German Jewish family whose excellent craftsmanship has built one of the largest ladies' undergarment companies in Germany and made them royal merchants to the court of Bavaria. None of it survives the Shoah. I knew my father's family was largely murdered in Treblinka and my dad had survived some of the most brutal labour camps, including the arms manufacturing Factory C of Skarzysko-Kamienna. But I hadn't known that members of my Berlin family were murdered in Auschwitz, only that my Munich grandfather was severely beaten in KZ Dachau in 1933.

Writing *Zol Zayn Shulem* contextualised facets of my own life and filled many, though certainly not all, gaps. Written initially in German, I translated both books into English, partly because Britain is now my adopted home and also I perceive insufficient awareness regarding Jewish people who lived in Germany after the war and even less about why some of us children left Germany as adults.

Zol Zayn Shulem had been planned with a German publisher but, after learning that they wanted all rights to what was after all my family story, I decided to self-publish. Sponsorships by two Jewish organisations and a crowdfund helped, allowing me to include poems, reflections and citations I had gathered, making both books highly original.

Daniel has his own website, <https://dzx2.net/> while his books *Zol Zayn Shulem 1 and 2* are widely available from Amazon and other popular bookstores.

OBITUARY

Inga JOSEPH (née Inge Pollak)

Born: 9 March 1927, Vienna

Died: 20 April 2026



Inga Joseph was only 12 when she came to Britain in 1939 on a Kindertransport from Vienna, together with her older sister Lieselotte ('Putz'); they were taken in by a family in Falmouth, Cornwall. Though her father escaped to Britain, her mother remained in Vienna and fell victim to the Nazi genocide. After this rupture in her young life, the quest for a relationship of loving, supportive security became a dominant theme in her depiction of her inner world.

Within a few months of her arrival in Britain, she was writing fluently and idiomatically in English, and was a passionate diarist. Using the pen name Ingrid Jacoby, she published three volumes of her diaries under the title *My Darling Diary*. The first volume, subtitled *A Wartime Journal*, begins shortly before her forced emigration from Vienna and continues through her time in Falmouth, from June 1939 until her departure for Oxford (to a secretarial college, not the university) in autumn 1944. The two subsequent volumes, both subtitled *The Girl In and Out of Love*, cover a decade of her life in Oxford, ending in 1955 on the eve of her marriage.

Inga was at first unhappy and homesick in Britain but her antipathy rapidly dissolved when she moved from her unsympathetic first family to St Joseph's, the home of Miss Davis, who took in children. She was rapidly integrated into the community of this small but happy institution, where she forged lasting friendships, particularly with Connie,

Miss Davis's niece. Inga was happy in Falmouth, remote though it was, enjoying walks on its beaches and excursions to beauty spots on the Cornish coast. She found ready acceptance at the girls' High School in Falmouth, where she studied successfully for her School Certificate.

However Inga's wartime status as an 'enemy alien' contributed to the feelings of inferiority and isolation that she confided to her diary. Falmouth, then still an important port, was the target of air raids, which killed one of her classmates and repeatedly disrupted her studies. Though the experience of wartime did much to cement her admiration for the British and her determination to stay in Britain as a fully integrated member of British society, the fate of her mother, who was deported to Minsk, hung over her life as a permanent reminder of her lost Viennese past.

A new chapter in Inga's life began when she moved to Oxford, initially to take a secretarial course, though she was soon drawn to a career in the world of books. Her first job was a lowly appointment at Oxford City Library, where she encountered a young woman who wrote poetry: Elizabeth Jennings. After a brief spell working at a correspondence college, Inga took a position at one of Oxford's most prestigious bookshops, Parker's, in the Foreign Department. Her rapid ascent in Oxford's cultural world reached its peak when she was taken on by the renowned firm of antiquarian booksellers, A. Rosenthal & Co, which had numerous celebrated clients.

Inga was part of a lively community of Jewish refugees in north Oxford, which included the spinal injuries specialist Ludwig Guttman, and the mother of the artist Milein Cosman. Through this network, Inga found work in a typing agency, through which she could augment her salary. Her clients included

the philosopher Karl Popper and Isaiah Berlin, then the most eminent Jewish academic in Oxford.

At a party at the university's Department of Human Anatomy, where her sister worked, Inga met her husband, Stan (Stanislaw) Tkaczyk, a non-Jewish Pole who, rather to her relief, changed his surname to Joseph. And it was as Inga Joseph that she became known. The couple moved to Sheffield, where Inga studied modern languages at Sheffield University and became a teacher, as well as a wife and mother.

Yet Inga could never get over the loss of her own mother. Describing her search for her after the war, she said: "It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. We just got to find that she was sent to Minsk."

Many years later, she travelled back with her husband to find some answers. A caretaker where the family had lived showed them where the Jews were made to line up during the Holocaust.

She said: "It doesn't make me want to cry. It just makes me so angry. That this was allowed to happen. We have no idea what happened. We tried our level best. We tried so hard to find her. It was impossible."

Inga and Stan had one son, Julian (named after Albi Rosenthal's son), and two granddaughters.

Taken from an interview given to the AJR's Refugee Voices Archive in September 2017 (<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/inga-joseph>) and a review of Inga Joseph's diaries written earlier for the *AJR Journal* by the interviewer, Dr Anthony Grenville (https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2015_February.pdf)

IN PERSON EVENTS

Please note to attend in person meetings you must contact the co-ordinator listed for exact times and venue.

DATE	TIME	AREA	CO-ORDINATOR
Thursday 4 June	Afternoon	Pinner	Ros Hart
Monday 8 June	Morning	Ealing	Ros Hart
Tuesday 9 June	Morning	Golders Green, with Judy Karbitz talking about Irving Berlin	Ros Hart
Monday 15 June	Lunch	Radlett	Ros Hart
Tuesday 16 June	Lunch	Liverpool	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 16 June	Morning	South London	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 17 June	Afternoon	Manchester trip to IWM North	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 17 June	Afternoon	Glasgow outing to Barbie exhibition	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 18 June	Lunchtime	Kinder Lunch with Nicola Strauther from National Holocaust Museum	Susan Harrod
Thursday 18 June	Afternoon	Newcastle	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 22 June	Morning	Art Class	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 23 June	Afternoon	Leeds	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 23 June	Afternoon	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 25 June	Lunchtime	Oxford	Karen Diamond
Monday 29 June	Lunchtime	Edgware	Ros Hart
Tuesday 30 June	Morning	Wembley	Karen Diamond

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 1 June @ 4pm	Margaret Mills – Agatha Christie : a very mysterious lady https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86988743757	Meeting ID: 869 8874 3757
Tuesday 2 June @ 4pm	Steven Salamon – author of <i>The Anschluss to the Arcades: the evolution of a family store in Cardiff</i> https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83000589245	Meeting ID 8300 058245
Wednesday 3 June @ 7.30pm	The Kitchener Camp rescue: the prelude to Dunera https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83452035959	Meeting ID: 8345 203 5959
Monday 8 June @ 4pm	Professor Julian Stern – The art of music and solitude https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83782660463	Meeting ID: 837 8266 0463
Monday 15 June @ 4pm	David Cant – author of <i>Unfinished Business: The story of a career with the Russians</i> https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83002397824	Meeting ID: 830 0239 7824
Wednesday 17 June @ 4pm	Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>Haroun and the sea of stories</i> by Salman Rushdie https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82304482826	Meeting ID: 8230 448 2826
Wednesday 24 June @ 4pm	Evelyn Toynton – WG Sebald: The only post-war German writer who truly grappled with the Holocaust https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82716991851	Meeting ID: 827 1699 1851
Monday 22 June @ 4pm	Beszéljünk Magyarul! – Hungarian speaking group https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88678720557	Meeting ID: 886 7872 0557
Thursday 25 June @ 3pm	Dr Amy Williams – How to start your family research https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88615916609	Meeting ID: 8861 591 6609
Monday 29 June @ 4pm	FILM: How to re-establish a Vodka Empire (aka tracing my Ukrainian heritage) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87875747353	Meeting ID: 8787 574 7353
Tuesday 30 June @ 4pm	David Allen – The Lady Poisoners of Victorian England https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82570532901	Meeting ID: 8257 053 2901

KEEP FIT WITH AJR

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

Every Mon @ 10.30am **Get Fit where you Sit** (seated yoga)
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439> Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439

Every Tues @ 11.00am **Shelley's Exercise class**
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622> Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622

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