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80 YEARS 1946 – 2026

AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

A great time for Jewish theatre

Here There Are Blueberries offers a compelling and thought provoking examination of human morality, sparked by an SS officer's photo album of Auschwitz

Despite – or perhaps because of – the ongoing turmoil in the real world, which undoubtedly affects our community's morale, there appears to be enormous interest in the Jewish theatrical and literary worlds.

In early March record numbers of people attended events during the 75th annual Jewish Book Week, which is London's longest running literary festival. This year it coincided with some wonderful plays staged in mainstream theatres, each focusing on different aspects of Jewish history.

Here There Are Blueberries is a superb play which was shown at Stratford East in East London from 31 January until 7 March. Moises Kaufman, who co-wrote the play, was inspired by seeing some photos from Auschwitz that had first been shown on the front page of *The New York Times* in 2007. These photos had all been taken by Nazis themselves, in their off-duty moments, many of them relaxing with young German women who also worked at Auschwitz.

Kaufman contacted Rebecca Erbelding, the archivist at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC who had opened the package containing an album of these photos in 2006. The album had been sent by a member of the United States intelligence who had come across it 60 years previously during a trip to Germany. At first Erbelding was sceptical. She and her colleagues were familiar with photos of prisoners at Auschwitz (often as they were being taken off the trains as they arrived at the camp) and even photos of the crematoria taken by *Sonderkommandos*. But photos of the Nazi officers relaxing as if on holiday were extremely unusual.

Kaufman and his co-writer Amanda Gronich have created a gripping detective story following Rebecca and her colleagues at the Holocaust Museum as

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SPRING FEVER

The start of Spring heralds a busy season for the AJR with numerous outings and activities planned for the coming months.

We would especially love you to join us in June at the stunning Latimer Estate in Buckinghamshire to kick off our 85th anniversary year – see full details on page 4.

A different country estate provided the setting for the incredible work of Jewish refugee Sir Heinz Koeppler, recounted on page 8. The property could not be more different from the tiny house on Amsterdam's Prinsengracht where Anne Frank wrote her diary and which had a major impact on three young friends during their recent visit (page 15).

We hope you find much of interest in this issue and we wish you a happy Pesach.

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

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A great time for Jewish theatre (cont.)

they try to find out who are in the photos, where they were taken and why. The cast was outstanding, but perhaps best of all was the extraordinary use of maps of Auschwitz and the photos.

Several notorious Nazis appear in the photos, including Mengele, Rudolf Höss, Richard Baer, the final commandant, Josef Kramer, the commandant of the Birkenau extermination camp and Karl-Friedrich Höcker, Baer's adjutant. It turns out that the album of photos had belonged to Höcker.

In contrast the young women photographed with these men were not key figures. They were switchboard operators and other menial workers at Auschwitz. One of the photos of the young women shows them enjoying bowls of blueberries, hence the title.

Perhaps the most breathtaking revelation comes when we find out the day some of these photos were taken and what exactly the Nazi hierarchy were celebrating. "My purpose in writing the play," Kaufman told one interviewer, "was to understand how human beings find a way to come to terms with that kind of murder and at the same time lead what appears to be from the photographs normal, quotidian lives."

Another theatrical production which has its roots in the Holocaust is *Broken Glass*, currently at the Young Vic until 18 April. Written by America's greatest Jewish-American playwright, it is the only one of Arthur Miller's great plays to confront issues about Jewishness and antisemitism

Premiered in 1994, *Broken Glass* was described by *The New Yorker* as 'a brave, bighearted attempt by one of the pathfinders of postwar drama to look at the tangle of evasions and hostilities by which the soul contrives to hide its emptiness from itself.'

It received its British premiere at the National Theatre later the same year with Henry Goodman playing Phillip Gellburg, who works for a major mortgage bank in New York. At the end of 1938 his wife Sylvia suddenly becomes partially paralyzed from the waist down, after reading about the events of *Kristallnacht*. She can't walk or stand up. Phillip contacts Dr. Harry Hyman who believes Sylvia's paralysis is psychosomatic. The play is about the different ways Phillip and Sylvia respond to the crisis of growing antisemitism in Nazi Germany. She is obsessed with the terrible news from Germany, he is remarkably indifferent. When Dr. Hyman asks Gellburg if he's been following the story in the papers, his reply is telling: 'Well, yes, but not much. He is indifferent to the plight of Germany's Jews and refugees ("I sympathize with these refugees, but…")'.

The last twenty years have seen a dramatic revival in Miller's reputation with landmark productions of *Death of a Salesman* with Philip Seymour Hoffman (2012) and Antony Sher (2015), *A View from the Bridge* at The Young Vic with Mark Strong (2015), *The Crucible* with Ben Wishaw, Sophie Okonedo and Ciaran Hinds (2016) and recently, *All My Sons* with Bryan Cranston.

Perhaps a key reason for Miller's fame was that, in his heyday, he didn't focus on Jews but on humanism and universalism, posing questions about What kind of man should I be? and not What is it like to live in an antisemitic world? How much was this because of Miller's sensitivity to American antisemitism in the 1940s and '50s, a time of silence about the Holocaust? Was Miller's growing interest in the Holocaust a response to a larger shift in later years?

Something else that is striking about *Broken Glass* is that it's the first time Miller takes his great subject, denial, which is at the heart of so many of his best plays, from *Death of a Salesman* to *All My Sons*, and places it at the heart of a play about a Jewish couple and their different ways of responding to the rise of Nazism. At the centre of all his great plays is self-deception – living a lie. This is exactly what Phillip Gellburg does in *Broken Glass* until his wife forces him to confront what is happening to Jews in Nazi Germany. This is what makes his last great play so fascinating, especially for Jewish theatregoers.

Ryan Craig's *The Holy Rosenbergs*, currently in revival at the Menier Chocolate Factory, is also about conflict within a Jewish family, this time during a war in Gaza. The daughter, Ruth,

In Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass* the character Sylvia becomes obsessed with the terrible news from Germany

has become a human rights lawyer investigating allegations of war crimes by the IDF. Her brother Danny was killed fighting for the Israeli army and his parents are still reeling from their loss. The play bears an uncanny resemblance to Miller's great play about war, guilt and loss, *All My Sons.* The highlight of this production is the performance by Tracy-Ann Oberman as the mother trying to keep her family together.

Finally, there is yet another revival, *Yentl*, at Marylebone Theatre, direct from the Sydney Opera House (6 March-12 April), based on IB Singer's tale about a young woman daring to defy Orthodox law by disguising herself as a man to study Jewish scripture. Then, after *Yentl* closes, the Marylebone Theatre hosts another searing family drama with Miller's play, *The Price*, starring the wonderful Henry Gooodman (17 April-7 June).

Why so many plays, especially revivals, about Jews? The subjects range from Kristallnacht and Auschwitz to *Yentl* and Israel at war. But why now? Could this be because of the reaction to 7 October and the war in Gaza? And why are so many of these plays about the conflicts within Jewish families and especially between Jewish wives and daughters and their husbands and fathers? This is certainly an exciting moment to be a Jewish theatregoer.

David Herman

CARDIFF WALKING TOUR

Wally's Deli

On Wednesday 27 May at 12.30pm, we're delighted to be part of the first Jewish Culture Month by holding a walking tour to explore sites in Cardiff city centre connected with the history of Jewish refugees as well as the wider story of Wales's relationship with the Holocaust.

The tour, expertly led by historian Martin Winstone, will address the experiences in Cardiff of Jewish refugees from Nazism, and their significant impact on the city. It will also engage with lesser known and often surprising aspects of this period of history, including the role of Cardiff and south Wales in the history of British antisemitism, the connection between the 1958 Commonwealth Games and the Holocaust, and the story of the only Welsh-born victim of the Holocaust.

The two-hour tour will end at Wally's Kaffeehaus which was opened in 1947 by Austrian Jewish refugee Ignatz Salamon, grandfather of the present owner and AJR member Steven, who will talk about the history of the business over *kaffee & kuchen*.

The cost is £15 per person to include *kaffee & kuchen*. Email nextgens@ajr.org.uk to book.

LOOKING FOR?

FROM OSTRAVA TO PRAGUE

Rutová Radana, a researcher at the Terezin Memorial in Prague, is looking for any information about the Youth Aliyah school in Ostrava, which was closed in 1940.

Her team at Terezin has recently made an unexpected discovery in the cellar of a house in Prague: inscriptions and names written in Hebrew, dated 1941. They believe that this house may have become the new home for members of the Ostrava group of Hashomer Hatzair after the Youth Aliyah school in Ostrava was closed.
rutova@pamatnik-terezin.cz

DR. LEONARD KURZER

Daniel Regan is hoping to trace descendants of Dr Leonard Kurzer, who practised as a GP 50+ years ago in London's Limehouse and of whom Daniel and his family have fond memories. Originally from Poland, Dr Kurzer had two sons who also became medics, training at the Royal Free Hospital.
d.regan7@ntlworld.com

ASHES AND DIAMONDS

Next month the White Bear Theatre in Kennington, south London, hosts the premiere run of a one-woman play about Sara (Antoinette) Hirschel, who fled to the UK from Belgium in May 1940, and lived in London for 70 years. Memories overlap, sparkling and fading, merging into one: past overlapping with present. Memories of being strafed by Luftwaffe, storm-tossed boats, births, deaths, love, family.
www.whitebeartheatre.co.uk//whatson/ashes-and-diamonds


Before cleaning


After cleaning

SPRING CLEAN FOR KINDER STATUE

The wonderful Kindertransport statue at London's Liverpool Street station has just benefitted from a total facelift thanks to a generous donation from the AJR.

The now gleaming statue will shortly be taken safely into storage while the station itself is given a £1.2bn transformation, after which the Kindertransport statue will be given pride of place in the middle of the main concourse.

SPECIAL AJR 85TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

JOIN US FOR THE WEEKEND...

The AJR will be 85 years old this summer and to kick off our anniversary celebrations we have decided to combine our annual tea with a residential weekend.

On **12 – 14 June** we will bring together members, family and friends to enjoy a blend of social interaction and informative sessions, with great food and even better company. The venue will be the Latimer Estate in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, which offers its own significant WW2 history as well as a cosy and friendly atmosphere, great facilities and stunning grounds.

During WW2, Latimer House became the centre of highly top-secret activities run by MI5 and MI6 under the obscure name *Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Unit* (CSDIC). Thousands of German prisoners, including Hitler's Generals, would pass through Latimer House between 1942 and 1945. The unit bugged the conversations of over 10,000 German prisoners-of-war, all recorded in over 100,000 transcripts now preserved in the National Archives. Having no idea they were being overheard, the prisoners spoke freely to each other, giving away important information and secrets about the war in the air, at sea and on land. The intelligence gleaned at Latimer and its sister sites aided the intelligence from Bletchley Park and enabled Britain to win the war.


The stunning Latimer Estate

AJR's special weekend programme will begin at 5pm on Friday 12 June with a warm welcome, dinner and an introduction to the history of our venue by historian and author, Helen Fry. Saturday will see a full programme of sessions including top speakers such as Winton child Sir Simon Wessely, expertly led workshops on subjects such as conducting family research and writing family history, fun activities and a gala dinner. After the final sessions on Sunday morning, guests will be invited to stay for the AJR Annual Tea at 2pm, which you can read more about below. Please email nextgens@ajr.org.uk for full details and to book.

There will also be plenty of schmoozing opportunities at our private bar while the 30 acres of formal gardens and grounds with sweeping views of the Chess Valley provide an ideal setting for moments of relaxation. Guests will also have use of the hotel gym and indoor swimming pool, and your ensuite bedroom will be a few steps away for a quick shluff!

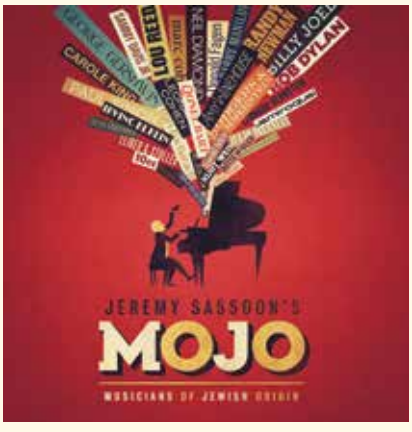
...OR MAYBE JUST FOR TEA

If you are not able to stay for the whole weekend, you are welcome to join us just for our Gala Tea, on **Sunday 14 June**. This will formally begin at 2pm, with welcome drinks served outside in the beautiful grounds from 1.30pm, weather permitting.

Although not supervised kosher, the delicious tea will contain no meat, poultry, shellfish or any products containing these ingredients. We are able to organise a supervised kosher tea if required.

After tea we are delighted to be joined by the internationally renowned singer-pianist Jeremy Sassoon, who will provide a foot-stomping celebration of some of the most iconic and best-loved Jewish popular songwriters. Jeremy and his superb band will take us on a 100-year journey from the golden era of Gershwin and the Great American Songbook through the Rock 'n' Roll era and into the 21st century, honouring artists such as Carole King, Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Randy Newman and Amy Winehouse along the way. Full of surprising and hilarious anecdotes and some of the most unforgettable songs you've ever sung along and danced to, this is definitely an event not to miss.

The cost of the tea is subsidised by AJR to enable everyone to attend. Any donation you are able to make, in addition to the charge of £40 per person, would be greatly appreciated.



For further information please call the AJR office or email susan@ajr.org.uk

Journal obit helps against forgetting

This year we are celebrating the 80th anniversary of the AJR Journal by looking at the impact our magazine has had throughout the decades. This month we focus on an obituary that was originally featured in our October 1958 issue, which is now at the centre of an exhibition in Frankfurt.

Dr. Hoch's Konservatium is a highly respected German institute for music, dating back to 1978. A few weeks ago it launched an exhibition, *Against Forgetting*, to commemorate all its Jewish lecturers who were forced to leave the conservatory after the National Socialists came to power in 1933, after which the systematic dismissal and exclusion of Jewish intellectuals and artists from almost all public institutions began very quickly.

As a foundation, the Conservatory was by no means forced to dismiss its teachers in this context. Nevertheless, it took immediate measures to implement the content of the new legislation. A committee was set up to develop measures for 'reorganisation'; an important part of which was the removal of non-Aryan and foreign teaching staff from the Institute.

One of the staff members who was 'reorganised' out of the Conservatory, and is thus featured in its new *Against Forgetting* exhibition, was the renowned pianist and composer Willy Salomon, who had taught at Dr. Hoch's since 1916. Willy was a former student himself, having studied piano, composition and counterpoint, score playing and conducting at the Conservatory, graduating as a teacher in 1913.

Newspaper cuttings dating from 1915 confirm that Salomon was one of the most sought-after piano accompanists in the city, especially within the Jewish community. He joined the teaching staff at Dr. Hoch's in 1916, specialising in accompaniment, opera ensemble, harmony and ear training. He also studied at the University of Frankfurt, where he received his doctorate in 1925.

After his discharge from Dr Hoch's Conservatory, Willy Salomon lectured at the Jewish House of Learning and taught privately. He also remained active as a pianist both as an accompanist and soloist, at, for example, several piano recitals outside Frankfurt.

In 1935, Salomon was part of a working committee of Jewish musicians that, together with Hans Assenheim, organized biweekly Wednesday concerts. These focused, among other things, on works by Jewish composers who lived in Frankfurt. By the beginning of 1938, forty concerts had taken place in this series. Salomon was also a member of the board of the local group of the Association of National German Jews.

At the end of 1938 he was deported to Buchenwald. Thanks to the efforts of his sister's fiancé, he was miraculously able to escape and make his way to England in 1939, where he was interned on the Isle of Man not long after having arrived. After his release Salomon continued to teach, lecture and perform until not long before his death in 1958.

Last December the AJR received an email from an executive at Dr Hoch's Conservatory requesting permission to include the "wonderful obituary" of Willy Salamon that appeared in the October 1958 AJR Journal as part of its new exhibition *Against Forgetting* which commemorates all the Jewish lecturers who were forced to leave Dr Hoch's Conservatory in 1933.

The free exhibition is open to all modern-day Conservatory students and is complemented with a special section on the institution's website, in which the October 1958 AJR Journal is featured.

The AJR believes that Willy Salomon would be very happy to know that his memory is being honoured in this way. As Ernst Kahn wrote in his obituary: Nobody who came across Willy Salomon can forget his wit and sense of humour, his idealism as a musician, his wide interest and great general knowledge, his love of nature and animals, his kindness towards his friends and especially towards aged people.

Curators at Dr. Hock's Konservatorium looking at one of the 'Against Forgetting' exhibition panels

A hand-drawn advert for a concert given at the Onchan Internment Camp by Willy Salamon and Hans Schidloff

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.

LEOPOLDSTADT

Your February article about the sad passing of Tom Stoppard reminded me of his play *Leopoldstadt*.

My parents left Vienna for Britain in 1938 when my mother was eight months pregnant – a brave decision on their part. They persuaded my grandparents to join them by insisting that the same outcome would have befallen them as had happened to their siblings had they gone to Czechoslovakia, where my maternal grandmother had come from, rather than coming to Britain. Consequently, I was the only one of my cousins who grew up with grandparents.

I remember my grandfather avidly reading the *Aufbau* when I was a child and teaching me all the children's nursery rhymes in German. He was rather deaf so never spoke English but would read the English newspapers from cover to cover.
Pat Brody, Edgware

Thank you for informing me that the brilliant Tom Stoppard, arguably the most important British dramatist of our era, was a Jewish child refugee from the Nazis. Not many people know that.

Like many others – and me – he had a complex relationship with his Jewish roots.

I am an old man.

I am a Jew.

When I get up in the morning, when I walk on the seafront of my hometown or go into a shop or a pub, I think "old man " – I do not think "Jew".

I saw Hitler march into Vienna on my 9th birthday. I fled to Belgium on a Kindertransport in 1939 and landed in England 86 years ago in 1940. King George VI granted me British citizenship in 1947.

Reading the news, I share my Jewish heritage with Albert Einstein and Jeffrey Epstein, with Felix Mendelssohn and Peter Mandelson, with Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim and Harvey Weinstein.
John Farago, Deal

GRETE MARKS

I was interested to read Janet Weston's brief reference to Grete Marks in her article about York Art Museum's *Wall of Women* exhibition (September 2025).

Grete Marks was a remarkable woman who produced amazing avant-garde ceramics in the 1930s in Germany. She appears in the paperback edition of my book *Women's Experiences in the Holocaust*.

She was very strong minded and when she applied to Bauhaus she was frustrated by the misogyny of not only the Director Walter Gropius but also his side kick Gerhard Marcks. Gropius liked to direct all the women to the weaving workshop. Grete wasn't having that as she wanted to do ceramics. Her daughter, Dr Frances Marks, sent me me this: 'Correspondence between Gropius and Marcks indicates they were reluctant to take her but realised she was a forceful woman who would object if refused a place.' She added '… research has shown very few women were accepted.'

Grete's forcefulness was required as she had a difficult life whilst producing remarkable ceramics which were sold in Heal's and Liberty's in the 1930s. It was one of the buyers from Heal's who helped her come to England when life became too difficult in Germany with her work being designated as degenerate. One particular 'degenerate' vase is now in the British Museum donated by her daughter.

Her story is quite remarkable and should be read by many people. She is an inspiration.
Dr. Agnes Grunwald-Spier, London NW3

FROM YOUR OLD POSTBAG

The April 1998 letter from my father, Frank Bright, reproduced this March, made me smile. When Miriam and I cleared out his study after his death, those bankers boxes filled with old AJR Journals were still there, although, thank goodness, not back to 1998!
Toni Bright

THE ARREST OF RUDOLF HÖSS

Last month we published an article by Claudia Rosencrantz examining the role of Werner Haas in the arrest of Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz. The piece sought to contribute to an important historical discussion, and we value the commitment Claudia brings to her work.

We recognise that the piece prompted strong feelings and disagreement, including from Thomas Harding, author of *Hanns and Rudolf*, and members of his family. Matters relating to the Holocaust and to individual family histories carry profound emotional weight, and it is entirely understandable that differing interpretations may cause distress.

We are therefore pleased to publish this response by Thomas Harding which adds essential perspective to the record. We offer our unreserved apology to Thomas and his family for the offence caused by the publication of the original article, and we remain committed to handling matters of this significance with sensitivity, fairness and respect.

I read with interest the article 'My Uncle Werner and Rudolf Höss' by Claudia Rosencrantz (March).

The article describes Werner Haas's response to reading my book *Hanns and Rudolf: The German Jew and the Hunt for the Kommandant of Auschwitz,* published by William Heinemann in 2013, a dual biography of Hanns Alexander (my uncle) and Rudolf Höss (the Kommandant of Auschwitz).

Rosencrantz says that my book made Werner 'very angry' and he wanted to 'set the record straight'.

In her article, she includes a two-page handwritten report written by Werner which states that he was 'absolutely certain' Hanns Alexander did not meet Captain Cross (in

charge of Field Security Section 92) before the arrest and that Hanns was not involved with obtaining the key information from Höss's wife Hedwig that led to the arrest. Werner also says that there were no 'hatred beatings' carried out by the British soldiers and Hanns was not involved with the interrogations following the arrest, nor were there celebrations after the capture.

Crucially, Werner says that my uncle was not even present during the arrest. 'In short,' Werner writes with a flourish, 'there was no Alexander.'

I was quite surprised by this re-writing of history.

Starting in 2006, I spent six years researching these particular events. I visited military archives in the UK, USA, Israel and Luxembourg. I worked with historians at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and other Holocaust centres. I gathered diaries, letters and testimony held by numerous private sources. And by the time my book was published, I came to a different conclusion about the arrest of Rudolf Höss.

Here are a few of the documents that convinced me:

1. A list of people working in 1945 and 1946 for Number 1 War Crimes Investigation Team (based in Bergen-Belsen), including the name of Hanns Alexander. At this time, 1 WCIT was the principal Nazi-hunting unit in the British army.
2. A file note written on 18 February 1946 by Hanns Alexander's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Tilling: 'Capt. Alexander due on Pohl (Himmler's deputy) then Flensburg: Höss and Glücks' (Richard Glücks was Höss's boss).
3. A field report written by Hanns on 15 March 1946, three days after Höss's arrest, stating that Hanns met with Captain Cross before the arrest, that he was involved with the interrogation of Rudolf Höss's wife prior to the arrest, that he interrogated the kommandant after the arrest and, crucially, that he was present during the arrest itself: 'Rudolf Höss alias Frenz Long was arrested at Gottrupel Kreis Flensburg in the house of farmer Hansen by Capt. Cross 92 FSS from Heide, with his complete section, present were further Capt. Harford of 318 FSS Flensburg as it was in his area, a Medical Officer of the 5th R.H. in Heide and Capt. Alexander.'
4. A report written about the arrest of Rudolf Höss on 15 March 1946 by Captain Cross which states that 'Höss was handed over to Capt. Alexander'.
5. A letter written by Hanns's brother Paul on 13 March 1946 to their parents back in London confirming that Hanns was involved with the arrest of Rudolf Höss ('Hanns had a very successful time here,' he wrote, 'he caught the bastard from Auschwitz. I have never seen such a sh*t in all my life') and their celebrations afterwards.
6. A photograph taken shortly after Rudolf Höss's arrest showing he had a bloody nose and his memoirs written over the winter of 1946/ 1947 which stated he was severely beaten by the British.

It is worth noting that unlike the contemporary sources listed above, Werner's 'report' was written in 2018 – more than seven decades after the events.

The only contemporaneous evidence that Rosencrantz puts forward in her article is a photograph of her uncle's unit FSS 92 taken a few days after the arrest. The fact that Hanns Alexander is not included of course proves nothing. He's not in the picture because he did not belong to FSS 92.

What does all this mean? From the archival records, we know that it was literally Captain Hanns Alexander's job to track down and arrest the kommandant of Auschwitz. We know that he helped with the interrogations that led to the kommandant's capture, took him into custody and later questioned him.

Therefore, contrary to the claims laid out in Rosencrantz's article, Hanns was very much 'present' during the arrest of Rudolf Höss.

And what of Werner Haas? In his 'report' he acknowledges that he 'took no part in the events leading up to his arrest' – he therefore would not have been in a position to ascertain Hanns's role at that point.

In the same 'report', Werner also admits that at the time of the arrest he'd been a 'junior member, if not the most junior member of the team'. This goes some way to explaining why he did not remember Hanns Alexander, given that my uncle belonged to another unit and left soon after the arrest.

The truth is that people often have different recollections of what happened in the past. This can be especially true in fast-moving, highly emotional situations, such as the arrest of a high-profile war criminal.

Which is why historians supplement oral testimony with archival sources – such as military reports, diaries and letters – and are particularly careful when it comes to speaking about the Holocaust where getting the facts rights is so vital.

All that said, I have no doubt that Werner was present during the arrest of Rudolf Höss.

In the 1990s, Hanns gave an interview to his nephew, John Alexander, about the arrest of Rudolf Höss. At the end, Hanns says, 'Lots of people were involved with the work. Some people were reading letters to the wife. Others were watching the wife.' In his field report, Hanns mentions Captain Cross, the doctor, another captain, as well as the 'entire' FSS 92 unit.

In other words, there is more than enough glory to go around.

Thomas Harding

Author, *Hanns and Rudolf: The German Jew and the Hunt for the Kommandant of Auschwitz*


Wilton Park

SIR HEINZ KOEPPLER


Sir Heinz Koeppler addressing participants in a 1976 Wilton Park conference

Just like the AJR Journal, Wilton Park – the renowned international policy forum in West Sussex which was the brainchild of Jewish refugee Heinrich (Heinz) Koeppler – is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. Nick Hopkinson, a former director of Wilton Park, looks back at its history.

Today affiliated with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, Wilton Park formed a key part of Sir Winston Churchill's mission to build a democratic post-war Germany, focusing on the 're-education' of German officers.

Heinz Koeppler

Koeppler was born on 30 June 1912 in Wollstein/Wolsztyn to a Prussian landowner and the daughter of Jewish banker. When the small town became part of Poland after WW1, Koeppler's family moved to Berlin where Heinz studied law at the prestigious Kiel University. His Professor, Hermann Kantorowicz, described him as "one of the best students Germany has ever produced".

While at Kiel, his father died of intestinal bleeding, allegedly brought on by money worries. One day, in the summer of 1933, Koeppler was walking down Berlin's Kurfürstendamn when he met the father of his friend Hans Martin Goldberg. Goldberg's father expressed concern that Germany was no longer fit for a young Jew and took great interest in Koeppler's ambition to continue his studies in Britain. When Koeppler pleaded poverty, Goldberg offered to cover his travel and said he could stay with his son in London.

After perfecting his English in London, and with support from the Jewish Help Organisation for Academics at Woburn House, Koeppler won a scholarship to study history at Magdalen College, Oxford. In 1937, Koeppler gained a permanent position as a lecturer at Magdalen and was naturalised as a British citizen. He became friends with a group of liberal intellectuals whose primary concerns included how to prevent war through international institutions, law and education.

Soon after the outbreak of WW2 Koeppler was recruited to the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department (PID), not least because of his fluent German. From 1941 to 1943, he served as the liaison officer between the BBC and the PID, subsequently becoming Assistant Director of the German and Austrian Section.

To avoid replicating the mistakes of the Versailles Treaty after WW1, Churchill believed Germany would need to be 'reborn' and supported. Wilton Park grew out of a growing concern towards the end of WW2 about what should be done to create a democratic Germany after the defeat of the Nazi regime. A key means to do so was the idea of 'preparing' willing and 'suitable' Germans to form the core of a new Germany.

Koeppler became one of the strongest supporters of how education might help build post-war Germany. As attention increasingly focused on achieving a lasting peace in Europe, Koeppler responded to Churchill's call in 1943 for ideas on how to progress the postwar democratisation of Germany. In 1944 he submitted a proposal to the Joint Committee (comprising the Foreign Office, the Political Warfare Executive, the BBC and Ministry of Information) to establish an institution for Germans 'in public life' to discuss German problems, gain an understanding of British politics and exchange views on running a free society so Germany could live in peace and friendship with its former enemies.

The early years

Koeppler's proposal was accepted and Wilton Park's first course was convened in January 1946 in Beaconsfield. Wilton Park started with all the characteristics of a Prisoner of War (PoW) camp, but its daily routine contained a programme of education and learning. Koeppler thought hard about how to reduce or prevent a range of problems from sinking the project.

Koeppler knew he had to consider some of the PoWs would be committed Nazis, some largely apolitical and some anti-Nazis either because the war had been lost or for longer term ideological reasons. All might be resentful of being prisoners, be unwilling to cooperate with 'the enemy' and liable to suspect that the programme would simply be propaganda.

Koeppler sought not to indoctrinate. He assumed the inmates would draw their own conclusions from being exposed to the presented facts. Comprehension would see through the abusive rhetoric, lies and simplifications they had previously heard. This was achieved by a liberal exchange of ideas in a setting that resembled the experience of talking, debating, eating and living together in residential colleges such as those in Oxford and Cambridge. Mutual understanding would thus develop, but not

AND WILTON PARK

necessarily resolution. Wilton Park did not exist for negotiations.

The programme content was partly founded in Koeppler's belief that Germans had for a long time been divorced from the general flow of European culture. The roughly 300 participants in each six-week course participated in lectures and discussions on British democracy and 'civility', German and European developments and a rich programme of cultural events. There were also discussions about Nazi war crimes, in particular the concentration camps.

The success of the original 'courses' attracted wider interest. The British authorities in post-war Germany soon asked to send civilian participants to join the PoWs. Other Europeans participated from 1950. From the mid-1950s, Americans began to participate, especially after a major grant from the Ford Foundation. Developing country participants became regular participants from the mid-1980s.

Over the years, Wilton Park has received many tributes. In 1971, the then German Federal Minister of Defence, and later Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, argued Wilton Park's "rural seclusion of the South Downs gave birth to many ideas which became a political reality in Germany in the years to come". At its 60th anniversary conference, the German ambassador to the UK, Wolfgang Ischinger, stated: "I am delighted to be here in the cradle of German democracy". In later years, Wilton Park made contributions in other areas ranging from forging consensus in the transatlantic alliance, helping end apartheid in South Africa and advancing UK membership of the European Community and enlargement of the European Union.

Endurance

In spite of its success, questions about Wilton Park's (low) cost, purpose and location were occasionally raised. In his 31 years leading Wilton Park, Koeppler doggedly fought off a number of attempts – in particular HM Treasury – to close the institution through campaigns such as soliciting letters of support from leading opinion formers.

Wilton Park developed many unique strengths. Its work is planned and executed independently from the British government, and is known to be so. Koeppler addressed the apparent paradox in 1966: "The essence of this institution is its academic freedom. And here the Foreign Office does not call the tune; on the contrary it has imposed on itself a self-denying ordinance. We receive no directives on what issues we should discuss, nor who should be asked to come and speak".

Another key element underpinning Wilton Park's success has been its willingness and ability to programme new topics. Koeppler's long term aspiration from the outset was for the British government to turn Wilton Park into a permanent and wider ranging international institution using his methods to discuss the most awkward and intractable world problems.

A book recently published by Routledge shows how Wilton Park addressed and progressed understanding of, and sometimes even co-operation in, topical international policy areas including: forging consensus in NATO and arms control; UK relations with the European Community; integration in and enlargement of the EU; Africa; China, and the Middle East, and more recently transnational challenges such as curbing climate change and migration.

Koeppler was knighted in the 1977 New Year Honours. By the time of his retirement later that year, Sir Heinz had established Wilton Park as a leading international Track II forum (informal dialogues bringing official and non-state actors together to help identify new ideas, relationships and solutions). The original 'courses' for German officers evolved into today's interactive policy roundtables for ministers, diplomats, officials, academics, businesspeople, journalists and other opinion formers from countries around the world. Its international community and work in more than 50 countries beyond its 16th century Sussex country home have helped realise Sir Heinz' international vision.

Sir Heinz justifiably argued "the outstanding fact in Wilton Park's history remains that its aims and methods have stood the test of time". In the context of fragmentation of the liberal

Sir Heinz Koeppler welcomes Prime Minister Sir Edward Health to Wilton Park's Jubilee Conference, 1971

global order and democratic backsliding in mature democracies, Wilton Park is needed more than ever as a forum to exchange and influence opinion through informed, international, interactive, interdisciplinary dialogue. This is sadly all the more true in an era of growing misinformation. In this context, Sir Heinz' image of a bridge of international understanding for Wilton Park's logo remains as apt as ever.

Nick Hopkinson is a writer on EU and international affairs and is former director of Wilton Park where he served from 1987 to 2010. He posts @nickhopkinson.bsky.social A copy of his fifth book *The Policies and Power of Public Diplomacy – Wilton Park's Road* (Routledge, London and New York, 2025), which he edited and was lead author, is freely available by clicking on the open access button within the following link: **https://www.routledge.com/The-Policies-and-Power-of-Public-Diplomacy-Wilton-Parks-Road/Hopkinson/p/book/9781032831251**

THE BRAUER FAMILY: A

Eva Brauer

The three Brauer sisters, Eva, Anita and Margot, with Eva's husband, Egon Gadiel (R), Helen's father, Joe Allan (L), plus Rose Pierce, Margot's sister-in-law from her first marriage (centre L)

Helen Levy only recently discovered that her stepmother's family rescued and hid several Jews in Berlin during WW2 before coming to the UK. In the absence of anyone to speak for them she feels compelled to share their story.

This is the story, or part of the story, of Johanna and Willy Brauer. Told by someone who never knew them, nor much of their history, until a chance discovery online.

For so many of us for who are second or third generation survivors of the Holocaust, the internet helps us reach out for lost links, lost connections, lost information. For me, it was a search that gave life to a story that was never told to family members , themselves.

It was a few years ago that, on entering 'Johanna and Willy Brauer' into the search engine, a link came up for *Kauperts*, the German street guide.

To my amazement, I discovered that Johanna and Willy Brauer had sheltered nine other Jews during the Holocaust and that, in 2010, a Karlshorst square had been named after them to honour their bravery.

We know the risks for gentiles who sheltered Jews. But Jews sheltering other Jews? How was this even possible?

I am not a blood relative, but my father married the Brauer's youngest daughter, Margot – known as Gitte by to those close to her, and as 'mum' to me – when I was nine years old.

As a child, I heard whispers of conversion. Now, as an adult, here was the confirmation that Margot's mother, Johanna, was indeed a convert. In the war, she had de-converted to save her family. According to the Leo Baeck Institute: Willy Brauer was Jewish, but his wife Johanna was an Aryan, according to Nazi law. Her status protected her husband.

I had often wondered how Johanna, Willy and their eldest daughter, Eva, survived in Berlin. Margot had told me how Willy was once arrested, and that Johanna and a group of other women had stormed where he was being held captive to secure his release. I had added this tale to the stories of amazing turns of fate, of actions going against the grain – where someone's defiance did not end in a bullet, but in turning a blind eye or capitulation.

I recently discovered that the event she referred to was known as the 1943 protest action of Rosenstrasse, through which Johanna – according to official documentation regarding the 2010 renaming of the square – had saved her Jewish husband from deportation.

My research told me that, thanks to Johanna's de-conversion from Judaism, the family was able to stay in Berlin. They had to give up their precious house and garden but were able to move into a flat elsewhere.

It seems that this, together with Johanna's sheer grit, somehow protected her family from the worst, but I'm not sure if that is accurate or just how it appears?

What I have been given to believe is that Johanna came from a very well connected old German family, the Kehrs, which gave them some sort of extra security.

They were able to get two of their daughters out of Germany on domestic visas and Margot's son, Malcolm, my stepbrother, told me recently that his maternal grandfather would have made sure of this, paying for their escape.

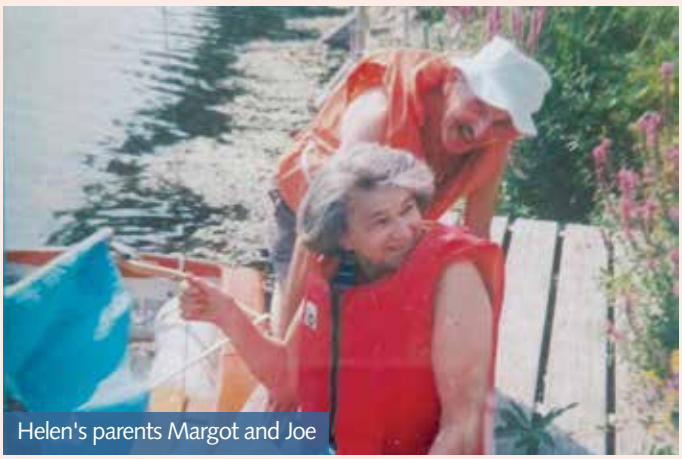
I know that the family had originally planned for all three girls to emigrate to Australia and they were kitted out in appropriate clothing ready for this change of climate, some of which I now own with its beautiful delicate stitching on thin cotton nightgowns. Clearly, that was not ultimately possible, so the UK on domestic visas became necessary.

Given that the girls were brought up with servants, sports clubs and genteel liberal company, this must have been a tough transition, but one for which Margot was always grateful, as she made clear in a letter to the editor of the *AJR Journal* back in February 2009.

All I knew of Johanna is that she lived with Margot and her first husband, Nat Cohen, and Malcolm after the war. That Willy had died and that she was a widow. Margot ran a quite Germanic house, as I saw it. It was very organised and clean, but still homely. Furniture was moved around on a regular

STORY WORTH TELLING

The new roadname being uncovered in 2010



Helen's parents Margot and Joe

basis and hoovered underneath, repairs were attended to and there was never a pile of paperwork or a pile of ironing gathering dust.

Visitors were welcome and family was important. Trips to north London invariably involved at least three stops along the way to visit family and friends and we hosted family surprise parties, Kalooki and solo card games evenings, resplendent with cherry brandy with advocaat, whisky and soda, and cream sherry. Meals, however, were not typically German, but simple English fare such as roast lamb, potatoes and peas. Spaghetti bolognese came far later. The nearest mum came to more traditional fare was shmaltz, *gribenes*, chopped liver, chicken soup and lokshen pudding.

According to the entry for the Johanna and Willy Platz, the Brauers were betrayed and those they sheltered were discovered in a Gestapo raid in April 1944. I now know that they sheltered Erich and Elsbeth Frey and Georg and Kathe Licht, but the names of the others are now, sadly, lost. They were subsequently transported, firstly to Theresienstadt and then to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. Alice, the Licht daughter, was sent elsewhere and survived, ultimately emigrating to America.

From what I have read, the Brauers were clearly linked to the underground. They took in those who had sheltered at "Otto Weidt's workshop for the blind, which was secretly a refuge for Jews", when it became unsafe for them to stay there.

That the Brauers were not annihilated is astonishing. They would have been well known to the authorities even before discovery. In fact, they were very involved in Jewish community matters pre-war.

Yet, the Brauers were not shot on discovery, nor sent to the death camps. Willy ended up in a Jewish hospital which was really a prison above Gestapo offices, where Johanna was able to bring him food. Eva ended up in various awful prisons and camps and was a slave labourer. According to her testimony for the USC Shoah Foundation, filed under her married name of Eva Gadiel, she moved between different places, but was released from the worst after being liberated by the Soviet armed forces.

Eva's testimony does mention that the family sheltered other Jews, but my mother and Malcolm clearly did not know. Their silence is astonishing. Or perhaps it is actually common for those who acted so bravely to see it as nothing out of the ordinary, and not talk about it.

Malcolm is the only surviving member of the Brauer family, as far as I know. There must be relatives from the non-Jewish side, but I know of none from the Jewish side. Margot once told me that countless cousins had perished.

I feel the weight of this knowledge. There is no-one else to tell their story, but me. Last year Malcolm sadly suffered a severe stroke and now lives in a nursing home.

Who honours the Jews who faced potentially devastating consequences? The Brauers didn't meet Yad Vashem's criteria. Where, indeed, could they be remembered as Righteous?

So, my thanks go to the AJR, of which my parents were long standing members, for helping to honour the Brauers for their incredible bravery, through this article and via the UK Holocaust Map, for the Brauers put their own lives on the line to save others and suffered doing so.

It would be immensely wrong if their story was not told and I am so grateful to be able to honour them in this way.

Acknowledgments

- **https://berlin.kauperts.de/Strassen/Johanna-und-Willy-Brauer-Platz-10318-Berlin**
- **https://www.facebook.com/lbi.newyork/posts/elsbeth-and-erich-frey-with-their-two-daughters-berlin-1925-from-a-private-colle/2652032578153538/**
- Juden in Lichtenberg; Thea Koberstein and Norbert Stein, Edition Hentrich 1995 – contains a chapter on the Brauers – "Familie Brauer, Drachenfelsstr.12" pages 271 – 275
- **https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/11747**
- Photographs courtesy of Michael Laschke (road renaming ceremony) and the book *Juden in Lichtenberg* by Thea Koberstein and Norbert Stein, Hentrich 1995

REMEMBERIN

Florentina Freise, Managing Director of Dialogue Capital, has recently published a doctoral dissertation on a very popular club founded in 1943 by German-speaking refugees. She has written this essay especially for readers of the *AJR Journal*, many of whom will have fond recollections of Club 43.

In the mid-1990s, the *Tagesspiegel* reported on a German-speaking refugee club in London that had been founded during WW2. The reference stayed with me. Not long afterwards, I found myself in north-west London, standing in front of the Belsize Park Synagogue, tucked away among the elegant white houses of its surrounding residential streets.

It was a meeting place that appeared in few history books and was scarcely known outside the United Kingdom, yet it had once been central to the lives of many refugees. What began as curiosity developed into a long engagement that later formed the basis of a doctoral dissertation. Long before it became an academic project, however, Club 43 was first and foremost a social place: a meeting point for refugees in exile who had found safety in Britain and chose to rebuild their lives there.


Old Acquaintances

enachem Gerson :
rom "WERKLEUTE" to "HASOREA"

JERUSALEM

The very first reference to Club 1943 appeared in the March 1950 issue of AJR Information

Club 43 was founded on 1 January 1943 by a group of German-speaking refugees: Hans Flesch, an actor; Alfred Unger, a writer: Monty Jacobs, a theatre critic; Grete Fischer, a journalist; Hermann Friedmann, a solicitor; and Hans José Rehfisch, a writer.

Many of the club members had fled Nazi persecution. Others were political opponents of the regime or had been forced into exile for different reasons. Among its founders and early members were doctors, lawyers, writers, artists and academics – people who had lost not only their professions but often their families, social standing and sense of belonging. London offered protection, but life in exile was marked by uncertainty. Refugees faced legal restrictions, suspicion and, in some cases, internment. Against this background, the founding of a club dedicated to education, culture and conversation was both practical and deeply symbolic.

From early on, Club 43 was closely connected to the AJR. Its activities, lectures and internal life were regularly reflected in the *AJR Journal*, where the club came to represent a particular strand of refugee self-organisation: informal, intellectually ambitious and deliberately non-programmatic. For many AJR members, Club 43 was not simply another club, but a familiar and trusted space.

Members met regularly for lectures, discussions and cultural events. They spoke about literature, European history, music and politics, as well as the everyday concerns of life in exile. Club 43 did not present itself as a political organisation, nor as a memorial institution. Instead, it offered a framework of continuity at a moment when much else had been disrupted.

In the interviews I conducted with former members in later years, the club often appeared only indirectly. People spoke primarily about their lives: work, friendships, family, arrival and settlement. Yet the club was always there, quietly woven into these narratives. It functioned less as a formal institution than as a shared point of reference — a place where one did not have to explain one's background.

Strikingly – and perhaps understandably – experiences of persecution and flight were rarely discussed at length. They were understood, assumed, but seldom elaborated. Instead, members emphasised the importance of everyday normality. Club 43 offered a space in which individuals were not defined solely as refugees or victims, but as participants in a shared cultural and social life.

The significance of the club within the AJR community became particularly visible at the time of its closure. When Club 43 held its final meeting in December 2011, the occasion was marked in the *AJR Journal* by a lead article by Dr Anthony Grenville, who reflected on the club's long history and its place in the lives of its members. His contribution made clear how deeply Club 43 had mattered – not only as a venue for talks and discussion, but as a social anchor that had accompanied many refugees for decades and helped them to integrate into British society.

Grenville's article captured something that also emerges repeatedly from interviews and archival material: that Club 43 was valued less for any single programme than for its reliability over time. It was a place that endured, adapting quietly as its members aged, while remaining recognisably itself.

Hans Seelig, the club's last president,

G CLUB 43

once described London as a city in which one learned restraint. One did not want to stand out more than necessary. "You did not want to be different," one former member recalled. Adaptation was part of finding one's place – and part of survival.

Club 43 was not unique. London was home to many organisations founded by German-speaking refugees, including the *Deutscher Kulturbund*, the Austrian Centre, the PEN Club and the Wiener Library. Cafés and restaurants also served as informal meeting points. Yet Club 43 deliberately differentiated itself from more overtly political groups. It was conceived as a space of intellectual and cultural continuity rather than activism. Culture here was not a programme, but a shared orientation.

This orientation was reflected in the club's publication *In Tyrannos*, as well as in its lecture programmes, many of which were noted over the years in the *AJR Journal*. Canonical authors such as Goethe and Thomas Mann appeared alongside contemporary writers; discussions of European history stood next to reflections on current affairs. Political questions were present, but indirectly, shaped by a desire to avoid ideological rigidity.

After the war, the composition of the club changed. Only a small number of members returned to Germany or Austria. Many remained in Britain, became British citizens and established families. Over time, children and grandchildren joined the club, even though they themselves had not experienced exile. Club 43 thus became a place where memory and continuity coexisted, without being formally staged.

In its later years, meetings became smaller and quieter. After the death of Hans Seelig in 2009, the club continued briefly before closing in 2011. Its end was not dramatic. It marked the conclusion of a shared chapter rather than a rupture – a moment of quiet loss felt by many who had come to regard the club as part of their social and emotional landscape.

What remains of Club 43 today?

There is no plaque and no permanent memorial. What remains is an experience: the knowledge that belonging can be created through everyday practices; that integration does not always require visibility; and that the legacy of refugee institutions often lies in the lives shaped within them rather than in public commemoration.

For the AJR community, Club 43 remains present not only in memory, but in the pages of its own Journal and archives. It survives in photographs, programmes, minutes and recollections – and in the social ties that once formed around it. At a time when questions of belonging, identity and migration are again publicly contested, this history offers a quieter perspective.

Club 43 was not a monument. It was an everyday place. For many, it functioned as an 'ersatzfamilie' – a substitute family – offering continuity, familiarity and mutual recognition in exile. Its significance lies less in any single event than in the long arc of care, conversation and shared presence it sustained over decades.

Perhaps this is where its lasting importance can be found: not in grand gestures, but in lived empathy; in helping others without judgement; and in the understated ways in which refugee communities have shaped London – and been shaped by it in return.

Florentina Freise outside Belsize Square Synagogue, where Club 43 was based


AJR journal
Association of Jewish Refugees

Club 1943

Ludwig Spiro

The closure of Club 43 in 2011 was marked with a lead article in our corresponding issue

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Tracey Emin *I never Asked to Fall in Love – You made me Feel like This 2018*

This is a tale of two women, each remarkable in her own way. One thought she "would die as a mediocre YBA", the other, at the age of 91, is honoured with the Royal Academy's main gallery.

Tracey Emin's retrospective at **Tate Modern, A Second Life,** is her most ambitious yet. In her own familiar, confessional style she explores a life challenged by mortality, prompted by her own illness and major surgery from bladder cancer.

The wild child of the unmade bed says she would make it differently today, but it remains a centrepiece at the Tate. Emin presented us with all the messiness of womankind – duvet hurled back, dirty underwear, used condoms, empty bottles and cigarette boxes at the foot. But to Emin this time the bed suggests the end of pain and the beginning of renewal.

Her other famous installation, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995,* includes two foetuses, whose abortions haunted her. It was destroyed in the Momart warehouse fire of 2004, and she has no intention of remaking it. But in this show, she examines the anguish of her emotional and physical life. The angry splash of red paint in *I Never Asked To Fall in Love – You Made Me Feel Like This*, 2018, reflects deep torment.

Despite her ill health Emin is just 62. In contrast **Rose Wylie** is 91, and to mark it, the **Royal Academy** has brought together her most iconic artworks with brand-new and previously unseen paintings.

Wylie's work is alive with references to cinema, celebrities, literature, and ancient civilisations. Her cast of characters – primarily women – includes Elizabeth I, Nicole Kidman, Marilyn Monroe, Serena Williams, and Snow White. These cultural and historical references rub alongside her own experiences, such as living through the Blitz as a young girl.

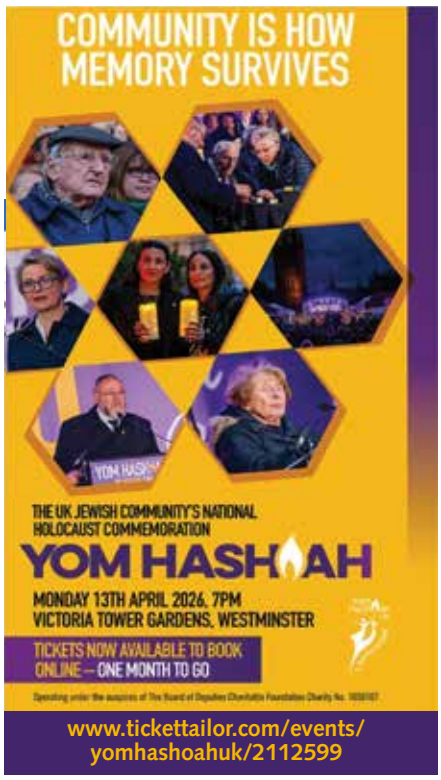
After raising her children, Wylie's artistic career started in her fifties. She became a cultural icon with her singular primitive style making waves across the art world, fashion scene and beyond. There is always plenty of irony in her work.For example, *Snow White with Duster* carries the message: Some Day Her Prince Will Come.

In *A Handsome Couple,* 2022, she depicts the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, focusing on the three-strand pearl necklace which betrayed the Duchess's infidelity and caused her to lose their much-publicised divorce case.

Tracey Emin: a second life at Tate Modern until 31 August

Rose Wylie: The Picture Comes First at the Royal Academy until 19 April 2026

Rose Wylie *Snowwhite (3), with Duster, 2018*



Challenged by Anne Frank

Ella Spencer recently celebrated her 24th birthday with a trip to Amsterdam with her two best friends. One of the museums they visited had a profound impact on them all.

Ellie (left), Lilly (Middle), and Ella (right) in Amsterdam

When we booked a long weekend in Amsterdam to celebrate my birthday, we imagined canals, coffee shops, lots of shopping and the kind of carefree laughter that usually accompanies trips with best friends. What we did not anticipate was how profoundly one morning would shift the tone of the entire weekend.

Visiting the Anne Frank House was something Lilly and I had always assumed we would do one day. At our Jewish schools, JFS and JCoSS, Anne Frank's story was woven into our education. We studied the Holocaust extensively. We read extracts from her diary in classrooms. We marked Yom HaShoah in assemblies.

But our friend Ellie is not Jewish and had never experienced Holocaust education in the same immersive way. For her, this visit would be something entirely new. For Lilly and me, we thought it might feel like revisiting something we already understood.

We were wrong.

Like many children, I first encountered Anne through *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. At school, her writing felt powerful yet strangely distant, history contained safely between the covers of a book. You read her words knowing the ending, knowing the scale of the tragedy beyond the Annex walls. It is moving, of course, but there is a certain detachment in learning about it from a classroom desk.

Walking through the actual rooms where she lived in hiding dissolved that detachment completely.

The steep, narrow staircase. The bookcase concealing the entrance. The blackout curtains. The silence. It is not a grand space, that is what shocked me the most. The claustrophobia is inescapable. Standing in Anne's bedroom, seeing the faded images she pasted on the wall in an attempt to preserve some sense of teenage normality, made her feel startlingly real. She was not simply a symbol of six million. She was a young girl, with dreams, frustrations, humour and ambition.

What affected us most was the ordinariness of it all. The hiding place sits above an office building in the centre of a bustling city. Life continued outside, trams ran, people worked, the world moved on all while eight people lived in constant fear just metres away. The proximity of normal life to unimaginable danger was deeply unsettling.

Visiting post the 7 October massacre added another layer we hadn't expected. In Jewish schools, the Holocaust is taught thoroughly but often in a way that feels historical, contained within the past, framed as something that happened 'then'. In recent months, antisemitism has felt less abstract. Being in the Annex at this moment in time made everything feel closer, more fragile. The idea that hatred can escalate and that discrimination, if normalised, can evolve into something far more dangerous, no longer feels like a distant warning from history books.

For Ellie, the experience was eye-opening in a different way. She spoke afterwards about how the visit gave her a new understanding of why Holocaust education is so central to Jewish identity. For her, it was not just about learning historical facts; it was about witnessing how easily prejudice can infiltrate everyday life. She told us that seeing the space, the cramped kitchen and the shared bedrooms made her realise how resilience and terror coexisted daily for those in hiding.

Lilly reflected on how different it felt to return to Anne's story as an adult. At 13 or 14, reading the diary, you relate to Anne's teenage frustrations. At 23, you think about the future she never had. The career she dreamed of as a writer, the independence she would never experience. The loss feels sharper.

For me, the visit reinforced something deeply personal. Growing up Jewish in London, the Holocaust has always been part of my inherited memory, even though my own family were not directly survivors. It exists in communal stories, in the way our grandparents speak about Europe, in the unspoken understanding of why Israel matters to so many in our community. Being in that house did not teach me new historical facts; it reshaped my emotional understanding.

Education provides knowledge. Being there provides perspective.

As we left the museum and stepped back into the bright Amsterdam afternoon, the contrast was jarring. Tourists cycled past, life carrying on as normal. Yet we felt quieter. More reflective. My birthday trip had unexpectedly become something far more meaningful than celebration.

Anne Frank once wrote about still believing that people are truly good at heart. Standing in her home, knowing how her story ended, that optimism feels both heartbreaking and courageous.

At 24, visiting the Anne Frank House did not simply revisit something we had learned at school. It challenged us to consider our responsibility now and in how we respond to discrimination, how we educate others, and how we ensure that remembrance is not passive.

History, we realised, is not as distant as we would like to think.

REVIEWS

THE HITLER YEARS: HOLOCAUST 1933 – 1945
By Frank McDonough
Head of Zeus Ltd

When Hitler became Chancellor on 30 January 1933 it spelled doom for the Jews and author Frank McDonough examines how life tragically unfolded in increasingly radical and genocidal stages. His highly analytical book is taken in chronological order year-by-year as the Nazi regime gained hold in more and more countries until finally the concentration camps were liberated by allied forces.

It details the development of early persecution of Jews leading to what became 'The Final Solution'. From 1933 to 1938 Jews in Germany suffered persecution, public discrimination and legal exclusion, lost their jobs and suffered economic hardship. Hitler hoped Jewish people and 'undesirables' would emigrate from Germany leaving him with a racially pure state. Approximately 65 per cent did leave prior to the outbreak of war in 1939.

Beforehand, Nazi activists across Germany took the initiative with impromptu boycotts of Jewish businesses, random acts of violence and public humiliation. Open violence during Kristallnacht sought to reinforce this goal. Catastrophically, the Holocaust saw 6 million Jews perish including 165,000 from Germany. The majority of victims were poor and powerless Jews in Eastern Europe, mostly in German occupied Poland and the Soviet Union.

German troops encountered no resistance entering Austria in March 1938. Immediately, the Anschluss opened a reign of terror in a prevailing, brutally antisemitic atmosphere. At this time there were 185,028 Jews in Austria mostly in Vienna. A total of 100,000 would leave by May 1939. But once war broke out, emigration became almost impossible as German military victories brought more European Jews under Nazi control.

In Poland, Jews were forced into ghettos in deplorable conditions and, in 1940, and with the country subjugated, he mounted a huge military assault. In quick succession Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium were all defeated. Then France also surrendered. But around 95 per cent of Jewish murders occurred after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 when killing squads claimed 1.5 million lives. In January 1942, senior German figures met at the infamous Wannsee Conference discussing the capture and transportation of all European Jews. By spring, six major killing centres had been established. Those who were not murdered were involved in forced labour, faced inhumane conditions, starvation and fatal disease.

Eventually there were close to 1,000 concentration camps, some well-known, others less familiar. Even as Germany was rapidly losing the war, in May 1944, deportations started in Hungary where 825,000 Jews lived, the largest remaining group in Europe. Tragically by 8 July, 437,402 had been transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where 320,000 Jewish people were killed in the first eight weeks. Eventually the Auschwitz complex covered 18 square miles including 50 different satellite camps. It was liberated by the Red Army on 27 January 1945 but not before the death marches to avoid the advancing forces. In the face of allied advance, concentration camps were disbanded and inmates forced to walk enormous distances in freezing weather suffering cold, starvation and tragic consequences.

This powerful deeply-researched book with contemporary photos is the fourth volume in McDonough's comprehensive narrative of German history from 1918 – 1945 and is the penultimate in his Hitler series. But in this book he has done supremely well collecting and analysing a mass of information presenting the dreadful truth of the Holocaust in simple terms so that it is never forgotten.
Janet Weston

A MOTHER'S PROMISE: MY TRUE STORY OF SURVIVING AUSCHWITZ AND THE HORRORS OF THE HOLOCAUST
By Renee Salt with Kate Thompson
Seven Dials

Throughout the long, dark, cold and hungry days of the war it was Renee's mother who made her daughter's life worth living. This remarkable book has enabled this brave survivor to tell her story 80 years later when aged 95. Renee not only stayed alive but overcome her demons and, in retirement, inspired so many others with her educational work. Joining forces with the Holocaust Educational Trust she has regularly given talks in schools and at the National Holocaust Centre, Nottinghamshire where her story forms part of *The Forever Project*.

Rene was just ten when the Second World War brought horror to her doorstep. Her story begins with a wonderfully rich Yiddish-speaking cultural life in Zduńska Wola in central Poland, then one of the country's largest fabric weaving centres. She was part of a large close family of over 200 members, tragically decimated by the Nazi menace.

For nearly six years from invasion to liberation, Renee was marched from ghetto to camp as mother and daughter were bound together in hell. From Łódź to Auschwitz-Birkenau to Bergen-Belsen they remained at each other's side whatever the adversity. It was her mother Sala who hid her elder daughter, lied to the SS, went right when directed left and whose small actions saved her daughter's life.

Barely alive at Bergen-Belsen's liberation in April 1945, she was gradually nursed back to strength and rescued from a displaced person's camp by a distant relative. After a difficult journey they ended up in Poland. Here she was reunited with her favourite Aunt Gitel who, with her new husband, scraped together a living. After some hair-raising adventures the three settled in Paris soaking the up the wonderfully uplifting atmosphere.

Here Renee first met Charles, a British Army Military Policeman 12 years her senior who – as part of the liberating forces – witnessed the horrific scenes at Bergen-Belsen. He understood her trauma, never failing to provide kind and loving support. Renee travelled to England to marry him, living with his family in a drab London devastated by bombing. But she suffered from flashbacks which were little understood in a climate where people were reluctant to talk about and acknowledge what happened to concentration camp victims during the war.

Despite the suffering, health problems and starvation she endured she still went on to have two children, Sharon and Martin and later the couple bought a grocery

shop. They were blessed with five grandchildren and in retirement Renee joined the Holocaust Survivors Centre set up by Jewish Care. It became her second home and she plucked up courage going into schools telling her story. She also went back to Bergen-Belsen with her family.

Author Kate Thompson met Renee at a Holocaust Educational Trust exhibition launch about Auschwitz-Birkenau where she had spoken about her wartime rexperiences. Kate encouraged Renee to write this memoir and helped by adding thoughtful background information. In the process she retraced Renee's footsteps from her childhood home through Poland and Germany including the ghetto sites and camps. Renee had always been haunted about what happened to her father Tatuś and, poignantly, Kate was able to discover the truth, and have a memorial plaque dedicated to him.
Janet Weston

Goodenough College AJR

UNVEILING OF AJR BLUE PLAQUE

GOODENOUGH COLLEGE, LONDON
TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026

Goodenough College was the original site of the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia. Through the efforts of those who worked at the Committee, from 1938 it saved the lives of those persecuted by the Nazis, including the children rescued on the Kindertransport. In 1939 it became the Czech Refugee Trust Fund.

On 19 May, which coincides with the anniversary of Sir Nicholas Winton's birthday, the AJR will be unveiling a plaque to commemorate the importance of the BCRC to the Jewish refugee community. If you or your family benefited from the help of the Committee, we would be delighted for you to join us for the unveiling of the plaque followed by a reception.

susan@ajr.org.uk

AJR

SPECIAL AJR EVENT

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM Holocaust Galleries

Lambeth Rd, London SE1 6HZ

WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2026
1PM

Join us for a welcome by James Bulgin, Head of Public History followed by a free-flowing tour of the Holocaust Galleries

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

AJR

AFTERNOON EVENT

THE LONDON ARCHIVES

TUESDAY 26 MAY 2026
40 Northampton Rd, Clerkenwell, London EC1R 0HB

'Revealing the Medieval Jewish Cemetery beneath the Barbican'

Exhibition and private talk for AJR members

Donation per person: £7.50

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

AJR

** NEW **

AJR ART CLASS

MONDAY 20 APRIL 2026
11am – 12:30pm

Do you want to try your hand at watercolours in a friendly and sociable setting?

Join us for our new, monthly art class in Finchley, North London

Cost per session: £10

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

AJR

AJR RAMBLERS CLUB

Our next walk will take place on:
TUESDAY 5 MAY 2026 at 11am

Meeting at a London underground station

There is no charge to come for a ramble. There will be a couple of comfort stops and an opportunity to have a coffee/sandwich break.

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

OBITUARIES

Lily BRUML

Born: 2 September 1923, Trautenau (Trutnov)
Died: 9 January 2026, London

Lily Bruml was born in 1923 in Trautenau (today Trutnov) in the Sudetenland, a region that was part of Czechoslovakia before World War II. Her father was a successful businessman who manufactured toys and had moved the family from Vienna to Czechoslovakia in 1915.

Lily grew up in a loving home with many Jewish and non-Jewish friends, and while not strictly religious, her parents made sure she learned about her Jewish heritage.

In 1938, as Nazi Germany prepared to invade the Sudetenland, Lily and her parents and grandmother fled Trautenau almost overnight and briefly stayed at the border before moving to Prague where they found a new apartment and attempted to restart life. After the full German occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1939, anti-Jewish restrictions intensified, and Lily's life changed dramatically as Nazis enforced the oppressive laws and persecution we are all so familiar with today.

On 6 August 1942, Lily and her family were ordered to report to the Trade Fair Hall and were held with more than 1,000 other Jews under extremely crowded and unsanitary conditions, before being deported to Theresienstadt, a concentration camp which although it was a model camp, used to impress the Red Cross, Lily and her parents suffered severe hardship, near-starvation and forced labor until liberation came in 1945. Her grandmother died shortly after arrival at the camp.

In her testimony, recorded by the National Library of Israel she stated "Everything was taken away, my name didn't exist anymore, I was BA992".

While in Terezin, Lily worked in a bakery within the camp producing bread for departing German troops – a position she wisely sought out so that she could bring bread to her parents. When the Soviet Army liberated the camp, Lily was ordered to remain working for some time to help manage the food for fellow survivors.

Auntie Lily was a remarkable, resilient woman, with many varied interests, including playing tennis, travelling, food and, like our father, she had a natural ear for languages. Underneath her tough exterior, she was extremely intelligent, witty and a loving aunt.

After liberation, she and her parents returned to Prague and then to Trautenau, though their home had been requisitioned first by the Gestapo and then the Russians.

After the war, the family eventually returned to Vienna, but Lily was unhappy there, and her parents supported her in moving to London, where her brother Hans, his wife Litzi and their children, Oscar, Anita and Susie were\ZX c\ already based, after some time in British Mandate Palestine and Israel.

It was in London that she met Emil, who had escaped Czechoslovakia before the war. They were happily married for 50 years until 1998 when he sadly died. They are now, as she so wished it, reunited.

The malnourishment and abuse she suffered in Terezin has been given as the reason she never had children, however, it is so very clear how adored she was by her nieces, nephew, and great nieces and nephews and great great nieces and nephews. She committed her life to living well (and to playing bridge well!), and part of this meant ensuring stories like hers were not forgotten, and would be learnt from.

She was famed for speaking in schools and to community groups, for which she received a British Empire Medal for services to Holocaust education and awareness. But what is perhaps more remarkable is the trip she was able to undertake with Oscar and his family, some 30 years ago, showing them Theresienstadt and the horrors so many people could never even speak of let alone. revisit.

In her late seventies, Lily again went to Terezin and Trutnov with Anita and Susie. She shared that her most prized sole possession was to have a cup of water.

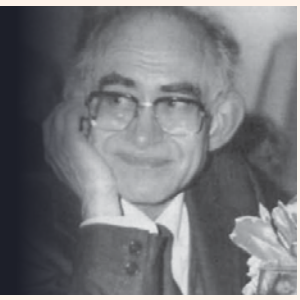
Auntie Lily was a remarkable, resilient woman, with many varied interests, including playing tennis, travelling, food and, like our father, she had a natural ear for languages. Underneath her tough exterior, she was extremely intelligent, witty and a loving aunt.

As a family, we will remember her stoicism (one of the strongest individuals we know) and her dignity, and that she was able to live independently and fully till about three months ago, in her 102nd year.

We all carry remarkable, intimate memories of Auntie Lily. She leaves an incredible written and recorded legacy, ensuring the horrors she and her family suffered cannot be forgotten or denied.

Her legacy truly is a blessing, and stretches beyond anything we can know.

Oscar Weiner & **Susie Moss**



Professor Michael SPIRO

Born: 29 April 1929, Chemnitz
Died: 5 October 2025, London

Michael Spiro was an only child, born prematurely in 1929 to liberal Jewish parents in the textile manufacturing town of Chemnitz, Saxony. Michael's father, Sally, who owned a successful textile factory, came from Margonin, East Prussia where his father was a shopkeeper.

Michael's mother, Nina (née Beck), was from a large, prosperous family originally from Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. Many of her relatives perished in the Holocaust.

From early 1933 Nazi legislation progressively constrained Jewish lives and Michael was eventually unable to attend school. He had private lessons from an English Quaker, Dorothy England, who lived with the Spiros in Chemnitz for several months. Michael's parents decided to emigrate and he remembered calling from his flat window to neighbours in May 1938 – "We're going to England tomorrow". His horrified parents told him off and explained the possible consequences of his exuberance. At Berlin Airport the family were body searched and Nina's jewellery confiscated while the plane waited. As soon as they were airborne, Michael was violently sick.

The family settled in a Belsize Park boarding house and awaited a work permit for a job Sally had been offered by a Leicester textile manufacturer. The permit was delayed, so Sally applied (successfully) for visas to Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand he found employment at a textile factory in Christchurch and was able to stand surety for his sister and her family, and for a cousin of Nina's and her family from Vienna. Joining the Spiros in Christchurch saved their lives.

Sally's expectations of his only child were high. Michael recalled that if he got 10/10 in the weekly maths test the weekend would be good but with 9/10 he would be in disgrace. Fortunately, he excelled academically and, after a Science M.Sc. at Canterbury College Christchurch, was awarded a prestigious scholarship (Rutherford had been a previous incumbent) for a D.Phil. in reaction kinetics at Balliol College, Oxford. Following posts in Toronto and Melbourne, Michael became a lecturer in Physical Chemistry and eventually a Professor at Imperial College, London.

Michael had a highly developed sense of public good and gave generously in the fields of arts, education and sciences.

The official history of the Chemistry Department acknowledges his research and administrative contributions.[1]

Michael worked on diffusion in liquids, in particular tea and coffee. In 1993 a paper on tea scum was picked up by the media. Michael was an excellent science communicator and made several media appearances, including one on Blue Peter in dinner jacket and bow tie. Dorothy England, Michael's English teacher in Chemnitz, saw one of his programmes and, much to his delight, re-established contact.

Post-retirement, Michael remained a Senior Research Fellow at Imperial and worked for the Royal Society of Chemistry. He lectured at the University of the Third Age until his early 90s, favouring popular topics such as food science and famous scientists.

Michael said he always felt shy with girls. In the late 1960s he met his future wife Molly (née Thomson), who became Head of Social Work at Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals. There was a New Zealand connection – some of Molly's father's family were early settlers. She was also proud of a scientific connection – her mother was a descendant of Michael Faraday's sister. Michael and Molly married in 1976. They had 25 happy years together, living in Belsize Park, travelling widely for walking holidays and enjoying cultural and culinary pursuits. Molly died in 2001.

Michael's parents both died by the time he was 30. Family connections were important to him, and he maintained lifelong contact with his and Molly's relatives worldwide.

Michael had a highly developed sense of public good and gave generously in the fields of arts, education and sciences. But despite his full participation in the life of his adopted countries, he commented that he often felt an outsider and still, at times, a refugee.

Sadly, Michael developed dementia. In his final years he was well looked after by family, friends, and carers at home and in Jewish Care's Otto Schiff House. His sharp enquiring mind, his kindness and warmth, and his sparkle and mischievous sense of humour will be greatly missed.

Interviews with Michael Spiro can be found in the January 2004 issue of the *AJR Journal* (**ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2004_january.pdf**), and on the Ben Uri Gallery website: **benuri.org/content/feature/912/image7047/**

1 Gay, H. and Griffith, W.P. (2017), The Chemistry Department at Imperial College London, A History, 1845 – 2000

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
Monday 13 April	Lunchtime	Hampstead, with Idy Symons of Technion	Ros Hart
Tuesday 14 April	Morning	Wanstead	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 14 April	Lunchtime	Enfield	Ros Hart
Wednesday 15 April	All day	Imperial War Museum outing	Karen Diamond
Thursday 16 April	Morning	South London (Waterloo)	Karen Diamond
Monday 20 April	Lunchtime	Stanmore/Edgware, with Alan Kleinman talking about Growing up in the 1950s &1960s	Ros Hart
Monday 20 April	Morning	Art Class in Finchley	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 21 April	Lunchtime	Nottingham	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 21 April	Lunchtime	North Lancashire	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 22 April	Lunchtime	Bristol	Ros Hart
Wednesday 22 April	Afternoon	Glasgow coffee & cake	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 29 April	Afternoon	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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Michal Mocton
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07966 886 535

ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 13 April @ 4pm	**(Film) The Forgotten Refugees – about the mass exodus of Jews from Arab Countries and Iran in the 20th Century** **https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82147982586**	**Meeting ID: 821 4798 2586**
Monday 20 April @ 4pm	**Dr Amy Williams – The Finance of the Kindertransport** **https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87373399051**	**Meeting ID: 873 7339 9051**
Tuesday 21 April @ 4pm	**Tamar Hodes – author of *The Water and The Wine*, about Leonard Cohen** **https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83791556106**	**Meeting ID: 8379 155 6106**
Wednesday 22 April @ 4pm	**Book Discussion (no speaker) – *The Correspondent by Virginia Evans*** **https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83198456414**	**Meeting ID: 8319 845 6414**
Monday 27 April @ 4pm	**Michelle Statt – StreetVet, which provides support for homeless pet owners** **https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81863580359**	**Meeting ID: 818 6358 0359**
Thursday 30 April @ 3pm	**Dr Amy Williams – Rediscovering the Kinder Lists** **https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87424397928**	**Meeting ID: 8742 4397928**

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

JOIN OUR NEW WHATSAPP CHANNEL

AJR

SCAN THE QR CODE OR GO TO THE LINK TO KEEP UP TO DATE

http://bit.ly/41e3tjS

Don't forget to turn on notifications to be the first to hear about our news and events!

SCAN HERE TO CONNECT WITH US

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