



# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## An international treasure



Sir David Attenborough



Irene and Helga Bejack

### Sir David Attenborough, one of the greatest figures of British broadcasting, celebrates his 100th birthday on 8 May.

Sir David is best known as the presenter of several extraordinary natural history programmes, as well as for being the younger brother of the actor/director, Sir Richard Attenborough. But another part of the brothers' life is less well known: during WW2 their parents fostered two Jewish refugee girls from Germany.

The Attenborough's mother, Mary, was a social activist who had already helped organised relief for Basque children fleeing Guernica. Their father, Frederick, an academic at University College Leicester, then helped several German-Jewish academics and others find sanctuary in Britain. These included two sisters, Irene and Helga Bejack. The girls could not speak English and the Attenborough brothers could not speak German, but the children grew close nevertheless.

During an online AJR event in November

2020, Sir David told us how Irene and Helga would receive letters through the Red Cross from their father saying he was alright, which was sadly untrue. Dr Bejack was eventually deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered in October 1944. Their mother had died of TB some years before. After the war, Helga and Irene joined an uncle in New York but continued to keep in touch with the Attenboroughs. Irene died in 1994, Helga in 2005. Sir David's full interview can be viewed on the AJR's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/TheAssociationofJewishRefugees](http://www.youtube.com/TheAssociationofJewishRefugees).

On Sir David's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday there is much to celebrate. He is one of our great national treasures but the story of how his family took in two refugee girls is perhaps one of the most moving chapters of his long and distinguished life.

David Herman

### REPORTING IN

As is traditional in May, this issue contains our Annual Report & Accounts for the last calendar year (pages 10-15). It reflects an incredibly busy period during which the AJR responded admirably to challenges both within and outside its control.

We also bring you news of a wonderful new museum and heritage centre in Lithuania (pages 8-9). Separately, we focus on a sector of British industry in which the contribution of Jewish refugees deserves to be celebrated: publishing (page 2).

We would love to hear your thoughts on any aspect of the AJR's work or matters which affect our wider community.

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

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# THE REFUGEES WHO CHANGED PUBLISHING

**Jewish refugees had an enormous impact on many parts of British mid-20th century culture. Perhaps one of the most important areas of this impact was in publishing.**

Think of publishers like Marion Boyars, Andre Deutsch, Wolfgang Foges who ran Adprint, Ludwig Goldscheider and Bela Horowitz from Phaidon, Paul Hamlyn, Tom Maschler, George Weidenfeld and many, many more.

In the last few years we have seen a number of fascinating books about refugee publishers: Tom Maschler's memoir, *Publisher* (2005), *Emigres: The Transformation of Art Publishing in Britain* (2014), Thomas Harding's biography of George Weidenfeld, *The Maverick* (2023) and now the story of Thames & Hudson is told in a huge, beautifully illustrated new book, *The Art of the Book: 75 Years of Thames & Hudson*, written by Dr. Anna Nyburg, one of the most interesting writers about refugees from Nazi Europe and their contribution to British visual culture.

Walter Neurath was born into a non-observant Jewish family in Vienna in 1903, the only child of Alois Neurath, a wholesale importer of tea, coffee and luxury goods, and his wife Gisela. Walter spent his childhood in Vienna and studied art history and archaeology at university. In 1922 he became a member of the Institute for Art History and worked for an art book publisher. In 1929 he turned to full-time publishing. During these years Neurath got to know the future psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim and the scholar Ernst Gombrich.

On 12 March 1938 the Nazis marched into Austria and in June Walter and his second wife, Marianne, fled to England. Anna Nyburg notes that they managed to bring 'Biedermeier furniture, Meissen porcelain and a valuable collection of works of art by the likes of Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt.' The couple were sponsored by Mrs Frances Margesson and



Dr Anna Nyburg

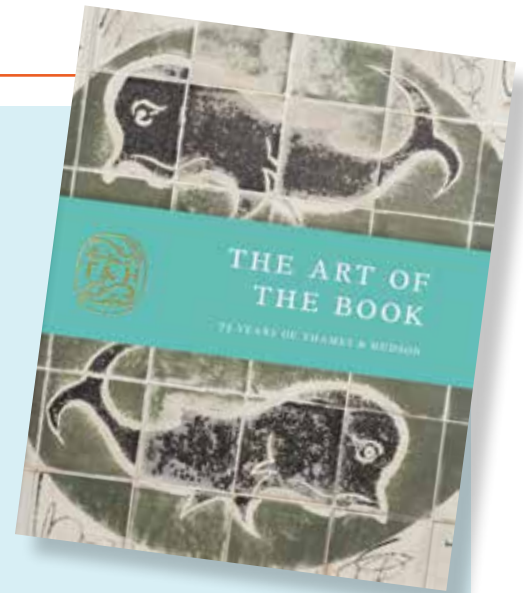
they stayed with her family at Boddington, near Rugby, for nearly five years.

Walter was briefly interned in 1940 and quickly found work with Adprint, headed by Wolfgang Foges, another Viennese refugee. Neurath worked on the successful and much-loved *Britain in Pictures* series, more than 100 books which included John Betjeman's *English Cities & Small Towns*, *English Country Houses* by Vita Sackville-West, *English Women* by Edith Sitwell and Graham Greene's *British Dramatists*.

Then in 1949 Neurath established Thames & Hudson (named after the two great rivers that run through London and New York). In 1950 Thames & Hudson published its first book: *English Cathedrals*, with photographs by Martin Hürlimann, the first of many books he worked on for Neurath. In 1953 Walter married Eva Feuchtwang, his third wife, who became his business partner.

Thames & Hudson was the first publisher to produce beautiful art books at affordable prices. By 1959 it had 400 books in print, including the *World of Art* series; a new archaeology series, *Ancient Peoples and Places*; the *Myth and Man* series edited by Joseph Campbell; and *Great Civilizations*, a hugely successful series in the 1960s. From early on, Thames & Hudson were associated with famous cultural figures like André Malraux, who edited the series *The Arts of Mankind*; and authors like Claire Tomalin, Peter Ackroyd and Anthony Burgess.

The Neuraths were not the only refugees working at Thames & Hudson. Werner Guttman from Berlin ran the production department for many years; George A. Adams from Vienna designed



and illustrated many of the children's books. Another designer, Ruth Rosenberg, who had previously worked in Berlin, stayed at the firm well into her nineties.

Walter Neurath died in 1967, still in his early sixties, and was succeeded by his son Thomas, just 27. 'For the next thirty years,' writes Nyburg, 'he and [his sister] Constance, together with Eva, would not only keep Thames & Hudson going, but also expand and diversify its publishing activities.' Thousands of new titles were published and new subject areas appeared. Relationships were forged with a new generation of famous artists such as Hockney, Lucian Freud, Anselm Kiefer, Francis Bacon and Paula Rego, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach and Howard Hodgkin.

Nyburg highlights the importance of continuity at Thames & Hudson, with Walter and Thomas in charge between them from the founding of the company in 1949 until Thomas retired over sixty years later. Thomas's older daughter, Johanna, joined the design department in 1986 and served as design director from 2004-2024.

As the company's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary draws near, the world of art and publishing has changed hugely, from Picasso to Grayson Perry and Vivienne Westwood, from Jewish refugee publishers to books on Videogames and Hip Hop. Amazingly, Thames & Hudson have managed to keep abreast of the changing times, always a sign of quality, and Anna Nyburg has managed to tell the whole story in just over 470 magnificently illustrated pages. Her book is so clearly written and always superbly researched.

**David Herman**

## SILVER FOR LINDA

Last month, we celebrated a remarkable milestone: 25 years of service by our longest-standing social worker, Linda Kasmir.



Linda Kasmir

For a quarter of a century, Linda has been at the heart of AJR's mission to support Holocaust refugees and survivors across the UK. Our social workers support some of the most vulnerable members of our community through home visits, helping to assess practical, emotional and financial needs. From navigating welfare and reparations to arranging care and coordinating support, their work enables members to live with dignity and independence.

Just as importantly, they provide human connection. Through regular contact, advice and advocacy, our social workers build trusted relationships that greatly improve wellbeing.

Linda embodies these values. Her work reminds us that social care is not just about services, but about empathy, trust and standing alongside people when they need it most. As we celebrate her contribution, we also encourage anyone who may benefit from AJR's support to get in touch.

## EXHIBITION TOUR

The travelling exhibition **Between Life and Death: Stories of Rescue during the Holocaust** is now touring across the UK, bringing powerful and deeply moving stories of courage, solidarity, and moral choice.

Stories of Rescue  
**BETWEEN**  
Life and Death  
During the Holocaust

**1-30 MAY** – Sutton Central Library, St Nicholas Way, **Sutton**, Surrey SM1 1EA

**1-30 JUNE** – Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, **Salford** M27 5DA

**1-31 JULY** – Swiss Cottage Library, Camden, 88 Avenue Road, **London** NW3 3HA

Individuals featured in the exhibition include Eva Paddock, who arrived from Prague on a Kindertransport, and the opera-loving sisters Ida and Louise Cook, who helped Jewish refugees cross borders and supported them upon arrival in the UK.

## Kitchener Talk

On 3 June the AJR will present an online talk about the 4,000 men who were brought from Germany to a former WW1 army camp in Sandwich, Kent.

In this illustrated talk, Professor Emerita Clare Ungerson will tell the relatively unknown story of the Kitchener Camp rescue, including how the camp was received by the residents of Sandwich and how, in 1940, 239 of the men found themselves en route to Australia via the disastrous *HMT Dunera* voyage

Clare Ungerson's book, *Four Thousand Lives*, was first published in 2014. This talk has been arranged by the AJR for members of the Dunera Interests Group (<https://dunera.org.uk/>) which connects descendants of the Dunera internees.

7.30pm on Wednesday 3 June via <https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83452035959> (Zoom meeting ID: 834 5203 5959).

The Wiener Holocaust Library

Arolsen Archives  
International Center  
on Nazi Persecution



### FAMILY HISTORY MENTORSHIP SCHEME

TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026 at 6.30PM – CENTRAL LONDON

Are you interested in family history connected with the Holocaust? Increase your research skills with our mentorship training to then help other AJR members uncover their families' histories of persecution, survival and migration.

The AJR and The Wiener Holocaust Library are offering free training on how to navigate the online version of the Arolsen Archives (ITS) and other online resources.

Come along to an introductory taster session on 19 May 2026 at 6.30pm in Central London to learn more and decide whether you would like to apply for the full course which will take place in the Autumn.



<https://tinyurl.com/2p8yc9jx>



### COME WITH US TO POLAND

THE AJR WILL BE RUNNING OUR FIRST HERITAGE TOUR TO POLAND ON 11-15 OCTOBER.

We will visit places of Jewish history including Warsaw, Lublin, Łódź and Białystok, led by an experienced guide.

This will be a unique opportunity to learn about how our ancestors lived in the company of fellow descendants. We will also meet members of the Jewish community in today's Poland. Details are being finalised and will be announced as soon as possible in the weekly newsletter.



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

# TURNING YOUR FAMILY STORIES INTO HISTORY

**AJR member Margaret Gordon has just published a wonderful account of her family's history. She shares some advice for other readers who would like to do the same.**

What is the process of making sure the lessons of history are not forgotten?

In my case I had an interest in history from an early age. I met, albeit very occasionally, my great aunts, who lived in Germany. I would write down in a notebook the stories they told me of their father, my great-grandfather, who had been a postilion (a person who rides a harnessed horse that is pulling a horse-drawn vehicle such as a coach). For a girl like myself, who loved Georgette Heyer novels, this was thrilling to hear.

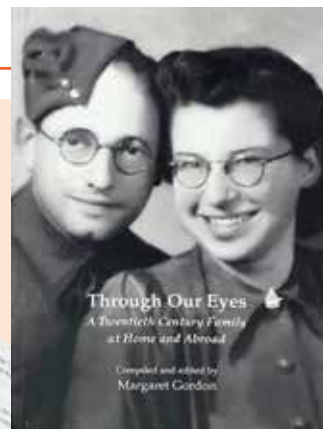
When I reached the age of discretion, I realised that my parents had interesting histories too. Sometimes they told us about them: my maternal grandparents married despite disparities of class and religion. Sometimes they didn't: my father's experiences in Dachau. But we asked them to write them down and, luckily for us, they did.

The process of editing all this information was a protracted one. But it was interesting, illuminating, sometimes sad, and often funny. It allowed me to spend even more time with my mother as we transcribed and translated the many letters that she had kept. Those from her parents, her husband, her brother, her brother-in-law, her foster parents. It was good for the brain, good socially, and good historically. What more could one wish?

Ask your parents or grandparents to write down their story. Whether they came from a rural village in England or a large town on the Continent they will have come from a different age. If they are reluctant to write it down, then make it easy for them. If they tell you stories, ask if they mind if you write them down. They will usually be willing to tell you again and again, and often in exactly the same words. If they don't tell you stories, then ask if you could interview them about their youth, or how they came to this country or town, about their parents or their siblings. Make it a project. Make it a life's work.

In my case, at our prompting, our parents had written their memories. But they still weren't memoirs as such. They were jottings about stories that came to mind now and then. They needed editing together. And in some instances, we needed to fill in the gaps, which I did by interviewing and prompting for things I didn't understand or had heard before but were now missing.

And family stories, your stories, are becoming history every day. Keep a diary. Write down what you did today, or summarise at the end of the week, or the month, or the year. It is surprising how fast you forget, but also what you can remember years later.



What I did as a child in the 50s is vastly different from what children of today are doing. No mobile phones, no synthetic fibres, no long socks to school, no pizza, no television, no computers, no internet. Riding bicycles in the street, climbing over a fence to play with the next door neighbours, going to the 'flicks' twice a week, writing airmail letters. What will you be telling your grandchildren in sixty years' time?

**Margaret Gordon's book, *Through our Eyes: A Twentieth Century Family at home and Abroad*, is a very attractive 364 page hardcover book which is widely available via Amazon and other online retailers. She published it using Words by Design, which offers a range of bespoke services to authors wish to publish their own books and families seek to research and write the history of their ancestors.**

## PADDINGTON AND THE KINDERTRANSPORT

Did you know that this British icon, Paddington, is based on Jewish history? He's actually based on the Kindertransport. Paddington, as you can see here in this statue at London's Paddington Station, embodies the appearance of the Kinder when they arrived into British train stations. And his little suitcase here is an emblem of his refugee status. On his tag, you can see 'Please look after this little bear. Thank you.' which connects to the Kindertransport tags. Although they were wearing a number, the symbolism of that number was essentially, 'Please look after these children who are arriving into the arms of strangers.'

Discover more snippets by following [jewishrefugeesajr](#) on Instagram 



# Manfred: a different story...?

**AJR's Kindertransport Scholar Dr Amy Williams shares a new but difficult perspective on the fate of the late Manfred Goldberg MBE, who would have just turned 96.**

Manfred Goldberg was a very well-known survivor whose story is shared widely. I was incredibly moved when I read about the hope that he carried for much of his life of somehow being reunited with his younger brother, Hermann. Eventually, he had to face the fact that he would never see Hermann again.

Hermann mysteriously disappeared whilst Manfred and his mother, Rosa, were on work duty at Preču concentration camp in Latvia. However, his death was not publicly acknowledged until many years later, when Manfred returned to Germany to dedicate Stolpersteine outside his family home in Kassel.

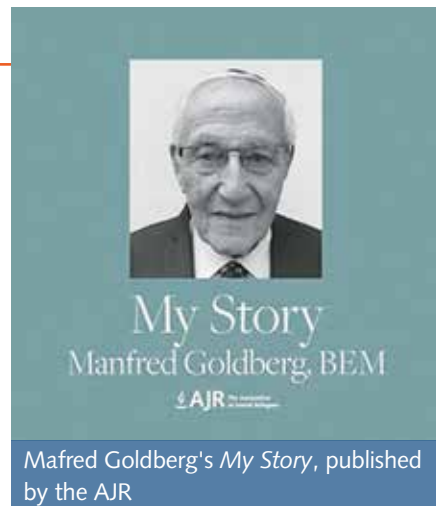
Knowing about the special bond between the brothers made it even more tragic when, during the very week of Manfred's own passing last October, I discovered a document which stated that both he and Hermann had been given a full guarantee by an English family. Had they been able to travel here before war broke out, both brothers would have been saved. Instead, young Hermann was taken away to what we now know was a certain death, while Manfred miraculously survived numerous concentration camps and death marches before finding refuge after the war here in Britain. So this is a story of 'what if...?'

The document that I found is dated 4 October 1939 and contains a list of children who had been guaranteed entry to the UK if they arrived. To appreciate its significance we need to understand the wider context of the various Kindertransport documents. According to reports published in the *Hansard*, on 8 December 1938 the British government had discussed rescuing up to 50,000 children via Kindertransport. Subsequently, in May 1939, it was reported that 85,657 children across Greater Germany needed

help. However, just two months later, in July 1939, it was reported that the British committee decided to limit itself to a total of 10,000 children because it could not find enough homes. Just over 9,000 children had already reached Britain at this point, and the committee pledged to keep back 1,000 vacancies in case of further emergency.

In an alternate reality the Goldberg boys might have been among the 1,000 'further emergency' children. Their father, Baruch, had arrived in Britain just days before war broke out and was taken to the Kitchener Camp. The refugee committee tried desperately to get his and his fellow Kitchener inmates' children out of Germany or other countries. I have found nine different lists of children who had been guaranteed entry if they arrived. Manfred and Hermann appear on list 6, along with confirmation that Woburn House had already received a £100 deposit for them. Meanwhile Manfred's cousin, also called Manfred, was on a list for the "10-shilling scheme" while his brother Sigrid's list entry shows his guarantor as an M. Korsky.

Sadly, the outbreak of War and the cessation of all Kindertransport via train and ferry meant that none of the Goldberg children were able to travel here. Only Manfred and his mother, Rosa, survived the war. Thanks to World Jewish Relief's



Manfred Goldberg's *My Story*, published by the AJR

meticulous case files we know that they arrived in Britain on 17 September 1946, and that in April 1947 Baruch was granted funds to allow Manfred to attend college. The WJR files help to trace the fracture and reunion of the family.

What is striking is that I did not find the lists of these children in Britain or Germany, where Kindertransport documentation was officially stored, but in Israel at the National Library in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People. They are testament to Kindertransport that could have happened, and to all the children who might have been saved.

I was pleased that we were able to arrange for Michael Newman and me to visit Shary, Manfred's wife, to show her the document. It was daunting to tell someone that their loved one potentially did not have to suffer all that they did: to imagine an alternative reality where they were rescued. Shary's reaction will stay with me, as she and the rest of the family knew nothing about these rescue attempts. Manfred and Hermann are part of a more complex Kindertransport story. A story which is only now being told.



Manfred (left) with his mother and younger brother

# 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](mailto:editorial@ajr.org.uk).

## ACCOUNTS FROM NUREMBERG

I recently read David Herman's article about the Nuremberg Trials.

In my book 'Women's Experiences in the Holocaust', I wrote about three women who were present at trials and wrote about their experiences.

Patsy Crampton was a translator at the Nuremberg trials, Alma Soller, an American, documented the Nuremberg trials and Norma Falk was a Red Cross nurse who looked after the women defendants at the Belsen trials. Norma was Jewish and Alma and Patsy were not. Patsy and Norma both worked for a while as VAD nurses.

Whilst none of these girls were victims of the Holocaust they were witnesses to the crimes of the Nazis as they were witnesses to the evidence presented at the trials. They were all very young at the time; Alma was born in 1919, Norma in 1924 and Patsy in 1925. I knew Norma from when I lived in Sheffield but only heard about Patsy Crampton when I read her obituary in *The Times* on 8 December 2016. I was interested to read that she had been a translator at the Nuremberg Trials. My eye was caught by her mother's parting advice as she left for Nuremberg: "You will come straight back, won't you darling, if there's anything nasty?"

Norma had written about her experiences, but although Patsy spent her life translating over 200 children's books, I could not find anything she had written about her own experiences. However, I did find she had been interviewed by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in 1997. Although there was no transcript, the IWM agreed to get one done. I am extremely grateful to the IWM and Jenny Byers who prepared the transcript for me in May 2017.

*Dr. Agnes Grunwald-Spier MBE*

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## VICTOR GARSTON

My wonderful father Victor Gerstl was born on 6 October 1928 in Vienna Austria. He was the youngest of six children. He recalled a happy childhood and his love of Arsenal started when he was still in Vienna.

Dad vividly recalled Kristallnacht and it was after this that his parents made the decision to send him to join his sisters in London.

In March 1939, when dad was 10 years old, his parents put him on a train bound for London. He recalls them waving goodbye to him and smiling, and he never saw them or his sister Lily again as they were deported to a camp and did not survive. He travelled on the train to London, and my aunt met him at Liverpool Street station. My auntie Lisl and her husband Karl then pretty much brought dad up with help from my Auntie Freda and Uncle George.

Dad first went to boarding school and then to Hendon County Grammar school.

My Auntie Freda lived in Watford and dad and my Uncle Richard changed their name from Gerstl to Garston (as she was living in Garston at that time) and they wanted a less German sounding name.

He later joined the family business, the Priory Handbag company, which later became Priory Footwear making shoes and slippers for Marks & Spencer. It was there that he met my mother, who was my uncle Karl's secretary. It wasn't love at first sight for my mother. She thought Dad was very sarcastic, but dad persevered, and they were married in 1958 they settled in Hampstead Garden Suburb in Willifield Way and I was born in 1962.

My father was a very loyal family man. He was literally the best father anyone could have. He adored his grandchildren – Natasha, Daniel, Joseph, Georgiana, Adam and Ionie – and delighted in all their achievements. He also adored his ten great grandchildren: Lily (named after dad's sister), Luca, Leah, Heath, Hunter, Beth, Harry, Rafe, Jordan and Lara. He also loved Eon and all the children's partners.

Dad was a lifelong Arsenal supporter. He went to Arsenal all his life with my Uncle Richard and my cousin Michael and when we were young my cousin David and I would go along as well. David has continued supporting them, me not so much! When Daniel and Joseph were old enough they

also became supporters and would go to football with dad as well.

My mother became ill with dementia at quite an early age and my father cared for her at home until we had to make the decision to put her in a home.

Dad was always interested in other people. He never complained about anything (except Arsenal losing) and I have been so lucky to have him so long. I cannot believe I will never hear his voice again.

He leaves behind six grandchildren and ten great grandchildren.

*Jane-Elizabeth Walters, London*

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## WILTON PARK

Your propensity to confuse becomes ever more apparent as historical facts recede and anniversaries multiply. A startling recent example concerns the contribution – perceptible maybe but certainly fractional – of Sir Heinz Koeppler to the Wilton Park international policy forum in West Sussex (*AJR Journal*, April 2026).

'Wilton Park's first course' you say 'was convened in January 1946 in Beaconsfield. Wilton Park started with all the characteristics of a Prisoner of War (PoW) camp...' That is because it WAS a Prisoner of War camp, one of two (the other being in Amersham) whose common ancestor earlier in WW2 was in Cockfosters. These camps housed German officers for the purpose of "interrogation", i.e. bugging their conversations by an organisation called CSDIC (Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre). Obviously this had to change if the establishment was to be perpetuated.

Twenty years later, in 1966, Koeppler made a song and dance about the institution's academic freedom, in particular from direction by the Foreign Office. If one wishes to give credit to the place for creating democracy in Germany, the very least one must do is to compare it with the achievements of Ludwig Erhard and Konrad Adenauer, among others.

The song and dance is repeated and magnified in the 2025 book by one of Koeppler's successors as director of Wilton Park. 'Its international community and work in more than 50 countries beyond its 16<sup>th</sup> century Sussex country home have helped realise Sir Heinz' international vision.' Except that this essentially duplicates activities of The Royal Institute of International Affairs, aka Chatham House, founded between the Wars, a full generation before Wilton Park.

AJR is fine and good, but it really needs to be more cautious about giving refugees the credit for every worthwhile development in the modern world.

*Peter Oppenheimer*

**Note from Nick Hopkinson, who wrote the article on Wilton Park to which Peter Oppenheimer refers:** The distinct contribution of Sir Heinz Koeppler and Wilton Park to building democracy in post-war Germany and later wider international post-war policy-making and understanding is widely recognised. I would warmly encourage readers to read the book.

**Note from Editor:** It is impossible to overestimate the contribution made to different sectors of British industry and society by the Jewish refugees who found sanctuary in Britain before, during and after WW2. The AJR is proud to be a champion of this, helping to share and celebrate the individual stories of achievement, as well as the challenges experienced by many refugees as they assimilated into their new country.

**SHANGHAI JEWISH REFUGEE MUSEUM**

Some time ago I wrote a piece for the *AJR Journal* about the immense thrill I experienced when I discovered that my father's name is displayed on the metal wall of names outside the museum in Shanghai devoted to the life of the more than twenty thousand Jewish refugees from Nazism who found refuge there before and during WW2. I was able to provide a contact at the museum for several other AJR members wishing to know if the names of members of their families appeared on the wall. The museum's staff are anxious to learn all they



Susie Barnett's nephew, Michael, pointing to his grandfather's name on the Shanghai Museum wall

can about the Jewish refugees and their lives in Shanghai in those terrible years.

My nephew Michael (an AJR second generation member) and his wife Sharon visited the museum recently when they were in Shanghai. When a member of the museum staff discovered that Michael's grandfather is named on the wall, she introduced them to the Director who insisted that they had a drink with him. So friendly!

Michael bought a DVD produced by the museum which shows how very poor most of the refugees were. My father travelled to Shanghai in 1939 with almost nothing after his release from Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, conditional on his leaving Germany as quickly as possible. Once war was declared, that escape route was closed off like every other.

The photo shows my nephew pointing to his grandfather's and my father's name on the museum wall.

I have just been invited to give my family and my Holocaust survival story on Zoom to an American school in SHANGHAI! My father would never have believed it.

The museum would be delighted to receive any information about Jewish refugees in Shanghai, via [info@shjews.com](mailto:info@shjews.com)  
*Susie Barnett BEM*

CELEBRATE WITH US

**AJR 85**  
YEARS

**12-14 JUNE 2026**  
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 <https://tinyurl.com/mrsn2xy7>

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# LIVING MEMORY RETURNS TO THE LOST SHTETL



**Dr Jolanta Mickutė, Head of Education at the new Lost Shtetl Museum, on what it means to open Lithuania's doors to a history it has long avoided.**

There is no better place to build a museum dedicated to the history of the shtetl than a shtetl itself. The Lost Shtetl Museum in Šėduva, Lithuania, a decade in the making and developed by an international team of historians, architects and Jewish cultural experts, opened its doors in September 2025. Since then, over 42,000 visitors have come through them.

Two hundred shtetls once dotted the Lithuanian landscape. Derived from Yiddish, the word means “small town,” and in historical reality these rural towns were a space where Jews and non-Jews, with their cultures and faiths, intermingled for centuries. Šėduva's Jewish history dates back at least to the eighteenth century. By the interwar period, almost 800 Jews lived in the shtetl of Šėduva as traders, craftsmen and tavern keepers, teachers, doctors and rabbis. They were citizens of the Lithuanian Republic: they paid taxes, sent their children to Lithuanian schools, and participated in local civic life.

In 1919, two Šėduva Jews, Shmuel Nol

and Yankel Kuper, even volunteered for the newly formed Lithuanian army and fought in the wars for independence. For many Lithuanian visitors today, this is a revelation. This is precisely why the museum exists: to remind people how interwoven Lithuanian Jews are into the country's fabric and ensure these stories do not go forgotten.

Sadly, none of these communities remain, and you cannot recount the history of Šėduva without speaking of how the Jewish community that lived there was annihilated. The Holocaust obliterated Lithuania's Jewish population, and with it, the shtetl disappeared.

On 25 and 26 August 1941, Nazi forces and local collaborators murdered 664 men, women and children, nearly the entire Jewish population of the town, in the Liaudiškiai Forest, a few kilometres away. Within less than six months of Operation Barbarossa, almost the entire rural Jewish population of Lithuania, the shtetl Jews, had been killed. In most cases, these killings took place in nearby forests and by local auxiliaries, paramilitary groups and local police, while German officers sometimes only observed.

The museum does not shy away from this. It includes a database of perpetrators, drawn from historical sources, Soviet-era trial documents

and eyewitness testimonies, identifying individuals who participated in the killings. As an educational institution we maintain the highest standards of historical accuracy, presenting established facts with commentary approved by professional historians, so that visitors can draw their own informed conclusions:

‘A sincere thanks for such a professionally crafted narrative that tells the history of Lithuanians and Jews. It is our hope that this museum will bring back to life a history that has been forgotten and will remind us of things that were born out of love, friendship, and coexistence. We hope that the darkest pages of this history will remain in the past and will never be repeated.’

The exhibition spans ten galleries. It begins with an introductory film tracing the arrival of Jews in the territory of present-day Lithuania and moves through centuries of shared life: the market square, the religious and social rhythms of the shtetl, migration stories, professions and aspirations. The largest gallery recreates Šėduva's market square, the civic and cultural heart of town life. Visitors can also follow audio guides voiced by two former Šėduva residents, pharmacist Nokhum Berman and Shula Nol, wife of a fabric merchant, whose routes through the town were reconstructed from historical records and



family stories. Next to the museum, a newly unveiled Memory Park offers a living memorial to the community.

The landscape designer Enzo Enea and his team created the Memory Park as a reminder of the surrounding landscape that used to be integral part of the former shtetl of Šeduva to the killing sites in the nearby forest. They record the surrounding landscape: plants, trees, crop fields, meadows and gardens, even the bees humming by the side of the road. Šeduva Jews were killed, yet the landscape that surrounded them for centuries survived. It is recreated in a miniature form in the Memorial Park next to the Museum.

Most people, locals and visitors alike, have little awareness of the rich Jewish culture that once thrived in this part of the world. At the heart of what this museum does is bridging that gap: making historical truths approachable for every kind of visitor and helping them grow their understanding. It's a challenging undertaking, but one the museum is well-placed to meet. To that end, we commissioned a series of documentary re-enactment films chronicling the life of a Jewish family from Šeduva, narrated in English by actor Liev Schreiber, whose own family roots lie in Ukraine, and directed by Roberta Grossman, a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. There is a very small Jewish community left in Lithuania today; only around 5,000 Jews remain in the entire country. Most Lithuanians have never witnessed a Jewish ceremony in their lives. The films help visitors connect to the story personally: to see beyond black-and-white photographs, and to perceive the

faces and lived experiences of people who once inhabited these towns.

Then comes a shift: the space falls silent and dim. Visitors pass through a confined passageway where light, sound, and scent combine to conjure the reality of the killing grounds. For many, the speed at which the massacres took place comes as a profound and disturbing revelation.

For fifty years after the Second World War, Lithuania lived under Soviet occupation, not only economic and political oppression, but control of the narrative. There were no specifically Jewish victims to commemorate. There was no space for rescuers either. Now, however, our guides meet visitors who are finally able to share stories of friendship, loss, grief and shame. Some admit that someone in their family participated in the killings. Others testify to how devastated their grandparents were when they learned what had happened. The museum's guest book is filled with entries expressing a new clarity that it is not too late to mourn.

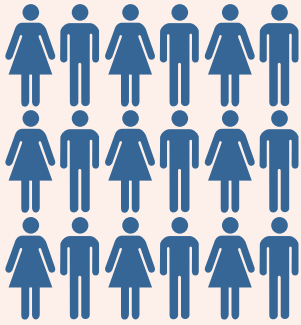
On our doorpost is a mezuzah, affixed by Israeli President Isaac Herzog, himself

a descendant of Šeduva Jews. Visitors are invited to touch it as they enter, continuing, symbolically, a gesture practised by generations of people who are no longer here to make it. Our director, Jonas Dovydas, has expressed the hope that every visitor leaves carrying at least one name, one story of someone who once lived here.

Like any museum, the Lost Shtetl holds only a fragment of the past. Much was lost to the flames of the Holocaust. Our team works continuously to close those gaps, drawing on the latest scholarship to meet the questions visitors bring. I'm proud to lead eight guides, educators, and curators who take on these difficult conversations daily. Their work is what transforms the exhibition into something living and creates a dialogue between past and present.

The Lost Shtetl Museum is more than an exhibition of artifacts. It is a place of history and memory, of reflection and, we hope, of meaningful dialogue, a place where people should feel safe having a conversation about a dark and difficult past. That conversation, for too long avoided, has now begun.





**1,831**  
TOTAL AJR MEMBERS

OF WHOM  
**469**  
ARE 1ST GENERATION



**185**

NEW REFERRALS TO OUR SOCIAL WORKERS

**326**

AJR VOLUNTEERS

**300** MEMBERS RECEIVING VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

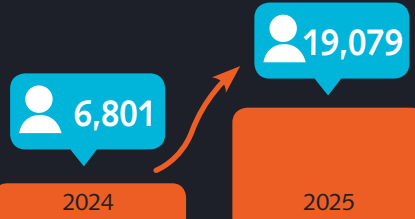
**70,698** MINUTES OF FACE-TO-FACE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT



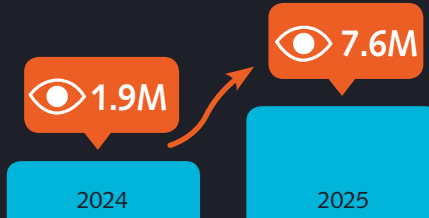
**600** GROUP MEETINGS, EITHER IN PERSON OR VIA ZOOM

**19,943** VISITORS TO THE AJR REFUGEE VOICES ARCHIVE

FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



VIEWS ACROSS FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK



**11**

FUNDING PARTNERS RECEIVING A TOTAL OF **£299,453** VIA EDUCATIONAL GRANTS



**399,000** HOURS OF CARE FUNDED FOR AJR MEMBERS



**£8,635,680**

TOTAL INCOME



**£10,895,346**

TOTAL EXPENDITURE



**£8,733,659**

DIRECTLY ALLOCATED TO MEMBERS FOR HOMECARE AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES



**£17,046,183**

RESERVES CARRIED FORWARD



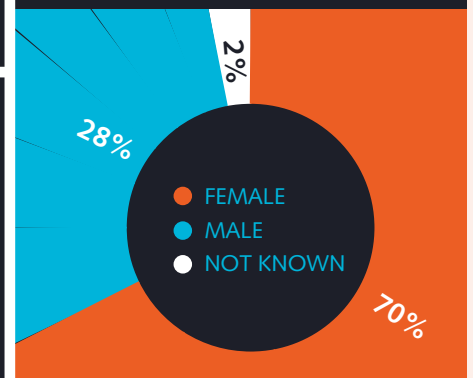
**£1.2M**

INVESTMENT GAINS

**£211,480**

SPENT ON AJR'S OWN HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

DIVERSITY OF OUR VOLUNTEERS



# 2025 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**Our annual report for 2025 is published against a backdrop of heightened tension in the Jewish community. We have witnessed an alarming increase in the number and type of antisemitic incidents including, just a few weeks' ago, the torching of four ambulances used by Hatzola to attend medical emergencies. Hatzola is the Hebrew word for 'rescue' and, critically, the service helps people of all faiths, taking the pressure off the overloaded NHS.**

We also still mourn the two members of the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation in Manchester, who lost their lives when their synagogue was attacked last Yom Kippur. Our much-missed stalwart member Werner Lachs, who chaired our regional group meetings there for many years, was Honorary President of that shul and passed away just the day before.

Tragically, since the 7 October attacks in Israel, there have been several developments that are causing anxiety. We know it is a worrying and tough time; people are more fearful and wondering about their futures and making the inevitable comparison to Europe in the 1930s. Thankfully, we do not live in a fascist state; the rule of law applies and media scrutiny rightly holds public figures to account.

We also benefit from something that – literally – money cannot buy: the selfless dedication of volunteers and community spirit. Within many of the incidents the role played by volunteers has been paramount, whether in rescuing nearby residents when the ambulances were destroyed, or the guarding of a synagogue that prevented more fatalities. We all know these roles should not be needed, but the fact is that people willingly give up their time to support the vulnerable and less able in their communities.

It's something we see across the country and something we know well at the AJR.

From our founding fathers in the summer of 1941, all through our 85 years, the AJR has been supported by the altruism of volunteers. They enrich the lives of our members culturally, practically and emotionally. While our members are the centre-point of the organisation, our volunteers are our backbone, helping us to deliver our mission by making a home visit, bringing someone isolated to an outing or by serving tea at a social event, and even calling someone with a birthday greeting. These kind gestures go a long way to sustain our special community.

Just last month, during Pesach, we were commanded to retell the story of the Israelites freedom from slavery in Egypt, so that the next generation learns of our ancestors' oppression and of our salvation. Here, too, there are parallels with our work: to preserve and narrate the life stories of our members so that these warnings from history are learned and seared into wider consciousness.

All this makes the work of the AJR as relevant as ever, despite – or perhaps because of – the declining number of first generation Holocaust survivors and refugees to share their stories first-hand. This report summarises all of our excellent work and accomplishments during 2025, and we hope you enjoy reading it.

### Social Work

We had 185 new referrals last year, meaning that our social work team was able to support even more first and second generation members. We helped our clients access funding for Homecare and other vital welfare services to enable them to remain safely at home; as well as applying for benefits, advocating on their behalf with other agencies, and being available for emotional support or even just a cup of tea.

There have been some changes amongst the team. This summer, we are sad to be saying farewell to Anthony Fagan on his well-deserved retirement, and wish him well. We have appointed Lesley Miller as Senior Practitioner alongside Dave Moon and together they provide additional leadership and support to the team. We hosted Ross Milnes on student placement

with us and congratulate him on passing his social work degree with distinction.

### Education & Heritage

Building on the partnerships we have forged through our work as the UK's largest dedicated grant funder of Holocaust education projects and initiatives, the AJR hosted the international forum, *Remembering & Rethinking 2025: Teaching and Learning About the Holocaust* in November, which was attended by 175 Holocaust educational experts and practitioners. The forum featured 22 sessions, 62 guest speakers and attendees representing 10 countries. Evening receptions were held at the Austrian Embassy and the Freud Museum. One important feature of the conference programme was the announcement of AJR's evaluation project of the UK Holocaust education sector.

Our educational work also extended globally, thanks to our partnerships with bodies such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and Unesco. The AJR supported professional seminars in Canada, Poland, Finland and Slovenia. An animated explainer video about antisemitism that we produced became the most watched video on Unesco's YouTube channel.

### Refugee Voices and Holocaust Testimony UK

The AJR Refugee Voices Testimonies Archive continued its central role in preserving the personal histories of Holocaust survivors and refugees through the ongoing recording of in-depth interviews. Recent additions include testimonies from the artist Genie Peretstky-Lee, a hidden child in France; David Peterson, a survivor of the Łódź ghetto and subsequent slave labour who was liberated in Bergen-Belsen; Alfred Buechler and Alice Hubbers, both Kindertransport refugees; and Lydia Tischler MBE, a Theresienstadt survivor who trained as a child psychotherapist under Anna Freud.

The RV archive currently consists of 331 interviews, including 100 with Kindertransport refugees. In 2025 the [Continued on page 12](#)

# 2025 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

*Continued from page 11*

archive conducted 22 interviews, the average age of the interviewees was 93.5 years. The longest interview, with Leipzig-born Max Walter Weg, lasted over eight hours and had to be recorded over three sessions!

Alongside the recording of interviews, the team responds to ever growing numbers of requests from museums, researchers, and educational organisations.

Refugee Voices is closely integrated with Holocaust Testimony UK, the joint resource of the UK Government and the AJR created in 2024 to advance Holocaust education by providing easy access to thousands of recorded interviews drawn from numerous organisations.

The AJR's Dr Bea Lewkowicz represented the Holocaust Testimony UK and the Refugee Voices Archive at a range of significant academic events during 2025, including the International Oral History Association conference in Kraków. We are delighted that Bea was awarded at OBE in the King's New Years Honours List.

### **My Story**

Softback editions of AJR's series of *My Story* books were donated to school and university libraries in the UK to support their teaching of the Holocaust. Beneficiaries included the universities of Leeds, Cambridge, and Exeter. Copies were also presented to the British Ambassador in Prague and the Israeli deputy-ambassador in London.

### **Kindertransport research**

Dr Amy Williams was appointed as the AJR's Kindertransport Scholar in Residence in June to lead commemorative efforts and historical research regarding the Kindertransport, with a focus on preparing for the 90th anniversary in 2028.

Since joining the AJR, Amy has uncovered significant new findings within archives in the UK and abroad and is working on many ambitious projects aimed at expanding the public's understanding of the Kindertransport. She is collaborating with long-standing

and new partners on some 50 projects to be delivered over the next two years, including a definitive digital database as well as artistic resources and commemorative memorials. Projects include new exhibitions in Berlin, Cologne, and Frankfurt.

Amy also gives numerous talks with museums, universities, and family heritage groups while, during her first few months with the AJR, she has reunited Kindertransport families and provided documents to help them regain their citizenships.

Much of Amy's new research will be available in her co-authored book on the transnational history of the Kindertransport, scheduled to be published by Yale University Press in 2027.

### **Next Generations**

Events and activities for the Next Generations focused primarily on areas of most interest such as family research, heritage tours, restitution, and reclaiming European citizenship. We took the first AJR delegation on March of the Living, including three generations of one family; a number of AJR members joined us at the World Federation of Holocaust Survivors and Descendants gathering in Paris, and around 20 descendants with a Czech connection joined us for a fascinating tour of Prague including an emotional visit to Terezin, tea with the British Ambassador, and Shabbat with the local Jewish community.

During the summer we invited AJR members to explore the archives to aid their family research. World Jewish Relief, the Arolsen Archives, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, Holocaust Testimony UK, and AJR Kindertransport Scholar in Residence, Dr Amy Williams, were all present to introduce their archives and make live searches.

In engaging with the next generations we also expanded our partnerships with other organisations such as JW3, the Wiener Holocaust Library, and Memorial de la Shoah.

### **Outreach & Events**

During 2025 we organised more than 600 meetings, events and outings, including over 350 in person social get-togethers throughout the UK, attended by first, second and third generation members. We also maintained a regular programme of at least three Zoom meetings per week, offering an array of interesting and informative talks as well as weekly yoga sessions.

Events of note included our HMD Service in January and our Kristallnacht Service in November, which attracted a record audience of almost 200 people, including VIP guests from government and partner organisations.

Our Annual Tea took place in May 2025 at the RAF Museum, as part of the VE Day 80th Anniversary Celebrations. It attracted national media coverage, with *ITV News* featuring it as its keynote piece for the day.

In December 2025 we worked with the German Embassy to host a beautiful tea for nine AJR members who are over 100 years old, and their families.

Our outings programme, open to all AJR members and their guests, included an overnight visit to Highgrove, a four-day trip to York, and a talk at the House of Lords. Meanwhile our new AJR Ramblers Club met throughout Spring and Summer, visiting several delightful locations.

Other events included our annual gathering for all AJR members in Scotland, which was held in Glasgow with guest speaker Professor Sharkey, plus walking tours of Finchleystrasse, Jewish Manchester, Bloomsbury and the East End. We also organised visits to Sandwich and Willesden Jewish Cemetery, and a boat trip in Henley.

The AJR's Kinder lunches have restarted, meeting four times a year. Positioned as social get-togethers, often with a guest speaker, these are proving popular with descendants of many Kinder.

The monthly online Kinder Contact Project is also popular, with its new later time

# 2025 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

enabling Kinder from the USA to join us.

## Marketing & Communications

AJR expanded its communications capacity with the creation of a dedicated Marketing & Communications department, headed by Gemma Blane. This department, which includes the AJR's key communications channels, including the *AJR Journal*, the e-newsletter, social media platforms, the website, and public relations, is working on delivering AJR's new brand strategy and increasing awareness of the organisation's work and mission, with the aim of driving membership and engaging partners.

## Public Relations

By spotlighting historical milestones and amplifying AJR events – such as Holocaust Memorial Day and Kristallnacht – we secured strong national media coverage, featuring multiple times on *ITV News* and *BBC News*, several national newspapers as well as radio, online, and other printed outlets.

To strengthen AJR's profile as a trusted voice and thought leader, we issued statements responding to acts of Holocaust distortion, which were widely picked up by non-Jewish media, as well as maintained a strong presence in the UK's Jewish media, including tributes following the passing of our members, stories that resonate deeply.

## Social Media

We continued to significantly expand our social media presence, drawing on members' testimonies to create compelling, widely shareable human-interest stories. Our content generated more than 7.6 million views across Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, compared with 1.9 million during the same period the previous year. Our audience has also grown substantially, with 19,097 new followers across these platforms, up from 6,801 in the previous period.

Through consistent, sensitive and engaging content, we aim to honour the legacy of AJR members, educate the public, and foster meaningful connections across generations.

## AJR-owned Media & Digital platforms

The *AJR Journal*, which celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in January 2026, continues to be one of the most visible and widely valued benefits of membership, attracting thoughtful debate about issues of importance to AJR members both within and beyond its pages. The Marketing & Communications team is now extending the Journal's reach by repurposing its content across social and digital media – for example by highlighting the remarkable details found in the hundreds of obituaries and personal stories published over the years.

The new AJR website and e-newsletter will soon be launched, designed to better connect with potential new members and resonate with younger audiences.

## Volunteers and Community

The volunteers and community team provides one-to-one visits to any members who are isolated, and we offer a telephone befriending service, offering a chat on the telephone on a regular basis.

Our work also includes providing community spaces for members to explore common interests. These include poetry sessions, German language groups, tea and games events and support groups. The emphasis is on creating community in an inclusive and dementia friendly way.

This year we introduced our Memories Matter course: a series of tailored sessions aimed at supporting people living with memory loss and dementia. Several members and their families who participated reported an improvement in cognitive ability.

Supporting our volunteers is an integral part of our work. All volunteers receive induction training as they start their journey with us and have regular catch-up sessions with their volunteer coordinator. Our volunteer platform, *Volunteero*, enables volunteers to easily upload visit reports, and share any concerns they might have.

We have an enrichment programme available to volunteers throughout the year. This year sessions included

safeguarding, Jewish festivals, conversation skills and hearing impairment.

Our new Volunteer Forum began last year. This is a group of volunteers from across the country with a range of volunteer roles who get together to discuss their volunteering experience, and offer advice and suggestions for improving our service. We have found their input informative and beneficial.

Each year we hold a major Thank You event in London, as well as smaller events around the country. We have teamed with Room to Reward, an organisation that recognises the achievement of volunteers by gifting them a treat. We have been able to reward several of our outstanding volunteers in this way.

We look forward to continuing to provide person-centred, individually tailored support for our members for years to come through the excellent services of our dedicated volunteer team.

## HR

Four members of the team left AJR in 2025. One to retire, one relocation, one for parental reasons and one for alternative work. Blessing Duncan joined the Social Work team, focusing on East London, Essex and Cambridge, while Amy Williams joined as our Kindertransport Scholar.

Our staff team are incredibly loyal to our members and over 75% of the team have remained with AJR for over six years.

Finally, my special thanks go to all the AJR team, superbly led by our Chief Executive Michael Newman, who in early 2026 celebrated his own quarter century with the organisation. Michael's dedication goes far beyond the day-to-day responsibilities of his role. He consistently leads us through times of change and challenges with his passion for excellence. His practical insight has earned the respect of colleagues in partner organisations, parliament, the staff team and my fellow trustees.

**MIKE KARP**  
Chairman

# 2025 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

## TREASURER'S REPORT

**In 2025 we received and distributed our largest grant from the Claims Conference to date.**

I am glad to share that in 2026 the Claims Conference grant is remaining at this high level, which recognises the German government's unwavering commitment to supporting Holocaust survivors and refugees.

The delivery of financial assistance to our members and the wider Umbrella Group, which we lead, has continued to grow. Welfare payments for care and other emergency services funded from all sources increased by £0.7m (11%) to £7.5m, of which the AJR itself contributed £0.6m in Self-Aid payments, from our own monies, to our most vulnerable members. As always, we extend gratitude to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany for providing the balance, and for their continued support, and congratulate them on their hugely successful negotiations with

the governments of Germany and Austria which provide funds for this life-changing support. Their funding to the entire Umbrella Group increased by £3.1m. Throughout the course of the year, 399,000 hours of care were funded for AJR members and 566,000 hours for survivors and refugees through other Umbrella Group agencies, an increase of 7% from last year.

The Trustees of the AJR remain committed to ensuring that the historical memory of the Holocaust and its impact are preserved through general education and awareness raising, as well as in ways that are personal to our members. To this end, more than £300k was allocated to projects delivered by a range of educational institutions with which the AJR partners.

We are thankful that we continue to receive legacy income, and we remain grateful to the foresight and generosity of former members whose bequests support the organisation and enable us to deliver both

our services and our mission. I echo the message of our chairman and encourage our members to remember that legacies provide a vital income source enabling us to continue and further our charitable work, so please do consider leaving the AJR a gift in your will

Global financial markets continued to grow in 2025, and we saw investment gains of £1.2m, a significant improvement against the £0.7m of gain in 2024. The Trustees continue to take regular steps to ensure the organisation has sufficient liquid resources to maintain our vital services. Our reserves remain strong, thus enabling us to ensure that these services can continue uninterrupted for the foreseeable future.

I offer my sincerest thanks to the finance team for their hard work and diligence and look forward to further helping to steer our great organisation at this critical time.

**MIRIAM KINGSLEY**  
Treasurer

## EDUCATIONAL GRANTS AWARDED IN 2025

**WIENER HOLOCAUST LIBRARY**  
– GRANT: £50,000

The AJR is pleased to continue our longstanding support of the Library as it works towards its three core aims: strengthening its voice in the sector; active care for its collections; and increasing the dissemination of powerful evidence held.

**HOLOCAUST CENTRE NORTH**  
– GRANT: £50,000

Our grant is supporting the third and final year of HCN's Class of '33 project, consisting of learning sessions to schools on site; outreach to schools in remote areas of the North; training for every teacher qualifying at the University of Huddersfield; and regular Sunday openings for families.

**NATIONAL HOLOCAUST CENTRE MUSEUM** – GRANT: £50,000

We are continuing our support of 'The Journey' outreach programme to schools, which engages with schools with high levels of deprivation or in regions currently under-served by Holocaust education.

**HOLOCAUST EDUCATIONAL TRUST**  
– GRANT: £31,000

This year, we expanded our support for HET's teacher development programme – in addition to funding its annual 'Exploring the Holocaust' residential course for teachers, we also supported a teacher study visit to Poland.

**COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS**  
– GRANT: £10,000

We renewed our support for our longtime partners CCJ, so that they can once again organise their project 'Testimony of the Holocaust', which centres on a study trip to Poland for senior Christian clergy leaders.

**MACCABI GB** – GRANT: £10,000

Our annual support of the Yellow Candle Project helps to ensure that schools, synagogues and communities across the UK are able to participate in a shared moment of remembrance each Yom HaShoah.

**YOM HASHOAH UK** – GRANT: £10,000

The AJR continued its longstanding support for the delivery of the national Yom HaShoah event. Last year the event was held at Victoria Tower Gardens, next to Parliament.

**SIR MARTIN GILBERT LEARNING CENTRE**  
– GRANT: £8,000

Following the a previous successful AJR-funded project, which focused on the Kitchener Camp, we awarded a new grant for the delivery of a new educational offering for schools focusing on Jewish migration to Britain.

**NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST**  
– GRANT: £7,500

The AJR has renewed its support of NLT's annual Refugee Week programme. Educational activities centre around original stories written by Tom Palmer, author of 'After the War' which focuses on the experiences of 'The Windermere Boys'.

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX** – GRANT: £6,755

University of Sussex was the first UK university to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and the AJR has supported their annual event since its inception.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**  
– GRANT: £2,000

We awarded a grant to the Parkes Institute's exhibition project 'Memories of Fear – The Artwork of Gerda Cohen'.

# 2025 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

## FINANCE REPORT

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)  
Summary Income and Expenditure Accounts  
Year ended 31st December 2025

NB all figures are subject to audit

Income:	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Claims Conference, Six Point & Other Grants	7,758,987		6,948,054	
Subscriptions/Donations	103,982		84,078	
Investment income	307,814		363,201	
Other Income	54,154		86,938	
		8,224,937		7,482,271
Legacies		410,743		797,164
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>8,635,680</b>		<b>8,279,435</b>
<b>Less outgoings:</b>				
Self-Aid, Homecare and Emergency Grants	7,462,640		6,717,716	
Social Services and other member services	1,271,019		1,313,957	
AJR Journal	85,700		83,786	
Other organisations	299,453		304,004	
Internal Educational and testimony projects	211,480		213,749	
Administration/Depreciation	1,565,054		1,590,547	
		10,895,346		10,223,759
Net outgoing resources for the year		-2,259,666		-1,944,324
Surplus/-Deficiency on realised and unrealised investments		1,178,961		699,991
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>-1,080,705</b>		<b>-1,244,333</b>

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)  
Summary Balance Sheet  
Year ended 31st December 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets and Investments		15,977,044		13,696,333
Current assets	4,113,870		7,612,594	
Current liabilities	3,044,731		3,182,039	
Net current assets		1,069,139		4,430,555
Net assets		17,046,183		18,126,888
Reserves brought forward		18,126,888		19,371,221
<b>Net movement in funds for the year</b>		<b>-1,080,705</b>		<b>-1,244,333</b>
<b>Reserves Carried Forward</b>		<b>17,046,183</b>		<b>18,126,888</b>

# REVIEWS

## SEEKING HOME: A REFUGEE CHILDHOOD IN WAR-TORN CHINA

By Eva Richter

Bloomsbury Academic

Having married a New Yorker and lived in the city over 60 years, Eva Richter now sees America as home. But Eva had an absolutely fascinating and sometimes frightening journey to get there. She was born in Duisburg, a thriving industrial Rhineland city, on 13 January 1933, just two weeks before Hitler came to power. Her father Norbert Lewinsohn was a paediatrician and her mother Lotte an obstetrician-gynaecologist but they were almost immediately falsely denounced as Communists by the only non-Jewish member of their circle.

With pressures mounting her parents decided to flee to China where their medical licences were valid. After travelling by boat to Shanghai they finally settled in Tientsin (now Tianjin) and prospered. Meanwhile Eva was left behind with an aunt in Mannheim, developing tuberculosis, but by March 1935, when her mother returned, she was healthy again. They both took an 11-day Trans-Siberian railway journey, with two-year-old Eva carrying a doll whose head was stuffed with money brought illegally out of Germany into China.

In Tientsin – a large and complex city in northern China 80 miles from Beijing – she was introduced to the British Concession, English language and colonial life in this incredibly polygot community. Between 1935–1948 she enjoyed an idyllic childhood in a loving and plentiful household with servants and many friends. Her descriptions are wonderfully evocative especially how everything was arranged in the various foreign concessions.

She went to Tientsin Grammar School and studied for the Cambridge Overseas exams, followed by a clandestine school for a while, then Franciscan Missionary and American schools. They had assemblies, speech days, and plays. Eva was taught several

languages but was left to pick up Chinese from servants. Her social life glittered with parties, movies, reading, walks, dancing and even Brownies. Until the war made it impossible, summer holidays were spent at the coastal resort of Peitaiho.

But inevitably clouds gathered and 1937 saw the invasion of North China in the Sino-Japanese War lasting until the final Japanese defeat in August 1945. Severe floods in Tientsin exacerbated problems, killing thousands. Restrictions increased after Pearl Harbor in December 1941, but luckily the family narrowly escaped internment in the Shanghai ghetto. The story of how they got by sharing their apartment with a Japanese family is very curious.

Later Eva studied in Beijing but life became increasingly perilous with communist Chinese activities, guerrilla action, civil strife, corruption and revolution. So, the family were once again forced to emigrate, meeting relatives in the USA but forging their own path. Eva, who is a first class writer, has returned to China a number of times. She writes her childhood story with great affection and vividness as if it was yesterday, although more than 70 years have elapsed.

Janet Weston

## THE AUSLÄNDER: ONE FAMILY'S STORY OF ESCAPE AND EXILE

By Sir Michael Moritz

Profile Books Ltd

Sir Michael Moritz, a technology and venture capitalist billionaire, and former Apple in-house historian, was born and bred in Wales. But, when he contracted a rare blood cancer, tests confirmed his 100 per cent Jewish ancestry, which he explores in the book.

Sorting through his mother Doris's papers after her death in 2019, Michael uncovered a past of tragedy and long shadows cast by WW2, although her parents survived. Soon after the war she married fellow refugee Alfred Moritz and the backgrounds of the two sets of grandparents are spotlighted in this volume, weaving together past and present. In particular he explores why one set survived and the other didn't and looks into attitudes and the legacy for

their second generation children.

Maternal grandparents Salli and Louise Rath were Rhinelanders. Salli was a cattle trader who, despite being blind, saw the writing on the wall. During Kristallnacht his house was badly vandalised and he himself was briefly imprisoned. Thanks to the assistance of the mayor of his hometown, Kempen, the Raths arrived at Liverpool Street in the nick of time, on 29 August 1939. Their daughters Doris and her sister Erika came via Kindertransport five months later. The Raths had papers for New Zealand but instead settled in Cambridge. Incredibly resilient, Salli corresponded passionately with former neighbours, claimed restitution, and rebuilt family life.

In contrast, Michael's paternal grandparents. Max and Minnie Moritz, came from the Nazi stronghold of Munich. Max had fought in WW1, but this counted for nothing with Hitler. Max and his brother Oskar – whose leather goods shop was wrecked during Kristallnacht – were sent to Dachau, although they were later released, traumatised. In 1937, Max sent 16-year-old Ludwig Alfred to England for a scholarship to St Paul's School and soon afterwards sent his brother Ernest to a south coast school. They were later both interned on the Isle of Man and Ernest was also shipped to Canada. Despite bringing his sons to England and an accommodation offer, Max and Minnie remained in Germany in increasingly dire straits. Eventually the Red Cross letters from them ceased and tragic news followed.

Alfred and Doris moved to Cardiff in the early 1950s, with Alfred becoming a distinguished professor of classics at Cardiff University, while Doris became a school teacher. They told Michael little about their pasts, but their son has uncovered a treasure trove which he sets against the background of Trump's America where he now lives. *Ausländer* (German for outsider) reflects the family experience of being a stranger in an adopted homeland, reflecting a theory that, as Jews, we don't belong anywhere.

Janet Weston



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



**SPECIAL AJR VISIT**  
**THE KING'S GALLERY, BUCKINGHAM PALACE**  
**WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2026 – AFTERNOON**

Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style  
 To mark the centenary of Queen Elizabeth II's birth, The King's Gallery at Buckingham Palace will play host to the largest exhibition ever mounted of the late Queen's fashion.

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**TRIP TO THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM NORTH**  
**17TH 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](mailto:michalmocton@ajr.org.uk)



**\*\* NEW \*\***  
**AJR ART CLASS**  
**MONDAY 18 MAY 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

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**GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA**  
**ARIADNE AUF NAXOS**  
**BY RICHARD STRAUSS**  
**WEDNESDAY 12 AUGUST 2026**

It is 10 years since we unveiled our AJR Blue Plaque commemorating Rudolf Bing at Glyndebourne. To celebrate this please join us to see this wonderful opera-within-an-opera, set to one of Richard Strauss's most luscious scores, with Robin Ticciati conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Tickets are priced between £145 and £180 per person and are in the upper circle, which is accessible by lift. Transport is not included.

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




**SCOTTISH REGIONAL GET-TOGETHER**  
**WEDNESDAY 13 MAY 2026 – GLASGOW**

Discussion groups delicious lunch, and the chance to socialise with friends old and new.

Our keynote speaker will be Dr Toby Simpson OBE, previously of The Wiener Library, who is now Strategic Lead of The Imperial War Museum North.

Toby will give a talk entitled:  
*Evidence of the Holocaust in British collections: The Wiener Holocaust Library and Imperial War Museums.*

We hope you will join us for this very special day.

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

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 Do you need help with decluttering, downsizing or organising and storage solutions?

**Contact Jo Sovin, Chaos Conqueror**  
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Impeccable references provided

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**Jonathan Fishburn**  
 buys and sells Jewish and Hebrew books, ephemera and items of Jewish interest.

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**CONTEMPORARY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**



**AJR RAMBLERS CLUB**

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

Meeting at a west 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](mailto:karendiamond@ajr.org.uk)

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# OBITUARIES

## Dr Louise LONDON

Born: 13 May 1947, Oxford

Died: 26 February 2026, London



**Louise London was a cherished member of the AJR community and an outstanding historian whose work helped illuminate one of the most complex chapters of Britain's past.**

Her landmark book, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust*, remains a definitive and courageous study of how British policy shaped the fate of Jewish refugees during the Nazi era.

Louise was the eldest of four siblings born to Jewish refugee parents. Her father, Heinz, who arrived in Britain in 1933, was invited to join the team at Harwell as a physicist working at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment there. Her mother Lucie, née Meissner, was a refugee from Vienna who reached Britain in 1939. Louise had a sister, Norah, and two brothers, Martin and Fred. Heinz and Lucie, who met in Birmingham, only discovered later that they had both been interned on the Isle of Man.

The family lived initially in a postwar pre-fab on a disused airfield at AERE Harwell, and relocated to an officer's house when Louise was about four years old. She attended Chilton Primary School before they moved to Oxford in 1957, where she studied at Oxford High School. Clearly thriving in an academic environment, she went on to Newnham College, Cambridge, to read English from 1966-1970.

After a law conversion course, Louise became a solicitor, working on several high-profile cases, including the Angry Brigade case and the Huntley Street squatters. She worked for a while for the late Sir Geoffrey Bindman, a solicitor specialising in human rights, and later

for Camden and Hackney Law Centres, specialising in housing. She returned to the law in later years and worked briefly for the Ministry of Justice.

While researching for her PHD in the Public Records Office she met Andrew McDonald, who became the first chief executive of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (Ipsa). They married in 1992 and, two years later, adopted a child from an orphanage in China.

In 2000 Louise returned to part-time and, eventually, full-time work for Islington and Hackney councils' legal departments. She and Andrew divorced in 2017 but remained good friends. Later she returned to practising law, lectured widely and she won the Ernst Fraenkel Prize for her thesis on British immigration control procedures and Jewish refugees, 1933-1942.

It was the plight of Tamil refugees fleeing the Sri Lankan civil war for Britain in the 1980s that had prompted Louise to look more deeply into the earlier experience of European Jews attempting to flee to England in 1938. The Tamils were faced with visa restrictions, similar to those used earlier against her parent's generation of Jews trying to escape Nazi persecution. To Louise, the past and present were intricately linked, and she sought to understand history and the present, creating a resource for those fighting the refugee cause.

This research would eventually lead to Louise London's monumental monograph, *Whitehall and the Jews: 1933-1948, British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust*, published in 2000 by Cambridge University Press. Considered a key text on British immigration policy, it is credited as a scholarly addition to historical interest in Jewish immigration and was shortlisted for the Jewish

Quarterly Wingate Prize in 2001.

She also volunteered for a time at the New North London Synagogue drop-in for asylum seekers. In March 2017, Louise was awarded an honorary research fellowship at the University of London's Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. Her final research project, which she was working on until she died, considered the ways the government placed restrictions on immigrants' capacity to change their names during and after the First World War.

Louise combined rigorous scholarship with a deep commitment to remembrance and education. In 2019 she spoke at the AJR Kindertransport conference, sharing her insight and compassion with survivors, families, and historians alike, and she later joined AJR's Kindertransport podcast to reflect on the history and legacy of the great rescue mission.

Those who heard her speak remember her dedication to ensuring that difficult histories are understood and remembered. Louise's work continues to guide researchers, inspire discussion, and honour the experiences of those whose lives were shaped by the events she studied so carefully.

Louise's research and thoughtful engagement with the AJR community leave a legacy that will continue to inform and inspire future generations. She also had many other talents. She sang with Barts Choir and was a gifted artist. One year she even exhibited a print in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.

She will be remembered with great respect and affection by all who had the privilege of learning from her work, and she is survived by her child, Ju, and her siblings Norah, Fred and Martin.

**Jo Briggs**



## Walter KNOBLAUCH

Born: 16 February 1936, Munich  
Died: 23 May 2025, Newcastle

### Walter Knoblauch was a devoted and much loved member of the AJR who helped to run our group in Newcastle for many years.

Walter's father, Herman, was also a community leader, and was heavily involved with his local synagogue in Munich. During the 1930s he helped several German Jewish families make their arrangements to leave Munich, yet was somewhat slower in organising his own departure. He had initially been told by Nazi officials that, because of his German-sounding name and business, German American shoes, he had no need to worry.

That all changed as war approached, when a member of the Nazi party advised him to leave straight away. With the help of Newcastle-based Stanley Holmes, who worked for the Tyneside Industrial Development Board, Herman secured an invitation to come to Newcastle. Together with his mother Ida, wife Emma, and sons Walter and John, he left Munich three days before war was declared, arriving in the Tyneside village of Cullercoats in 1939, before moving to Newcastle. Soon after their arrival, they discovered that money they had asked a friend to move into a Swiss bank account had been spent, leaving them penniless.

Herman set up another shoe business, Knorbrit Products, at Orchard Street, Newcastle, and later Laco Shoes. His brother John ran the Victory Shoe shops at the Grainger Market, Shields Road and Gateshead High Street right up until he died in 1982.

The Knoblauch family rarely spoke of their life in Germany before the war. In 2014 Walter told the Newcastle Chronicle that: "My father never talked about it, as was the case with many people of his generation who came over here. If he did begin to say a few things about it I was always told to

'ssshh' by my brother, as we knew that if we interrupted, he would just stop."

Walter's maternal grandmother, Rosa, had been unable to leave Germany, staying behind with her daughter, Paula. Walter remembered his mother as being constantly worried about them. "Then in 1944 she got a post card from the Red Cross saying that her mother had died of heart failure, but in fact she had died in the camp at Theresienstadt."

Another, equally chilling Knoblauch family memory was Walter's uncle Louis' encounter with Hitler in Munich in 1937.

Like Herman, Louis worked for the family business, German American shoes, and had been delivering an expensive pair to a customer in a wealthy apartment block.

Walter said: "As my uncle parked up, coming in the exact opposite direction and parking nose to nose to him was Hitler's Mercedes.

"He got out with his Alsatian and he and my uncle were both stood on the doorstep of the apartments ringing the buzzer to get in.

"My uncle always said he was glaring at him because he looked Jewish. They stood there on the doorstep with Hitler glaring until the door buzzed open and Hitler went inside to a flat where his girlfriend Eva Braun was living."

Walter himself spent several years studying and working in Leicester before returning to Newcastle by the end of the 1950s where, except for 15 years in South Africa, he and his wife Gail enjoyed many happy years, once describing himself as "a successful lay-about". In fact he was a successful accountant, who specialised in helping small businesses and start-ups comply with tax and accounting regulations.

Settling back into his new life in Newcastle, Walter became active with the local United Hebrew Congregation, the Representative Council, the Council for Christian and Jews, as well, of course, as the AJR. He also helped the wider community, volunteering with St John's Ambulance and the Newcastle Foodbank.

Always remembering his roots, he was a vehement supporter of the need to help refugees, once heckling a UKIP parliamentary candidate with his own poignant truth: "...if there had been a points system in 1939 when I arrived here, believe me I would have died. I left Germany three days before the war broke out. We did not have time to build up points."

Walter is survived by his wife Gail and will be deeply missed by all who felt the benefit from his strong community spirit.

**Agnes Isaacs & Jo Briggs**



### AJR'S 85TH GALA TEA SUNDAY 14 JUNE 2026 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Please join us for a delicious tea to celebrate 85 years of the AJR.

The internationally renowned singer-pianist Jeremy Sassoon and his superb MOJO band will take us on a 100-year journey of much-loved Jewish songwriters, from the golden era of Gershwin and the Great American Songbook, through Rock 'n' Roll 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 many unforgettable songs, this is definitely one not to miss!!



susan@ajr.org.uk

## 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	
Wednesday 6 May	Lunchtime	Bromley	Ros Hart
Thursday 7 May	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Monday 11 May	Lunchtime	Brighton	Ros Hart
Tuesday 12 May	Morning	Central London (Baker Street)	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 13 May	Lunchtime	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Wednesday 13 May	All day	Scottish Regional (see advert on page 17)	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 14 May	Lunchtime	Birmingham	Karen Diamond
Monday 18 May	Morning	New Art Class (see advert on page 17)	Karen Diamond
Monday 18 May	Lunchtime	Bournemouth, with Tamar Hodes, author of <i>The Water &amp; The Wine: the story of Leonard Cohen</i>	Ros Hart
Tuesday 19 May	Lunchtime	North Lancashire	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 20 May	Lunchtime	Kingston	Ros Hart
Wednesday 20 May	Afternoon	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 28 May	Morning	Essex and East London	Karen Diamond

### CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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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.

Wednesday 6 May @ 4pm	<b>Martin Winstone – Britain and the Holocaust, Part 2 (of 3)</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87613614526">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/87613614526</a>	Meeting ID: 8761 361 4526
Monday 11 May @ 4pm	<b>Eli Rabinovitz – In My Pocket, by Kindertransportee Dorrit Sim</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84694880459">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84694880459</a>	Meeting ID: 846 9488 0459
Tuesday 12 May @ 4pm	<b>Alan Kleinman – Growing up in the 1950s &amp; 1960s: a humorous perspective</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83169235355">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83169235355</a>	Meeting ID: 831692 35355
Wednesday 13 May @ 4pm	<b>Nick Dobson – Five Famous East Enders</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82371616543">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82371616543</a>	Meeting ID: 823 7161 6543
Monday 18 May	<b>Alex Pfeffer – World Jewish Relief Archives</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83681913051">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83681913051</a>	Meeting ID: 836 8191 3051
Wednesday 20 May @ 4pm	<b>Book Discussion (no speaker) – Mixed by Tamar Hodes</b> <a href="https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89979307519">https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89979307519</a>	Meeting ID: 899 7930 7519

## 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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