



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

After 85 years, what's next?



The AJR's work today relates directly to the purpose for which we were founded: focusing on the lives of those who found refuge here, both to assist in their lifetimes and to remember and learn from them.

This month marks exactly 85 years since the AJR was founded. Our current chairman and chief executive, Mike Karp and Michael Newman, collectively reflect on the significance of this momentous milestone.

What might the founding fathers (for they were all men) of our venerable association make of today's AJR? Doubtless they would be amazed that its activities and mission continue and that its focus has remained unchanged throughout our 85 years.

Established as a self-help organisation to support the interests of the Jewish refugees, mostly from *Mitteleuropa*, the AJR has continuously provided social and welfare services as well as organising regional groups dotted around the country.

We've long extended our presence beyond the *Finchleystrasse* but never deviated from the spirit and heritage of the émigrés who lived, worked, prayed

and drank coffee in that locale. In fact, the only service the AJR no longer offers from those initial war-time years is an employment centre; there aren't too many centenarian or nonagenarian members looking for work!

The AJR was founded in the summer of 1941, once almost all the Jewish refugees interned in summer 1940 had been released. In a note circulated on 6 July 1941, many of these refugees were invited to a meeting a fortnight forward, at which The Association of Jewish Refugees was formally created on 20 July 1941. There had earlier been some discussion amongst refugees about establishing their own organisation to represent the Jewish refugees from
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MUCH TO CELEBRATE

This month we are proud to share some of the milestones that shape the AJR as well as stories and photographs from a very special weekend during which over one hundred AJR members joined us to celebrate our 85th anniversary.

We also feature reports of several other special events and trips, including details of the latest AJR blue plaque honouring places synonymous with Jewish refugees.

We are especially proud to announce that the AJR's Head of Education and Heritage, Alex Maws, has been awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours. Alex's enormous contribution to Holocaust education reflects the wider impact of the AJR's work within the very special community we serve.

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

- AJR Team**
Chief Executive Michael Newman
Finance Director Adam Daniels
Heads of Department
Education & Heritage Alex Maws
HR & Administration Karen Markham
Marketing & Communications Gemma Blane
Membership & Engagement Debra Barnes & Susan Harrod
Social Services Nicole Valens
Volunteer Services Fran Horwich
AJR Journal
Editor Jo Briggs
Contributing Editor David Herman

For enquiries contact: 020 8385 3070

After 85 years, what's next? (cont.)

Nazism in Britain, independently of the existing British and Anglo-Jewish refugee organisations. But that had been impossible while so many of those involved – including Werner Rosenstock, who was to become the AJR's long-serving General Secretary – were detained.

One question we are constantly asked is how long the AJR can continue? But that overlooks the emerging and contemporary issues impacting the refugees that the AJR has addressed, and the advocacy we have consistently led. In those early years the AJR was occupied with absorption and integration of the refugees, from housing to navigating life in Britain during the conflict, to their naturalisation and the fight for restitution post-war.

What is lesser known is that the AJR itself is the enduring organisation among the refugees who found sanctuary here. Whereas the Free German League of Culture for those from Germany and the Austrian Centre for those from Austria focused on nationality and not on Jewishness, aiming to persuade their members to return to their native land as loyal Germans or Austrians after the war was over, the AJR was formed specifically to represent those refugees who identified as Jews and for whom Judaism was a significant factor in their lives.

Our 85th anniversary coincides with the launch of the AJR's new website – see page 4 – which features a fascinating timeline delineating key

milestones in the organisation's history, all of which are preserved in perpetuity in the archive of the *AJR Journal*. As well as being our well-loved mouthpiece, through this Journal we have chronicled in real time the lives, interests, challenges and accomplishments of the refugees. It also gives a unique insight into the culture, traditions and customs of the refugees and the survivors who came to Britain.

As for the future, it is first important to say that we are still working to deliver our mission; we still have 500 first generation members whose welfare will always remain our overriding priority. We are fortunate to receive very generous funding from the German and Austrian governments and will continue to strive to deliver whatever care is needed. We know how transformational this support can be.

At the same time, we are engaging more with the next generations, who are increasingly aware of and connecting to their family history. And we are also the largest national benefactor of Holocaust education and remembrance projects. To underline this commitment to advancing teaching and learning about the Holocaust, we have recently commissioned two external experts to evaluate our own grants programme and the UK Holocaust education sector.

What we are doing today relates directly to the purpose for which we were founded: focusing on the lives of those who found refuge here, both to assist in their lifetimes and work to remember them.

From the 1940s to present day

Throughout its early decades, the AJR was led largely by individuals from professional and business backgrounds who focused on securing the rights and welfare of its refugee members. One of the organisation's most important achievements came straight after the war when the British government rejected proposals to return refugees to their countries of origin and resumed naturalisation procedures. This allowed most refugees to become British citizens and build permanent lives in the United Kingdom.

The AJR also campaigned against antisemitism and worked to resolve practical issues affecting its members. These included professional recognition for refugee doctors and dentists as well as taxation matters related to restitution payments from Germany and Austria.

During the leadership of Ludwig Spiro from 1976 to 1987, the organisation increasingly concentrated on welfare and social support. Although it had already been involved in services for elderly refugees, this period marked a significant shift toward social care as a central priority. Subsequent leaders continued to broaden the range of support available to members.

Today, the AJR offers an extensive programme of services, including welfare assistance, volunteer initiatives, regional groups, restitution support, and financial grants. Projects such as *My Story*, which helps members record their life experiences, demonstrate the organisation's commitment to preserving personal histories. Other major educational and commemorative initiatives, developed by the AJR include the Refugee Voices archive, memorial plaque projects, exhibitions, and active participation in Holocaust remembrance activities.

In recent years, the AJR has gained recognition as one of Britain's leading Jewish organisations. It has advised government bodies, contributed to national Holocaust memorial projects, organised events in Parliament, and worked alongside international partners dedicated to Holocaust remembrance. Although the refugee generation that founded the organisation is gradually passing away, the AJR continues to thrive. Through its support services, educational work, and commitment to preserving historical memory, it remains a vital institution dedicated to honouring the experiences of those who escaped Nazi persecution and ensuring that their stories continue to inform future generations.



TRIP TO SANDWICH IN KENT WEDNESDAY 22 JULY 2026

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

We will travel together as a group by train from St Pancras.



roshart@ajr.org.uk / karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

AJR IN NUMBERS

DURING
OUR FIRST
85
YEARS
AJR HAS...



REPRESENTED THE INTERESTS OF OVER
70,000 JEWISH PEOPLE
WHO CAME TO BRITAIN HAVING EITHER FLED FROM OR SURVIVED NAZI PERSECUTION




DISTRIBUTED OVER
£130M
OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND REFUGEES



HELD OVER
35,000
MEETINGS AND EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE UK FOR AJR MEMBERS



PUBLISHED ALMOST
1,000
ISSUES OF THE AJR JOURNAL



SERVED WELL OVER
1 MILLION
BRIDGE ROLLS AT OUR VARIOUS MEETINGS



PROVIDED SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES CONTINUOUSLY SINCE
1941
WHEN THE FIRST AJR SOCIAL WORKER, DR ADELHEID LEVY, WAS APPOINTED



FUNDED
100+
INDEPENDENTLY DELIVERED PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO HELP PEOPLE IN BRITAIN TO TEACH AND LEARN ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST



RECORDED OVER
1,200
HOURS OF SURVIVOR TESTIMONY FOR OUR REFUGEE VOICES ARCHIVE



RECRUITED OVER
5,000
VOLUNTEERS TO HELP SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS




PRESERVED OVER
8,000
FAMILY DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



SERVED OVER
8,000
MEALS AT THE OLD AJR DAY CENTRE



PLANTED
OAK TREES
AT 100+ DIFFERENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE UK THAT ARE SIGNIFICANT TO THE JEWISH REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN SOME WAY



INSTALLED
12 AJR BLUE PLAQUES
TO HONOUR THE REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY JEWISH REFUGEES TO BRITAIN AND TO RECOGNISE THE PLACES AND INSTITUTIONS SYNONYMOUS WITH THEM



DELIVERED ALMOST
800,000
'MEALS ON WHEELS' TO AJR MEMBERS IN THEIR OWN HOMES



Welcome to AJR's new digital home

As AJR celebrates its 85th anniversary, we are delighted to introduce our new website – a modern digital home designed to showcase our work, strengthen connections across our community and support future generations. Gemma Blane reports.

This project began with a simple question: how can our website better reflect the organisation AJR is today, while helping us connect with the generations that will carry our community's stories into the future?

Our previous website had served us well for many years, but it no longer reflected the breadth of AJR's work or the expectations of modern users. As part of the redevelopment process, we reviewed how members, families, researchers, educators and supporters interact with AJR online and used this insight to create a platform that is more accessible, engaging and easier to navigate.

The result is a modern, mobile-friendly website that places AJR's core activities at the heart of the user experience. Visitors can more easily discover our welfare services, educational programmes, events, volunteering opportunities and Holocaust Testimony Archives, which now have a more prominent and integrated presence throughout the site.

We have also introduced a simpler membership sign-up process, making it easier for people to join AJR and become part of our community. While AJR remains home to the UK's largest community of descendants of Holocaust refugees and

survivors, membership is now open to anyone with a connection to, or interest in this history, including researchers, educators and those committed to remembrance and Holocaust education.

Another significant improvement is the new events experience. Existing and prospective members can now browse events, register and make payments in one place, through a streamlined booking system – creating a smoother and more convenient experience for everyone.

Throughout the design process, our aim was not simply to create a new website, but to build a digital home that reflects AJR's values of care, remembrance, education and community, while providing a strong platform for future growth.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed their ideas, feedback and expertise throughout the project, and our website agency, Two Boys, for helping bring this vision to life.

I invite you to explore the new website and discover everything AJR has to offer at www.ajr.org.uk.

Gemma Blane
Head of Marketing and Communications



Bea at Windsor Castle

PROUD TO BE A PART OF THIS

As the AJR celebrates its 85th anniversary, the Director of the AJR Refugee Voices Archive, Dr Bea Lewkowicz, shares her feelings about recently being presented with an OBE by HRH Prince William at Windsor Castle.

Today, many of my interviewees feel worried about the world today. Many would not have expected to see a war in Europe and attacks on Jewish institutions and on Jews on the streets of the UK. They thought that by giving their testimonies they could prevent future prejudice and atrocities. Sadly, I cannot alleviate their worries. What I can say, is that I can promise, that we are preserving the truth for future generations, by safeguarding their stories, by creating better ways of accessing the hours of recorded testimony, and by finding new innovative ways to create appropriate content for future generations.

I was touched when Prince William asked me if it was difficult to listen to some of these traumatic experiences. Coming home from a wonderful day in Windsor, I reflected on how lucky I am. to have been able to create the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, supported by a dedicated Refugee Voices team and my colleagues at the Association of Jewish Refugees. To have been given an OBE for this vital work makes me feel proud to be part of a wider society, which values and respects the memory of the Jewish women and men who came to the UK as refugees and survivors of the Holocaust and made Great Britain their new home.

THE AJR SENSE OF HUMOUR

When people think about the history of the AJR, they naturally think of courage, loss, survival and rebuilding. What they may not think of immediately is humour.



Yet anyone who has spent time with AJR members, attended a regional group meeting, read the letters pages of this *Journal*, or listened to the Refugee Voices interviews will know that humour has always been one of the defining characteristics of our community.

Not loud humour. Not slapstick humour. AJR humour. A distinctive blend of irony, understatement, self-deprecation and an ability to find the absurd in even the most unlikely situations.

Many of our members arrived in Britain as refugees from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in Europe. They lost homes, professions, possessions, languages and, in many cases, entire families. Yet somehow they retained an extraordinary ability to laugh.

Perhaps it was because they understood something important: humour does not diminish difficult experiences. Sometimes it is what enables people to endure them.

Over the decades, the pages of the *AJR Journal* have been filled with stories that reveal this spirit.

Stories of bewildered new arrivals trying to understand British customs.

Stories of refugees from sophisticated cities such as Berlin and Vienna discovering that the British were capable of discussing the weather for astonishing lengths of time.

Stories of first encounters with unfamiliar food, regional accents and the mysteries of queueing.

Stories of people who escaped one form of bureaucracy only to discover another waiting for them in wartime Britain.

Again and again, members have shown a remarkable ability to look back at life's challenges with warmth and perspective.

One of the most enduring forms of AJR

humour is the gentle irony of identity.

Many refugees arrived in Britain as outsiders. Over time they became teachers, doctors, scientists, shopkeepers, business owners, artists and community leaders. Some became so thoroughly British that they found themselves complaining about foreigners, discussing cricket scores and defending the correct method of making tea.

A generation that had been forced to leave one country succeeded so completely in building lives in another that their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren now form part of the fabric of British society.

There is humour in that journey, but also something profoundly moving.

The AJR sense of humour has never been about forgetting the past. Quite the opposite. It has often been a way of carrying difficult memories without allowing those memories to define an entire life.

Many Refugee Voices interviewees speak not only about survival, but about friendship, opportunity, family and unexpected moments of happiness. They remind us that the refugee experience was not solely one of tragedy. It was also a story of resilience, adaptability and, quite often, laughter.

Perhaps that is why the AJR community has remained so strong for eighty-five years.

Our members understood that rebuilding a life required more than courage. It required optimism. It required friendship. And sometimes it required the ability to recognise that life can be absurd.

Eighty-five years after the AJR was founded, that spirit remains one of our greatest inheritances.

The history of the AJR is a story of survival.

It is also quietly, but unmistakably, a story of people who never lost their sense of humour.

Jo Briggs

CLASSIC AJR ONE-LINERS

A celebration of the wit, wisdom and wonderfully dry humour that has characterised the AJR community for generations.

"We arrived in Britain as refugees. Twenty years later we were complaining about the weather like natives."

"The British gave us safety, freedom and a lifelong inability to pass a queue without joining it."

"I left Vienna speaking perfect German. Eighty years later my grandchildren correct my English."

"The first thing I learned in Britain was that tea is not a drink. It is a solution to every problem."

"We came with nothing. Then we acquired furniture, careers, mortgages and opinions about football and cricket."

"My mother always said we were only staying in England temporarily. She said that for seventy years."

"I spent forty years trying to fit in. Then I discovered that nobody else knew what they were doing either."

"Our generation crossed continents. Our grandchildren complain if the Wi-Fi is slow."

"Every AJR gathering proves one thing: you can leave Central Europe, but Central Europe never quite leaves you."

"We thought we were building new lives. It turned out we were building future generations."

"I finally became British when I apologised to someone who had stepped on my foot."

"We survived history. That gives you a certain perspective on minor inconveniences."

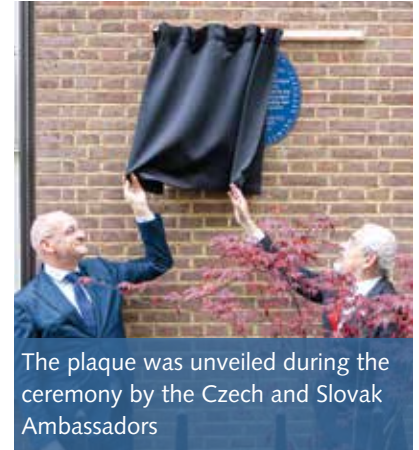
"Eighty-five years later, we are still here. And we still have opinions."

MUCH MORE THAN GOODENOUGH

In the run up to our 85th anniversary the AJR unveiled the latest plaque in our nationally recognised Blue Plaque Scheme, which honours the remarkable contributions made by Jewish refugees to Britain and some of the places and institutions synonymous with them.



Holocaust Survivors Lord Alfred Dubs, Lydia Tischler and John Fieldsend gather for the AJR Plaque unveiling at Goodenough College



The plaque was unveiled during the ceremony by the Czech and Slovak Ambassadors

This latest plaque has been installed at Goodenough College in Bloomsbury – an area that became a centre for refugee aid organisations during the 1930s – to recognise the vital role played by the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia and the Czech Refugee Trust Fund in facilitating rescue, advocacy and resettlement efforts for those fleeing Czechoslovakia in the lead up to WW2 and post-war.

The unveiling ceremony took place on 19 May, the birthday of Sir Nicholas Winton – one of the most significant British figures involved in rescuing Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe – and brought together diplomats, historians, descendants of refugees, AJR members and representatives from Goodenough College, alongside survivors and members of the wider refugee community.

Among those attending were first-generation refugees Lord Alf Dubs and John Fieldsend, 'Winton children' who settled in Britain. Also present was Lydia Tischler, a survivor of Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps, whose family was directly assisted by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund.

Lord Alf Dubs said: "I owe my life to the people and organisations who helped Jewish refugee children escape Nazi persecution. This plaque is a reminder not only of extraordinary courage and humanity, but of Britain's responsibility to

stand up for refugees. It is vital that these stories continue to be remembered and shared with future generations."

Since the first AJR Blue Plaque was unveiled in 2013, when we paid tribute to Nobel Prize-winning biochemist Sir Hans Krebs, the scheme has expanded across the UK and internationally, commemorating leading figures in science, music, education, medicine, public life and humanitarian rescue.

Among those honoured by the scheme are Sir Ludwig Guttman, founder of the Paralympic movement, Rabbi Leo Baeck, Sir Rudolf Bing, Otto Schiff, Anna Essinger and Kurt Hahn. The AJR has also unveiled plaques at the British embassies in Berlin and Vienna recognising diplomats who helped refugees escape Nazi Europe.

Speaking at the ceremony, AJR Trustee and founder of the AJR Blue Plaque scheme Frank Harding said: "While much has been written about refugees from Germany and Austria, less is known about those who fled the former Czechoslovakia. This plaque honours not only the refugees themselves, but also those whose courage, determination and humanity helped bring them to safety."

He added: "At a time when antisemitism is once again rising across society, it is more important than ever that we celebrate and recognise the extraordinary

contribution Jewish refugees made to Britain. These plaques ensure that their achievements, resilience and humanity remain visible in our public spaces, reminding future generations not only of what was lost through persecution, but of what refugees gave back to the country that offered them sanctuary."

The Hon Alice Walpole OBE, Director of Goodenough College, said: "Goodenough College is honoured to host this important plaque and to help preserve the memory of those organisations and individuals who worked to rescue refugees at a time of immense danger and uncertainty. Bloomsbury has a rich history as a place of sanctuary, scholarship and internationalism, and we are proud to be part of that continuing story."

The AJR continues to develop the Blue Plaque Scheme as part of its wider mission to preserve the legacy of Jewish refugees while supporting Holocaust survivors and their families today.

www.fishburnbooks.com

Jonathan Fishburn

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

He is a member of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association.

Contact Jonathan on
020 8455 9139 or 07813 803 889
for more information

AJR 85 YEARS

Last month the AJR celebrated its 85th anniversary with its first-ever Residential Weekend, bringing together Holocaust refugees, descendants and members of the wider Jewish community for an inspiring three days of celebration, learning, remembrance and connection.

Held in the beautiful Latimer House, in the Buckinghamshire countryside, the sold-out event welcomed attendees from across the UK and represented a significant milestone in AJR's history. The weekend reflected our enduring mission to support Holocaust refugees and survivors and their families, while ensuring that the lessons and legacy of the Holocaust continue to be passed on to future generations.

Throughout the weekend, participants enjoyed a rich programme of talks, workshops, performances and social events, designed to celebrate community, honour family histories, and strengthen bonds across generations.

The event opened with a welcome from AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman OBE, followed by Kabbalat Shabbat and a keynote presentation from renowned historian Dr Helen Fry on the history of Latimer House and its role during WW2. Our guests were thrilled to hear how over one hundred German-Jewish refugees were utilised as "secret listeners", posing as British soldiers and staff to eavesdrop

on the conversations of captured German prisoners of war.

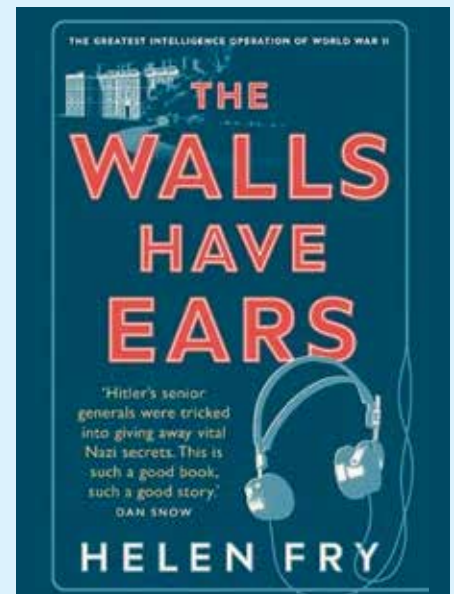
The following day guests took part in a series of workshops and discussion groups exploring family history, archives, oral testimony and what it means to be part of the descendants' community today. Participants also heard from leading voices, including Sir Simon Wessely, who shared reflections on being second generation and the continuing relevance of family history and memory.

One of the weekend's highlights was a performance of *Kindness*, the acclaimed play inspired by the experiences of AJR member and Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack. The production, delivered by Voices of the Holocaust and supported through AJR funding, was followed by a moving audience discussion that explored the role of storytelling and the arts in preserving Holocaust memory.

After the performance Cate Hollis, Founder & Artistic Director at Voices of the Holocaust, said, "It was a privilege to share *Kindness* as part of AJR's 85th anniversary celebrations. The response from audiences was deeply moving and reinforced the importance of continuing to tell survivor stories through creative and accessible forms. We are proud to have been part of a weekend that placed memory, humanity and community at its heart."

As AJR looks to the future, the success of the Residential Weekend reinforces the organisation's commitment to creating opportunities for connection, learning and

remembrance, while continuing to support the UK's largest community of Holocaust descendants and all those committed to preserving this vital history.



Dr Helen Fry, author of *The Walls have Ears*, told guests how Jewish refugees had been 'secret listeners' at Latimer House, the venue for our special weekend



The packed programme for the weekend



One of the highlights of the weekend was a performance of the play *Kindness*, which tells the remarkable story of Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack



After the performance of *Kindness* there was a Q&A with the actors about the impact of the play on school audiences and on themselves

DELIGHTED GUESTS

Participants described the weekend as both uplifting and meaningful, highlighting the rare opportunity to connect with others who share similar family histories and experiences.



Guests during the weekend included first, second and third generation Holocaust refugees

Tania Barnett attended with her brother and their mother, Ruth, who came from Berlin on a Kindertransport when she was just four years old.

“Not knowing what to expect from an AJR weekend away, I relished the experience,” said Tania. “The setting was sublime, with an invitation to imagine Nazi POWs being secretly ‘listened to’ via bugs everywhere that may just have even won us the war! Mum and I stayed in the old Mansion House, perhaps in the very room in which Rudolph Hess was kept under watch.

“We enjoyed the welcome blend of talks, workshops, a play, a gala, refreshment, free time, with appropriate choices on offer. The atmosphere was relaxed and included ample time to schmooze. By the end, I felt that I can value new and renewed friendships and that the weekend will be one of those special ‘memories’ that was sung about during the final Gala song. So Mazel Tov to AJR at the ripe old age of 85 and may you live long and prosper.”

Tania’s thoughts were echoed by her fellow 2G member **Janet Weston**, who said “The AJR’s 85th anniversary weekend has provided such a wealth of memories that it is hard to know where to begin describing them. For me the best thing was the chance to meet friends and get to know other members better in an atmosphere of supreme dedication by AJR staff who had thought of every detail.



The AJR’s Bea Lewkowicz and Debra Barnes with first generation members Maurice Peltz and Kurt Marx

GALA TEA

Our weekend celebrations culminated on Sunday afternoon in the AJR Gala Tea, a special anniversary gathering that brought together attendees from across the weekend in a joyful celebration of community and shared heritage.

Some additional 50 guests travelled to the Latimer Estate just for this special event, which featured a rapturous performance from internationally acclaimed jazz singer-pianist Jeremy Sassoon and his band. The concert, a bespoke version of their wonderful *MOJO – Musicians of Jewish Origin* full-length show, celebrated the work of iconic Jewish songwriters from George Gershwin and Burt Bacharach to Bob Dylan and Lou



The very special Musicians Of Jewish Origin concert moved all the afternoon tea guests, in every sense of the word

Nothing was too much trouble to help us and ensure we had a most memorable time

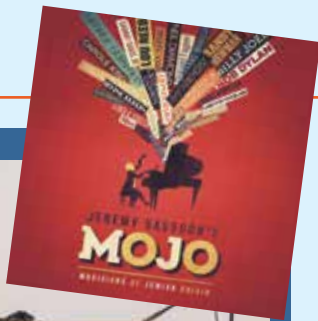
“The start of any event is key and what better than to start with Shabbat candle lighting, enjoy our meal and the talk by author and broadcaster Dr Helen Fry.

“Several people told me that they found the performance of Kindness on the Saturday afternoon to be their favourite event of the weekend, despite its painful subject matter. Workshops earlier in the day proved very interesting, providing a chance to speak frankly about a wide range of views and experiences.

“Maurice Peltz and Kurt Marx were with us throughout. Not only was it a privilege to meet these two remarkable men – totalling two centuries between them – but their lives featured in the final slot, Postcards from the Holocaust Centre. Zoom Rockman’s two



We were privileged to include several first generation members of the AJR among our guests



Jeremy Sassoon shared the fact that his grandparents had both been Jewish refugees and members of the AJR

Reed, all of whom have roots in central Europe.

Jeremy was thrilled to be part of our weekend, given that his own grandparents, Elsa and Henry Wertheimer, were refugees from Nazi Europe and AJR members. Sharing some of their story during his show, he said they would be very proud to know he was helping us to celebrate our special anniversary.

A rousing performance of Neil Diamond's *Sweet Caroline* had every guest singing and many of them standing, while there was a tear in many eyes during Jeremy's final song, *Memories*.

In the immortal words of Marvin Hamlisch, most famously sung by Barbra Streisand: *If we had the chance to do it all again, Would we? Should we?* There was universal sentiment in the room that we would!

animation cartoon films, created for Lemon Sole and exclusively previewed for us, could well pave the way forward in Holocaust education particularly for younger children."

Ellie Hyams, a third-generation participant added: "As a grandchild of survivors, I sometimes feel one step removed from this history. Being surrounded by people from different generations helped me understand how important it is that we continue telling these stories and carrying them forward."



AJR's Trustees joined us for the Gala Afternoon Tea on the Sunday



AJR Chairman Mike Karp welcomed guests to the afternoon tea

AN MBE FOR ALEX

Our keynote speaker for the Sunday morning was the AJR's Head of Education and Heritage, Alex Maws, who – it was simultaneously announced – was awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours for Services to Holocaust Education.

For more than two decades, Alex has been at the forefront of Holocaust education in the UK and internationally, helping to shape how the history of the Holocaust is taught, understood and remembered by future generations.



Since joining the AJR in 2017, Alex has championed our grant-making programme, reviewing and awarding funding that strengthens Holocaust education, research, testimony, remembrance, and public engagement nationwide.

Among the projects he has led are the AJR's UK Holocaust Map, an innovative digital resource developed in partnership with the UK government, which documents hundreds of locations across the country connected to Holocaust history and remembrance. He is also the producer and host of the AJR's acclaimed *Kindertransport* podcast. Beyond his work at AJR, Alex serves as a member of the UK delegation to IHRA and works closely with UNESCO and other international organisations to train educators and policy makers on issues relating to Holocaust education and contemporary antisemitism.

Commenting on his award, Alex told us: "As a naturalised British citizen, I know firsthand how incredibly welcoming our country has the capacity to be, but my work to preserve the memory of the Holocaust reminds me that kindness towards the stranger can never be taken for granted. My own great-grandfather was murdered by the Nazis, so the significance of receiving this incredible honour amidst a backdrop of rising Holocaust denial and antisemitism is not lost on me. I hope that this announcement can, in some small way, shine a light on the crucial work carried out by our dedicated team at the AJR and by so many other treasured colleagues across the Holocaust remembrance sector."

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.

TOUGH TIMES

David Herman's brilliant article *Is it happening again?* (June) hits the nail on the head with its honest appraisal of our people's current situation in this country.

We are a small community and must rely for our protection against the hate filled thugs on our fellow citizens who have not fallen prey to a highly successful campaign of antisemitism financed by Iran and Qatar. For this to be meaningful, we need a firm commitment from the great institutions of state – the Government, the police, the Monarchy, the Church, the universities, the schools, the cultural organisations – to defend us as an integral part of British society and to denounce antisemitism in all its forms. Alas, with the sole exception of the Monarchy, these institutions have failed us completely with their indifference or open hostility to our situation, just as in pre-Hitler Germany their counterparts failed us. The silent majority may regret these developments but remain silent. The recent capitulation of the British Museum to the threat of intimidation if it held a Jewish event is but a frightening example of the cowardice of our institutions.

Against this background it seems to me that declarations by some Jews that 'this is my country for which my grandfathers fought, I am not going anywhere' are unhelpful, since we just do not know what the future may hold for us. All we can do is to be on our guard, to see things as they are and not as we would wish them to be, to support the CST and decide for ourselves if and

when, God forbid, the time has come when we can only respond by leaving for Israel. Paradoxically, although it is in the middle of a defensive war, where else can we live our lives as proud Jews ?

Lionel Blumenthal

I am a second generation AJR member. My mother escaped from Germany in March 1939. Therefore, I have only vicarious knowledge of Germany in the 1930s. However, I imagine that many in my position who have been given familial accounts of events in 1930s Germany are deeply worried and saddened by the rise of blatant antisemitism in Britain.

The culture of vitriolic hatred and violence against Jews is something which we appear to have allowed to develop whilst 'asleep at the wheel'. The position in universities, schools and hospitals shows that even the well educated can subvert institutions which should be seen as havens against prejudice. In universities, the slide has been going on, largely unnoticed, for decades under the banner of 'anti-colonialism and social justice'. Of course, the method of propagandising has changed from the 1930s and social media's algorithms are to blame for its unchecked spread. However, the position we are now in is horribly reminiscent of my mother's accounts of life prior to Kristallnacht. We have attacks on businesses with Jewish links, the 'deplatforming' of Jews, random attacks (verbal and physical) on Jews in public places and the boycotting of Jewish goods.

My parents treated their Jewish identity as something to hide from the world at large. I rebelled against this in the 1960s and 70s when the ethos in the UK felt safe and I endured nothing more than an occasional offensive offhand comment from people who were unaware that I was Jewish. I put my parents' attitude down to their individual past experiences and traumas. I now understand their behaviour better. Indeed, during my recent hospital admissions, I did not fill out the box asking for my religion. Was this cowardice or circumspection?

Sybil Gilbert

Your article employs the usual terminology – 'antisemitic riots', 'jew hatred' and 'hate marches'. Should we not rather be referring to 'antisemitic racist riots' and 'neo-nazi hate marches' so that our opponents are placed explicitly in the categories to which they belong?

Also, I recently heard a radio discussion in which someone referred to 'Antisemitism. And racism'. This makes it appear as if they are two different things, which of course they aren't.

Michael Levin

British Jews, secular and religious, including descendants of refugees and Holocaust survivors, form a small, integral and respected part of British society.

Ninety years ago English antisemitic blackshirts openly marched in London, 81 years ago we defeated the Nazi regime. Since then, with a few dreadful exceptions, like the Manchester Synagogue attack, Jews have lived in peace in England. The stabbing of two Jews in Golders Green by a 'meschuggener' is hardly evidence of an antisemitic epidemic. There is little evidence of institutional antisemitism. To write about "terrifying number of antisemitic hate marches" is misleading.

Violence is wrong. Killing is wrong. The Hamas attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages was (almost universally) condemned. Secular and Jewish leaders in this country spoke out strongly against the perpetrators of that atrocity. Yet Hamas remains an evil destructive organisation. But some of the subsequent policies and actions ordered by the current Israeli Government and perpetrated by Israeli forces – mass bombing, destruction of homes and civil infrastructure, withholding of food, water, fuel and aid – are also wrong. They have led to mass protests – largely peaceful, some ugly and violent – by people (Jews among them) around the world including London and elsewhere in the UK.

However Jewish religious and secular leaders in Britain have been reluctant to support those Jews who condemn these Israeli actions.

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LOOKING FOR?

HMD GUESTLIST

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) is currently forming its guestlist for the 2027 HMD Ceremony and wants to ensure that it is as comprehensive as possible, especially when it comes to first generation survivors and refugees. If you are not currently on the HMDT's radar please get in touch with the Trust.

charlie.cox@hmd.org.uk

VICAR JOSEPH ANDRE

Work is about to start in Namur, Belgium, on a large mural in honour of Vicar Joseph Andre, who saved numerous children from being murdered by the Nazis.

The descendants of one of those children are keen to hear from the families of anyone else who was saved by Vicar Andre at his "home de l' Ange" or through his organisation.

avnifreddy@gmail.com

HANS... ???

Between 1938 – 1946 Sir Michael Burton's parents, Hilda & Henry Burton QC, hosted a young Jewish refugee from Vienna at their homes in Bishops Road, Prestwich and then Parkfield Road, Didsbury. The boy, who was perhaps 12 on his arrival in Manchester, was called Hans and is believed to have stayed in England for the rest of his life. Is anyone able to help identify his surname and any descendants?

editorial@ajr.org.uk

The British Government and other mainstream political parties have supported Israel's right to exist and to defend itself – and have acted against 'pro-Palestine' criminals acting against Israeli companies in the UK. Horrible antisemitic language online does not reflect the day-to-day real experience of Jews in this country. True, Jewish communities have for years felt the need to secure and protect their schools and synagogues, but – like adherents of other religions – they are able to walk down British streets wearing clothing and symbols of their faith. As David Herman points out, the King and the Royal family are supportive of the Jewish community.

John Farago

and identity, patriotism and assimilation, both then and in the present – and by extension highlight the creative contributions of more recent immigrants and their descendants to this contemporary British life.

Comprising a lively mixture of illustrated talks, discussions, a concert and the Royal College of Music exhibition 'Music, Migration and Mobility' about émigré musicians from Nazi Europe in Britain, the symposium programme is aimed at both a general and a specialist audience.

More information and booking via <https://tinyurl.com/44akwrsf>
Monica Bohm-Duchen
Founding Director of Insiders/Outsiders

Both schools have invited me back for next year so hopefully this will be an annual event and part of a vital role to educate young people in an effort to eliminate anti-Jewish racism

It's a massive task but more important now than ever before, and when one sees a group of students expressing so much interest, there is truly hope for a better future.

Michael Bibring

JEWISH INPUT TO THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN

AJR Journal readers who enjoyed your article about the 75th anniversary of the Festival of Britain (June) might also be interested to know about the one-day symposium I am co-organising at St.Johns Waterloo on 9 September.

Entitled *A Tonic to the Nation: Refugees and Immigrants at the Festival of Britain* the symposium will explore an important but still widely overlooked aspect of the Festival and its legacy: namely, the disproportionately large creative input of those from (mostly) Jewish immigrant families and of former refugees from Nazism – many of them imprisoned behind barbed wire as so-called 'enemy aliens' only eleven years earlier.

In so doing, it will invite a closer critical scrutiny both of the nature and extent of that input and of the complex issues of postwar cultural renewal, national memory

HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE?

I have just returned from a trip to Vienna to speak at Amerling Gymnasium – the school that my father was expelled from for being Jewish after the Anschluss

He spoke there a few times and this is now my third visit. This year I also managed to incorporate another talk at Real Gymnasium. In each case I spoke to students years 12 & 13. (That's A levels in old money!!) They were really engaged in the topic, asking lots of searching questions.

Delivering my dad's testimony as a second generation speaker is so rewarding when I do it in the UK, and incredibly poignant and meaningful to have the privilege of doing this in his hometown.

I took the opportunity again to give the Stolpersteine a good clean and once again the irony of scrubbing the pavement all these years later was not lost on me.

ANNELY JUDA

I noticed that the advert for Annelly Juda Fine Art which appeared in your May and June issues is shown at its former address, as it moved to Hanover Square in November 2025.

It's a highly significant gallery with its founder Annelly Juda and her son David amongst the most important contributors to British cultural life. You can find my recording of Annelly made in 2003 for the British Library through the British Library Sounds catalogue (Accession reference: C466/70).

Monica Petzal


TRIP TO ST. ANNE'S
TUESDAY 4 AUGUST



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

 michalmocton@ajr.org.uk

AJR OUT A



(Paris) Members of the group conducting research in the Memorial de la Shoah archives



The AJR group at the memorial to all those who were deported from Drancy

PARIS: A SHORT JOURNEY WITH LONG ECHOES

At the end of May a group of AJR members travelled to Paris to trace their family histories, to stand where relatives once stood, and to bring home fragments of memory now made tangible.

Debra Barnes reports.

The two days, one night itinerary was compact but intense. It began with a visit to the suburb of **Drancy**, whose unassuming facades belie the enormity of what happened there. For many participants, visiting the site of this notorious internment camp was the most visceral moment of the trip. One participant described the suburb as “such an ordinary place” – a reminder that sites of deportation and loss were often woven into the everyday geography of French towns and cities. Standing where their relatives had been held, participants confronted the dissonance between the ordinary present and the extraordinary violence of the past, recalling family narratives that had previously existed only in documents and oral memory.

One participant Michelle Levey said: “Standing in the Drancy camp where my grandfather, Josef Schwarz, spent the last eight days of his life, before being sent to Auschwitz, was a powerful and heartbreaking moment.”

The group then went to the **Memorial de la Shoah** which, as one participant reported, they “... hadn’t expected it to be as large and as extensive and with a clearly well

resourced documentation centre.”

Museum archivists guided the AJR group through registers, transport lists and digitised photographs; providing the participants with names, dates, and images that shape their family trees and prompt further genealogical work. One couple discovered a deportee who shared a birthplace and surname with their great-grandparents. Another participant, Elissa Winston, described the new piece of information about her great-grandfather that the museum archivist unearthed as “like finding the missing piece of a jigsaw.”

The group’s walking tour of **Le Marais** began as a study in layered histories: Jewish life, wartime traces, and the contemporary vibrancy of a neighbourhood that has long been a centre of Jewish Paris. The heat, however, made the streets unforgiving. The group’s exploration was curtailed by extreme temperatures and then complicated further when Eurostar cancelled the return train, turning a tidy two-day trip into an unexpected logistical challenge. Even so, the curtailed walk offered moments of reflection: storefronts and plaques that mark vanished communities, synagogues that still hum with life, and the small, everyday traces that connect past and present.

Beyond the sites themselves, participants emphasised the value of travelling together. “It was [also] a pleasure meeting the other travellers ... and it was interesting to hear about their family histories and personal stories,” one participant observed.

Second generation member Simon Burne said, “Sandra and I found the Paris trip profoundly meaningful. It was well organised, and the group were excellent company,” also noting that the experience had opened new avenues for genealogical research. For many, the trip was not an endpoint but a catalyst: digitised photographs, newly found names and archival references will now be followed up, cross-checked and woven into family narratives back home.

Short trips like this one are deceptively powerful. The Memorial de la Shoah’s documentation centre turned out to be a resource that changed how participants understood their families; Drancy’s quiet streets forced a confrontation with the ordinary settings of extraordinary crimes; and even the disrupted walk through Le Marais became part of the story – a reminder that memory work is lived, sometimes messily, in the present.

For descendants of survivors, such journeys are never merely historical excursions; they are acts of remembrance, research and responsibility – small pilgrimages that return with new evidence, new questions and, for some, a measure of closure.

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ND ABOUT



All aboard at Crich Tramway Museum



Cable cars at the Heights of Abraham



The state dining room at Belvoir Castle

DERBYSHIRE: A WEALTH OF DELIGHTS

Earlier this summer a group of AJR members enjoyed a residential trip to Derbyshire. Janet Weston shares her experience.

Did you know that Bonnie Prince Charlie got as far as Derby in the 1745 Jacobite Rising, or that the first major English painter whose career was based outside London was Joseph Wright of Derby? We learned more about this during the AJR's always eagerly awaited residential trip. The beautiful Derbyshire countryside, with its artistic life and industrial background, had formed a backdrop to introducing an area with which many of us were hitherto unfamiliar.

Once we had settled into the hotel conveniently right in the city centre we heard a most interesting talk from Eve Sacker. She helped found the now thriving Derbyshire Jewish Community, including people from Derby and Chesterfield. Along with some of our own members, whose loved ones are interred in the local cemetery, the community is hoping that improvements can be made at the site.

The next day we headed to Leicestershire for Belvoir Castle (pronounced Beaver), a Regency-style building with an impressive guard room and exquisite interior,

beautifully styled and decorated. We enjoyed seeing the wonderful Chinese style decorated bedrooms as well as the state dining room and portraits of family members of the 11th Duke of Rutland who lives in the castle. The picture of Henry VIII after Holbein is iconic. After lunch we were glad to ride round the extensive and beautiful grounds in a buggy watched by curious cows!

Next day we had an early start for the Emma Bridgewater factory, Stoke-on-Trent. The city is renowned for its potteries but the industry has been increasingly squeezed in modern times, so we felt privileged to see the traditional skills and workmanship which go into every piece of handmade pottery. These comprise casting, sponging and fettling, firing and decorating and glazing. We were very impressed by the speed and accuracy with which everyone worked, and intrigued by the painting and embellishing process. Later we headed to Crich Tramway Village, where a ride on a vintage tram, complete with authentic old penny coin and ticket, was a must. We explored period buildings, exhibitions and tram depots, the Red Lion pub and Derby Assembly Rooms.

Next day we had a relaxing morning in beautiful Bakewell, capital of the Peak District with the scenic river Wye and,

of course, ducks. It was great to buy old fashioned pies and puddings to take home. Then, many of us hiked up the somewhat steep hill to the beautiful Anglo-Saxon All Saints Church, a Grade I Listed Building. Next, we headed off to Matlock Bath for a cable car ride to the Heights of Abraham. We were glad the morning's wind had died down and we could enjoy the spectacular scenery.

Before going home we listened to a talk at the museum, which has the world's largest collection of Wright's versatile paintings, plus many other artefacts. Then we had time to see other places such as the ancient and beautiful All Saints Church in Bakewell, which dates back to 943 AD. Throughout the trip we enjoyed delicious food, eating in different restaurants each night.



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REFUGEES TWICE OVER: *THE*



South front of the ruins, Nymans



Irene and Ena in Germany during the 1920s

John Hilary shares the fascinating history of a spectacular National Trust property where manicured English gardens meet the haunting, dramatic backdrop of gothic ruins, and which owes its identity to a German Jewish family.

The Grade II property of Nymans offers a timeless vision of English beauty. Ruined halls and family crests speak of an ancient history rooted in the West Sussex countryside, while the celebrated garden is a tribute to the traditions of the landed gentry. Yet appearances can be deceptive. Nymans owes its identity not to an aristocratic English dynasty but to a German-Jewish family whose members have faced the experience of being turned into refugees not once but twice.

The family originally belonged to a thriving Jewish community in the county of Bentheim, right on the Dutch border. In 1763, however, all Jews were expelled from Bentheim by a decree signed by the Elector of Hanover who governed the territory, better known to British readers as King George III. The family journeyed south and settled in the village of Messel near Darmstadt in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, which offered a safe haven to many displaced Jews. Subsequent generations adopted the name of Messel as their own surname, in recognition of

the village that had given them refuge.

Four of the five Messel siblings who came to adulthood in the 1860s emigrated to London, seeking the economic opportunities that Britain offered aspiring Jews. The eldest, my great-great-grandfather Ludwig Messel, bought the rural estate of Nymans in 1890 and set about transforming it into the property that it is today. Yet one branch of the family remained in Germany, where the youngest brother Alfred Messel rose to become one of the most famous architects of the early twentieth century, as well as a personal adviser to Kaiser Wilhelm II. Visitors to Germany can still admire several of Alfred's extant buildings, including the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, the State Museum of Hesse in Darmstadt and the Rathaus in the Saxon town of Ballenstedt.

Alfred's youngest daughter Irene was the only one of his three children to survive into adulthood, and in 1921 she married Paul Wolfgang Bruck, the elder of the two children of Dr Wilhelm Bruck, a renowned appeal court judge in Kiel. Irene and Wolfgang (as he was always known) made their home in the fashionable Charlottenburg district of Berlin and adopted the joint surname Bruck-Messel, although their two children Ena and Harro would use just Bruck. Despite having been raised as Christians, they were identified as 'full Jews' under the 1935 Nuremberg race laws and exposed to increasing persecution. Their son Harro was forced to leave the Herder Schule under new regulations introduced in 1938, and joined the

American Colony School in Berlin instead.

Irene had visited Nymans as a child before the First World War and knew the English Messels from that time. With the situation in Germany deteriorating, she travelled over to Nymans again in 1936 and arranged for her cousins to act as personal sponsors for herself and her family, should they need to escape Berlin. In the event, the Bruck-Messel family managed to flee Germany in April 1939, just four months before the start of the Second World War. They settled first in the sleepy Kent village of New Romney and later moved to Folkestone, where Ena was enrolled in the school for Jewish pupils run by Dr Leonore Goldschmidt. With the German invasion of the Low Countries in May 1940, the school and children were evacuated to Wales.

The rapid advance of the German military and the fear of an imminent invasion across the Channel led to the internment of all male enemy aliens in Britain, and some female. In recognition of his status as a 'victim of Nazi oppression', Wolfgang Bruck-Messel had originally been classified in October 1939 at the lowest level of risk (category C) and was thus subject to no restrictions on his movements for the first few months of the war. Such distinctions were suspended under the new circumstances, and Wolfgang was interned on the Isle of Man along with many other German-Jewish refugees as well as a number of genuine Nazi sympathisers. Harro Bruck later recalled his father's good fortune in not being one of those internees picked

MESSEL FAMILY OF NYMANS



Wolfgang with Harro and Ena in Germany in the early 1930s



Harro as an evacuee at Tintern Abbey in 1940



Harro at home in Swansea in 2015

to travel to Canada in July 1940 on the *SS Arandora Star*, which was torpedoed by the Germans and went down with the loss of 714 lives.

While Irene and Wolfgang Bruck-Messel had escaped Germany with their children, Wolfgang's parents and sister remained in Kiel. Despite the fact that Dr Wilhelm Bruck had won the Iron Cross for distinguished service in the First World War and was thus supposed to enjoy immunity from Nazi persecution, the family was evicted from their home in April 1942. Shortly after, their daughter Vera received the dreaded order for deportation to Theresienstadt, now little more than a staging post on the way to Auschwitz. Rather than be separated, Wolfgang's father, mother and sister committed suicide together on 7 July 1942. Three brass *Stolpersteine* now stand in their memory on the pavement in front of their family home.

In Britain, the Bruck-Messel family continued to face the uncertainties of wartime existence. Both Ena and Harro attended Drayton High School in Newport, where Ena took her school certificate in July 1940. The two were then sent further inland to Tintern, where Ena worked in the Williams & Cotton grocery store; as shown in the photograph of him in front of the ruins, Harro was billeted with the curator of Tintern Abbey. Ena would eventually qualify as a doctor in London after the war, while Harro became a lecturer in thermodynamics and head of department at Swansea College. He remained in Swansea on retirement, and lived there to the age of 93.

Wolfgang Bruck-Messel found employment after the war as a design consultant, working with manufacturing companies in Germany and travelling twice a year to the Frankfurt trade fair; some of his textile samples are held by the Victoria and Albert Museum as evidence of how refugee designers helped to modernise British design practice. Wolfgang was also an amateur artist of floral still-lives and other subjects, with several of his pictures included in the Ben Uri Gallery's post-war exhibitions of works by contemporary Jewish artists, alongside sculpture by Jacob Epstein and paintings by Alfred Wolmark, Erna Auerbach and Fred Uhlman.

In 1962, Irene managed to reclaim ownership of her mother's summer house on the Chiemsee in the south of Bavaria; it had been occupied by another German family since the war. She and Wolfgang were then able to move into Apsley House on the Finchley Road, which would remain their home. Like her son, Harro, Irene also lived to the age of 93. I treasure my memories of when she used to come to dinner with us in London, as she would occasionally lapse back into German and recall the heady atmosphere of 1920s Berlin. It was like having a direct window

onto modern history.

The Messel family has the dubious distinction of having twice been made refugees: in 1763 thanks to the Hanoverian King of England, in 1939 under the Nazi regime. Each time, the family was able to establish itself afresh in its newly adopted environment, and to prosper. Yet the supreme irony came in 1960, when the Queen's sister Princess Margaret married Tony Armstrong-Jones, a direct descendant of the same Messel family that her ancestor George III had expelled from their home two hundred years earlier. In a remarkable twist of fate, the couple's eldest child – the current Earl of Snowdon – was born fifth in line to the throne.

The full history of the Messel family is told in John Hilary's illustrated book *From Refugees to Royalty: The Remarkable Story of the Messel Family of Nymans*, published in 2021. Any readers of the *AJR Journal* wishing to buy a signed copy can claim a 50% discount on the £25 cover price, as well as free postage and packing within the UK. For further details, please send an email with your postal address to fromrefugeestoroyalty@gmail.com.

Stolpersteine in memory of Wilhelm, Elisabeth and Vera Bruck, Kiel



A NEW ERA FOR THE AROLSEN

The Arolsen Archives in Germany are home to the world's most comprehensive archive on the victims and survivors of Nazi persecution. Their new director, **Moritz Wein**, is aiming to raise the collection's profile internationally.

The history of the Arolsen Archives began with a concrete mission in the postwar period: searching for missing persons, reuniting families, and helping to uncover the fates of the victims. The Allies began collecting information on victims of the Nazi regime while the war was still being fought. When peace came, an international tracing organisation was established to continue the work. In 1946, it was relocated to Arolsen and eventually became known as the International Tracing Service.

From these beginnings grew the world's most comprehensive archive on the victims and survivors of Nazi persecution. The collection contains information on about 17.5 million people and was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 2013. The documents preserve millions of stories – stories of persecution, deportation, imprisonment, and murder, but also of the decades-long search for answers. One of the most important resources provided by the Arolsen Archives today is the online archive, which is accessible to all and can be used free of charge.

The Arolsen Archives continue to investigate and document individual experiences of Nazi persecution. To this day, people from all over the world contact the archive to learn what happened to their parents or other family members. Often, a single document provides the first concrete clue: a name on a list, a place of imprisonment, a transport date, or an index card from a displaced persons camp. Individual paths of persecution can be reconstructed from



Moritz Wein being interviewed about his appointment as the new Director of the Arolsen Archives



This photo was taken in 1952, and shows just some of the archives that had been amassed by that time

fragments of information like these.

Today, this work is more urgent than ever, as fewer and fewer eyewitnesses remain to share their experiences firsthand. Antisemitism, racism, disinformation, and Holocaust denial are on the rise around the world. Against this backdrop, the documents held by the Arolsen Archives are more than just useful resources for academic and family history research – they are historical evidence. They reveal the persecution people endured, and they connect abstract numbers with names, places, dates, and individual lives.

Restoring dignity and recognition

Moritz Wein, who took over as Director of the Arolsen Archives in April 2026, sees this as a key part of the organisation's mission. A native of Austria, he is an expert in Holocaust education and the prevention of antisemitism. Before taking up his new role in Bad Arolsen, he worked at Austria's Federal Ministry of Education. He also brings extensive experience from international networks, including collaborations with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure.

Wein's personal connection to this field of work began early on. One of his first professional roles was as an educator at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial. There he saw the impact educational work can have when young people and adults engage with history not as a distant event, but as something they can connect with in a meaningful way at a personal level. Working with documents related to persecution plays a special role in this process because these records help make history tangible. Every form, every index card, and every list has a human story to tell.

"One thing has motivated me throughout my professional life: restoring dignity and recognition to victims and survivors of Nazi persecution and their families," says Moritz Wein. Acknowledging long-overlooked victim groups is also particularly important to him. Many people who were persecuted by the Nazi regime – including Sinti and Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, and those labeled 'anti-social elements' or 'career criminals' – have received little recognition to date. The marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and persecution they suffered are also documented in the records held by the Arolsen Archives. Addressing the legacy of these Nazi crimes and the long history of denying official recognition to certain victim groups is a key part of the organisation's work.

More inquiries and new digital initiatives

As the new Director of the Arolsen Archives, Moritz Wein is taking over an institution that has undergone profound changes in recent years. It has opened up significantly and has continued to evolve, becoming a pioneer in providing digital services and resources. Since 2019, people all over the world have been able to conduct research in the online archive. More than 90 percent of the documents have now been digitised, making a large part of the collection accessible to people all over the world – anytime, anywhere. Digitisation remains extremely important. The process does not end once documents have been scanned: what matters is unlocking the information they contain, interlinking data, and developing search tools that enable users to find relevant records more easily. The Arolsen Archives cooperate with a wide range of institutions, including archives in Ukraine, and expand their holdings through this work.

The latest figures reveal a high level of

ARCHIVES



The proposed new building for the Arolsen Archives has a modern facade that is reminiscent of archive boxes

interest in researching the holdings of the Arolsen Archives. In 2025, the Arolsen Archives achieved record highs in research activity, usage, and digital participation. Around 830,000 users visited the online archive – almost 20% more than in the previous year. Although most inquiries still come from relatives of victims of Nazi persecution seeking information about family members, interest from the general public is also on the rise. Last year over ten percent of all inquiries came from private individuals with no direct family connection to the victims – a first for the archive.

This development reflects a broader shift. More and more people are no longer content simply to be informed about the history of Nazism – they want to conduct their own research, trace local connections, bring individual names to light, and understand historical sources for themselves. The Arolsen Archives are responding to this need by offering digital projects that combine research, education, and participation.

They also show how the history of Nazi persecution relates to present-day issues such as antisemitism, racism, marginalisation, and democratic responsibility. The goal is to make history feel immediate and real. Individual biographies, local stories, and historical documents offer a direct, personal connection to the past. Digital formats in particular can reach young people in the digital spaces where they already seek information and learn about the world. Moritz Wein emphasises that digital remembrance projects can encourage young people to stand up against antisemitism and racism and to support democracy.

Access to reliable sources as a democratic responsibility

Moritz Wein identifies several key priorities for the years ahead. One is to make the Arolsen Archives even more visible internationally. Today, many descendants of victims of Nazi persecution live in places like the USA, Israel, Australia,

The Central Name Index (ZNK) is an important archive system of the Arolsen Archives. It includes around 50 million clue cards that contain information on about 17.5 million people



Poland, and other European countries. Families are often unaware that the Arolsen Archives hold documents that may help answer long-standing questions about their relatives' fates. The organisation hopes to reach these people more effectively by working with memorial sites, local initiatives, victims' associations, research institutions, and the media. At a time when historical facts are being questioned or deliberately distorted, open access to verifiable sources is a democratic responsibility, Moritz Wein explains.

The type of questions that people are bringing to the archive is also changing. In earlier decades, the focus was primarily on compensation claims, official documentation, and clarifying individual fates. Today, inquiries are more likely to relate to family history, local remembrance, lesser-known victim groups, and broader historical contexts.

An archive for future generations

Another milestone is the long-planned construction of a new archive building, which will serve as a concrete expression of long-term responsibility towards a part of the world's documentary heritage that must remain accessible to future generations. The new building will provide the perfect environment to ensure the long-term preservation of the collection to a professional standard, and has a key role to play in the future of the archive.

Moritz Wein sets out a clear goal for the coming years: to complete the new archive building, ensure the long-term preservation of the UNESCO-recognised world documentary heritage, and expand the online archive. At the same time, he aims to broaden the organisation's educational work internationally and significantly strengthen projects with victims' associations and descendants. For Wein, keeping the archive open and accessible is central to its future: an archive is never complete – each generation brings new questions.

ACCESSING THE ARCHIVES

The quickest way to obtain information about victims and survivors of Nazi persecution is through the online archive, which provides access to 40 million digitized documents. A search interface allows users to look up names, places, or other details. But what do the abbreviations, stamps, prisoner categories, and handwritten notes actually mean? Help is at hand in the form of the Arolsen Archives' well-structured e-Guide. By explaining different document types, historical terms, and typical entries, this resource helps users interpret what they find and understand the wider context.

Through the crowdsourcing initiative #everynamecounts, volunteers record information from historical documents, making it easier to search for names and trace individual fates in the online archive. No prior knowledge is required – anyone with internet access can take part.

Projects such as #StolenMemory and #lostwords offer further insight into the work of the Arolsen Archives. #StolenMemory invites international volunteers to help staff search for relatives of concentration camp prisoners whose personal belongings were confiscated by the Nazis, while #lostwords focuses on farewell letters written by people executed under the Nazi justice system.

More about the Arolsen Archives:

www.arolsen-archives.org/en

Joseph Horowitz 100 years on

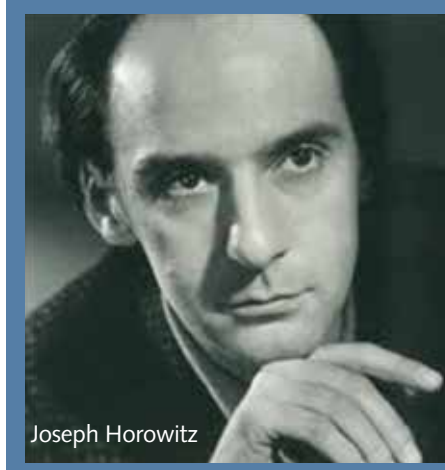
Joseph Horowitz was born in Vienna 100 years ago in May 1926. In an interview with the AJR Refugee Voices Archive he once said, 'I am a Viennese-born composer, a Jew by religion... and I want to be thought of as a British composer.'

Horowitz was part of that extraordinary generation of refugee composers that included Hans Gál, Allan Gray (born Josef Zmigrod), Berthold Goldschmidt and Franz Reizenstein, who all arrived in Britain in the mid – and late-1930s.

Horowitz composed extensively for theatre, radio and television, including the theme music for *Rumpole of the Bailey*, but he is best known as a prolific composer of ballet, orchestral, wind and chamber music and considered his 5th string quartet (1969) to be his best work. According to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 'He is a composer of remarkable versatility, graceful wit and an enviable ability to communicate, whether in his refreshingly light or more serious styles.' 'With the death of Joseph Horowitz, an important link with music making in pre-War Europe disappears,' said Howard Friend, Managing Editor, Novello 1998-2019. 'Though only twelve when his family had to leave the country of his birth for Britain, his upbringing in the heart of Vienna, the son of a distinguished publisher, never seemed far away in either his intellect or undoubted charm and sense of humour.'

In a moving tribute his nephew, musicologist Malcolm Miller, called Horowitz: 'A supreme master of harmony, counterpoint and orchestration, Horowitz's artful craftsmanship infused his many works in both light and serious genres with its sheer melodic inventiveness, assured understanding of instrumental and vocal idioms and a satisfying balance of zest and poetic expression...'

'The Viennese influence is never far from Horowitz's music, indeed the noted critic William Mann once described Horowitz as "the legitimate heir of Schubert and Johann Strauss II born into the age of Jazz". Horowitz himself always underlined that he was a British composer, yet infused with the Classical and Jewish European cultural



Joseph Horowitz



background he and his family brought to Britain from Vienna.'

Horowitz was the oldest of three children born to the great art publisher Béla Horowitz (1898-1955) – the co-founder in 1923, with Ludwig Goldscheider, of Phaidon Verlag – and his wife, Lotte, née Beller (1905-2003). Both parents were born in what Stefan Zweig famously called 'The Age of Security'. The Horowitz family lived on the Parkring, facing the Stadtpark, in the heart of Vienna. Joseph's maternal grandparents lived next door. He grew up in a cultured home. His father could quote in Latin and Greek, and his parents were both deeply religious and were involved in Viennese music and fine arts

In 1938, two days after the *Anschluss*, the family left Vienna for England. 'To me,' he said in a later interview, 'England was a fantasy of peace, of safety, of wonderful life, polite people...' Throughout his career, he offered an outsider's view of Englishness, from working with Michael Flanders to his

ballet of *Alice in Wonderland* to celebrate the Queen's Coronation.

When asked which of his compositions he would like to be remembered for he said, 'a small chunk of *Captain Noah*, my little *Rumpole* theme, the 2nd movement of my clarinet sonatina. If people find three minutes of a piece of music of mine they would like to hear again, that's a wonderful thing.'

He died in 2022, the last surviving member of the extraordinary Horowitz family from Vienna who did so much to enrich British culture.

David Herman

The Insiders / Outsiders festival recently hosted a special online event to pay tribute to Joseph Horowitz, featuring interviews with and about the composer. It can be watched on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb3nptqj-k

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AJR
HENLEY-ON-THAMES
WEDNESDAY 29 JULY 2026

Please join us for a relaxing boat trip down the river and free time to meander around the beautiful riverside town of Henley-on-Thames.

Coach pick-up from Northwest London
Cost per person: £40 including coach travel

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

REVIEWS

FROM THE ANSCHLUSS TO THE ARCADES

Steven Salamon
Grosvenor House Publishing

For refugees like my parents, the trauma of dislocation was made a thousandfold worse when they discovered grim, grey truth about 1940s British food with its dull staples of Spam and Bisto, cheddar and canned peaches. These were the tastes of a foreign and inhospitable land.

So, imagine the delight of a close-knit circle of emigrés when they found an oasis of toothsome and familiar provisions had suddenly materialised in their midst. Now they could feast on salami and *schinken (ham)*, Jarlsberg and Gouda, jars of sauerkraut, pickles from wooden barrels and lebkuchen – the tastes of home that they had been yearning for so badly. And the bread! No more ‘cotton wool’ – in its place a solid, flavourful slab of Rye.

That's the background to Steven Salamon's book *From the Anschluss to the Arcades*. Salamon is the owner of Wally's, a highly successful delicatessen and Kaffeehaus in Cardiff's Royal Arcade, founded by his late father. His book tells the story of how after Nazi Germany annexed neighbour Austria, the young Walter Salamon's family led by father Ignatz fled their home village of Rohrbach an der Teig, and arrived in Britain.

Eventually they found their way via internment in Kent to South Wales, which had become a magnet for refugee entrepreneurs. Ignatz's brother Maks had settled in Cardiff and was working for Aero Zipp, a company relocated from Berlin to an industrial estate just up the valley. That is where our family stories overlap, because my family owned Aero.

Maks recommended Ignatz, and soon he joined the workforce too. Though a diligent employee, he always longed to run a grocery store as he had in Austria. According to my parents, colleagues were concerned when Ignatz left the

security of his factory job to open a shop in 1949, and at first he certainly struggled. Starting with the usual British grocery lines, amid the years of austerity and rationing even the loyalty of former workmates didn't generate enough turnover. Then, he had a brainwave. Realising that the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe created a different kind of demand, he started stocking what we knew as 'continental' products. My mother remembered going in one day to see a string of wursts hanging over the counter, and couldn't grab them fast enough.

Soon the 'Bridge Street Stores' – later renamed the 'Continental Delicatessen' – was a thriving business, despite its location in an insalubrious part of the city centre where the pungent smells emanating from the nearby Brains brewery were sometimes overwhelming.

Salamon writes about how delighted customers were 'to find the much-loved foods that they had been unable to buy elsewhere.' A tightly packed cornucopia of comestibles, the shop had, he says, 'a delicatessen's hallmarks before the UK was even familiar with the concept.'

After the death of Ignatz, Walter and his brother Otto continued running the store, but city centre redevelopment in the 1980s finished it off. That turned out to be just a bump in the road. Having grown up behind the counter, Walter – known as Wally – was determined to continue the family business, founding his own eponymous delicatessen in a much swankier location in 1981. A fixture in the store chatting to customers, he constantly expanded an already dizzying range of products, eventually to be joined by accountant son Steven, who carried on after Wally's death in 2008.

Steven Salamon has done his research, and though publishing this book himself, very sensibly hired local journalist Jenny White to help him shape the narrative. A somewhat more inspiring cover design would have helped, but don't judge etc. The book they have created weaves authoritative historical context and skilful storytelling, to build a poignant family tale of

survival and success. Salamon gives us a satisfying glimpse of life in the backrooms, bringing to life a cast of long-serving staff members, and letting us into some of Wally's secrets – most important of all, a warm and personal welcome for all customers, many of whom are named and quoted. The third part of the book is a loving son's tribute to Wally, whose dedication and hard work created a mecca for the foodies of South Wales that is still flourishing nearly twenty years after his death.

Gaby Koppel

Gaby Koppel is a trustee of the Jewish History Association of Wales (JHAW)



WALKING TOUR OF HOVE – WITH A JEWISH TWIST

TUESDAY 14 JULY



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

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



roshart@ajr.org.uk



AJR RAMBLERS CLUB



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

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



karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

Annely Juda Fine Art

16 Hanover Square
London W1S 1HT

Tel: +44 (0)20 7629 7578

Email: ajfa@annelyjudafineart.co.uk

**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

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
Wednesday 8 July	Afternoon	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Thursday 9 July	Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Monday 13 July	Lunchtime	Hampstead	Ros Hart
Wednesday 15 July	Lunchtime	Yorkshire	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 15 July	All Day	Glasgow – outing to Scone Palace	Agnes Isaacs
Tuesday 21 July	Lunchtime	Enfield	Ros Hart
Tuesday 21 July	Morning	Central London (Baker Street)	Karen Diamond
Monday 27 July	Morning	Art Class	Karen Diamond
Monday 27 July	Afternoon	Radlett	Ros Hart
Tuesday 28 July	Lunchtime	Norwich	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 29 July	Afternoon	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

Susan Harrod
Head of Outreach & Events,
Membership & Engagement
Department
susan@ajr.org.uk
020 8385 3078

Agnes Isaacs
Scotland and Newcastle
Co-ordinator
agnes@ajr.org.uk
07908 156 361

Ros Hart
London and South East England
Co-ordinator
roshart@ajr.org.uk
07966 969 951

Karen Diamond
London and South East England
Co-ordinator
karendiamond@ajr.org.uk
07966 631 778

Michal Mocton
Northern England Co-ordinator
michalmocton@ajr.org.uk
07966 886 535

ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 6 July @ 4pm	Professor Ralph Stern – Suskind Stern: one of the earliest known portraits of a German Jew (part 1) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81104993483	Meeting ID: 811 0499 3483
Wednesday 8 July @ 4pm	Martin Winstone – Britain and the Holocaust, part 3 https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83841104474	Meeting ID: 838 4110 4474
Monday 13 July @ 4pm	Professor Ralph Stern – Suskind Stern: one of the earliest known portraits of a German Jew (part 2) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86216086541	Meeting ID: 862 1608 6541
Monday 20 July @ 4pm	Film: <i>My Italian Secret</i> – the story of cycling idol Gino Bartali and other Italian heroes of the Holocaust, many who are otherwise often forgotten https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88955848674	Meeting ID: 889 5584 8674
Thursday 23 July @ 4pm	Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>On Chapel Sands</i> by Laura Cumming https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88411388225	Meeting ID: 884 1138 8225
Monday 27 July @ 4pm	Joe Mendell – The carving of an icon: the history of Mount Rushmore https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82059982684	Meeting ID: 820 5998 2684
Tuesday 28 July @ 4pm	Lady Valerie Cocks – From Brick Lane to the House of Lords https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86860454926	Meeting ID: 868 6045 4926

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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Published by The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), a company limited by guarantee.
Registered office: Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, Finchley, London N3 1HF
Registered in England and Wales with charity number: 1149882 and company number: 8220991

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For general enquiries please contact: enquiries@ajr.org.uk
For press enquiries please contact: gemma@ajr.org.uk
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