

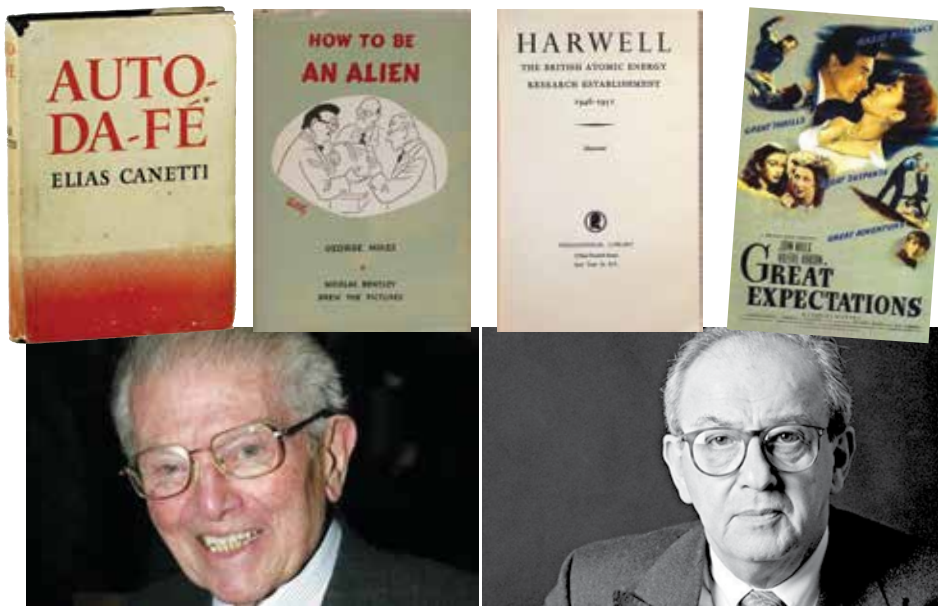


AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

HONOURING THE PAST. CONNECTING THE PRESENT. INSPIRING THE FUTURE

Looking back eight decades



Cultural icons that all made their mark in Britain in 1946, including the Hungarian-born food critic Egon Ronay and the leading reform Rabbi Hugo Gryn, who had survived Auschwitz

As we enter the final quarter of 2026 David Herman looks back at what some of the best known Jewish refugees who came to Britain were doing exactly 80 years ago.

1946 was a special year for many Jewish and central and east European refugees who came to Britain. Elias Canetti, who later won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981, had come to Britain with his family in 1938. In 1946, Jonathan Cape translated his masterpiece, *Die Blendung* (1935) as *Auto-da-Fé*. The novel explores the descent of a book-obsessive academic into madness. It was translated into English by the historian C. V. Wedgwood. *Auto-da-Fé* refers to the burning of heretics by the Inquisition. His masterpiece is a dark and disorienting tale of the self-destructive character of totalitarian thinking. On 24 May 1946, Kate O'Brien for *The Spectator* described it as "Appalling,

magnificent.... [It] screams and bellows of evil, out of which a supremely mad, unfaceable book is orchestrated ... of which we dare not deny the genius." It established his reputation as one of the great central European refugee writers of the post-war period.

There were other major refugee figures for whom 1946 was a special year. Otto Robert Frisch, a Jewish physicist born in Vienna who had fled to England when Hitler came to power, was appointed head of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell (1946-7) and was also appointed

Continued on page 2

FORTIFYING US

At a time when our wider community is facing a number of challenges, including physical and online threats, the stories of our Jewish refugees and their contributions to Britain can help to sustain us.

This issue contains a number of such stories as well as an account of an astonishing coincidence experienced by one of our members with her neighbour (pages 4-5). You can also read reports of wonderful visits to Glyndebourne (page 7) and the brand new House of Secrets (page 9).

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and that these various stories about our wonderful community inspire you.

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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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Looking back eight decades (cont.)

OBE in 1946. He played a key role in the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos alongside many other Jewish refugee physicists. His experiments determined the exact mass of uranium required to fire the Little Boy bomb over Hiroshima. In addition to working at Harwell, Frisch also spent much of the next thirty years teaching at Cambridge where he was Jacksonian Professor of Natural Philosophy and a fellow of Trinity College.

In 1946 another German physicist who had worked at Los Alamos, Klaus Fuchs, also joined Harwell when he was appointed head of the Theoretical Physics Division. However, Fuchs later became notorious as a Communist spy. In January 1950, Fuchs, who had been a Communist in pre-war Germany, confessed that he had passed information to the Soviet Union over a seven-year period during the 1940s. A British court sentenced him to fourteen years' imprisonment and he was subsequently stripped of his British citizenship. He was released in 1959, after serving nine years, and emigrated to East Germany, where he was elected to the Academy of Sciences and became a member of the central committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). He was later appointed deputy director of the Central Institute for Nuclear Physics in Dresden, where he served until his retirement in 1979.

Then there was the German composer and conductor, Walter Goehr, father of the composer, Alexander Goehr. Born in Berlin in 1903, Walter Goehr came to Britain in 1937. In 1946, Goehr composed the music for the acclaimed film *Great Expectations*, directed by David Lean. He wrote several other film soundtracks, including *A Canterbury Tale*, for which his friend Allan Gray, another refugee (born Józef Żmigrod), had composed the score.

Another very different figure was the Hungarian writer, journalist and humourist,

George Mikes, who published his best-known work, *How To Be An Alien*, in 1946. This book poked gentle fun at the English, including a one-line chapter on sex: "Continental people have sex lives; the English have hot-water bottles."

Another influential Hungarian refugee was the food critic, Egon Ronay, who emigrated to Britain in 1946 and wrote and published a series of guides to British and Irish restaurants and hotels after the war. In 1957, Ronay completed the first edition of the *Egon Ronay's Guide to British Eateries*, selling 30,000 copies. The guides gained in popularity and it became a mark of distinction to be mentioned in the books. His guides made a point of not accepting advertising or hospitality from hotels and restaurants to ensure impartiality.

The great Viennese philosopher, Sir Karl Popper, who came from a family of assimilated Jews, had fled to New Zealand in 1937, became a reader in logic and scientific method at the London School of Economics in 1946, a year after the publication of one of his best-known works, *The Open Society and its Enemies*.

Two major social thinkers came to Britain in 1946. Leo Łabędź, a passionately anti-Communist Polish-born critic of the Soviet Union who had been imprisoned by the Communists in the Gulag. Łabędź edited *Survey* journal and headed the London office of Committee for the Defense of Workers, known by its Polish abbreviation as KOR.

Łabędź often campaigned for the *Solidarity* union in Poland, and for political prisoners in the Soviet Union. He was one of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's leading champions in the West.

George Lichtheim was a German-born intellectual and writer who wrote widely on the history and theory of socialism and Marxism and arrived in Britain in 1946. He was a prolific author. His work appeared in *Commentary*, *Partisan Review*, *Dissent*, the

New Leader, *Encounter*, the *Times Literary Supplement* and *The New York Review of Books* and he wrote more than a dozen books.

Another Jewish refugee who arrived in Britain in 1946 was Rabbi Hugo Gryn, one of the best-known rabbis of the post-war period. He was born into a prosperous Jewish family in the market town of Berehovo in Carpathian Ruthenia, which was then in Czechoslovakia, and is now in Ukraine. Gryn and his grandparents, parents and younger brother were deported to Auschwitz in May 1944. His younger brother was killed at Auschwitz and his father died of typhus soon after they were liberated. Hugo Gryn came to Britain in 1946 and in 1950 he went to the United States, where he studied for the rabbinate. He returned to Britain in 1964, where he served in one of the largest congregations in Europe, the West London Synagogue, initially as assistant rabbi and later as senior rabbi, for 32 years.

What is astonishing about this group of Jewish refugees is their range of backgrounds and subsequent careers, from composers and physicists to food critics, humourists and rabbis, from spies and political philosophers to Nobel Prize-winning authors. 1946, eighty years ago, was typical of the experience of so many extraordinary Jewish refugees from Central Europe.



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IT'S NEVER TOO LATE FOR A B'NAI MITZVAH



Nazi persecution robbed them of their b'nai mitzvah. Decades later, with the help of the AJR, they will finally come of age.

For many Holocaust refugees and survivors who were forced to flee, hide or simply survive during their childhood, an important Jewish rite of passage was among the many things taken from them.

Now, decades later, the AJR is offering those who reached b'nai mitzvah age during the Holocaust the chance to reclaim that moment.

The AJR's new **Belated B'nai Mitzvah** project will bring first-generation members together for a special ceremony at Belsize Square Synagogue.

The ceremony, which takes place on **5 November**, will offer participants the chance to stand at the bimah surrounded by family, friends and community, marking a rite of passage that never took place.

There is no expectation that participants

must read from the Torah or demonstrate Hebrew knowledge. The ceremony is designed to be inclusive, with people able to take part in whatever way feels meaningful to them. The bimah will be lowered to the centre of the synagogue to make it as accessible as possible.

Family members will be encouraged to attend, giving children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren the opportunity to witness a significant moment.

An optional preparatory gathering will take place a few weeks earlier, allowing participants to familiarise themselves with the service, revisit practical elements such as putting on a tallit, and meet current b'nai mitzvah children.

That intergenerational element lies at the heart of the project. For younger participants, it is a reminder that their Jewish celebrations form part of a chain of continuity that survived attempts to

destroy it. For the older generation, it is an acknowledgement that their place in that chain was never lost, even when the ceremony itself was.

The ceremony will be followed by a kiddush, giving families and participants the opportunity to come together and celebrate.

For the AJR, the project is about more than a religious ceremony. It is an act of remembrance and repair, recognising that the Holocaust disrupted not only lives, but childhoods, traditions, education and the ordinary rituals through which Jewish identity is formed.

The Belated B'nai Mitzvah project is open to men and women who reached b'nai mitzvah age during the Holocaust.

To find out more or to take part contact enquiries@ajr.org.uk

UPROOTED LIVES – AN INVITATION

The AJR Journal team is delighted to invite all our readers to the launch of *Uprooted Lives: Obituaries of Refugees and Survivors of the Holocaust from the AJR Journal 1955-2025*.

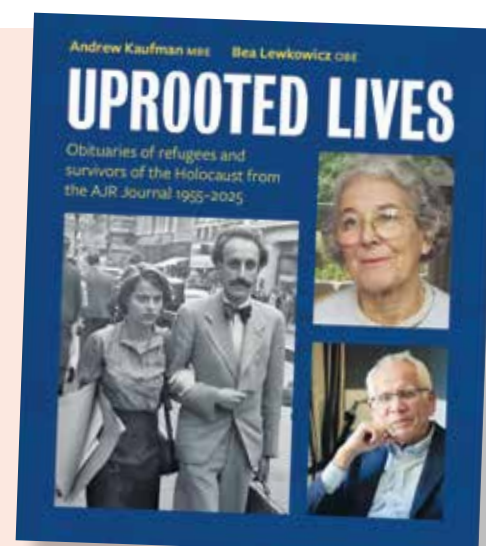
Compiled and edited by Andrew Kaufman MBE and Dr Bea Lewkowicz OBE, and celebrating the 80th anniversary of the *AJR Journal*, ***Uprooted Lives*** tells the extraordinary stories of principally German-speaking Jewish refugees and survivors of the Holocaust who found sanctuary in Britain.

Drawn from obituaries published in this Journal between 1955 and 2025, they include many internationally renowned

figures such as Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck, Anna Essinger, Melanie Klein, Dr Alfred Wiener, Dr Eva Reichmann, Sir Ernst Gombrich, Sir Ernst Chain, Sir Ludwig Guttmann, Anna Freud CBE, Judith Kerr OBE, Hella Pick CBE, Dame Stephanie Shirley, and others whose achievements transformed British intellectual, cultural, scientific and public life.

Alongside these eminent names are hundreds of less familiar but equally compelling life histories of educators, lawyers, doctors, artists, musicians, entrepreneurs, social workers, psychologists and community leaders. Richly illustrated by photographs and spanning eight decades, the book provides a unique record of our community.

The launch will be held at JW3 on Thursday, **12 November at 7pm**. Please email Susan



Harrod at susan@ajr.org.uk if you would like to join us.

You can order the book via the AJR website, and there is also a special gift package available which includes the book and a year's membership of the AJR.

A surprise reflection of my yo



First used by the *News Chronicle* on 6 July 1939, this iconic image was for years known only as 'three little girls', who we now know are Ruth (left) and Inge Adamecz and Hannah Cohn



A blue plaque has been placed on the site of the Tynemouth hostel where Inge & Ruth first stayed, before they were moved to Windermere for the duration of the war

Ninety-three year old AJR first generation member Inge Hamilton, née Adamecz, was astounded last month to see a handwritten description of her childhood self among her neighbour's family mementoes.

Inge is famously known as the little girl sitting in the middle of an iconic, historically defining photograph taken at London's Liverpool Street Station in July 1939. Her identity was publicly solved after 84 years, through a 2023 BBC Radio Newcastle investigative series called *The Girls: A Holocaust Safe House*.

Inge was almost six years old, when that photograph was taken. Her Jewish mother had made the difficult decision to send Inge and her older sister Ruth on a Kindertransport, after their non-Jewish father had divorced her and abandoned the family in response to Hitler's Nuremberg Laws. Hoping that her two eldest daughters would be safe in Britain, she remained in Breslau with their baby sister. Mother and youngest daughter both perished in the concentration camps.

After arriving – and being famously photographed – at Liverpool Street Station the girls were sent to Tynemouth, in north east England, where a hostel had been established by a group of Newcastle friends determined to help girls fleeing Nazi persecution. The group had formed a committee and raised enough funds to

procure and furnish a house at 55 Percy Park and employ two matrons to run it.

In September, war broke out and all refugees over 16 were declared enemy aliens. Following Dunkirk and the onset of German bombing, the coast was declared a restricted zone, and the Newcastle committee was given only three weeks to relocate the hostel. The committee found and rented South Wood, a house in Windermere that was part of the Wood estate. Although large by domestic standards, the house was small for 25 girls and two matrons.

Inge and Ruth spent the rest of the war in Windermere, in what Inge vaguely remembers as a largely happy time, despite one of the matrons being super strict. You can read more information about the hostel in the June 2022 issue of the AJR Journal, in an article written by Vivien Sieber, whose grandmother was one of the two hostel matrons. Vivien has also written a book, *Kino and Kinder*, published by i2i Publishing.

After an initial period at a small local school Inge was invited to attend an interview at Kelsick Grammar School in Ambleside. Although her reading and writing were not very good, she passed the intelligence test with flying colours and thus became a pupil at Ambleside.

Inge cannot remember many details about the school, but her overall impression is positive. She enjoyed the activities but has very little recollection of the other pupils. She admits to having never been one for reflection, possibly an unconscious response

to the traumas of her very early childhood.

Fast forward 80 years. Inge is now living in Southfields in south west London, in a flat that she rented with her partner Geoffrey, who sadly passed away earlier this year. She and Geoffrey – who were together for 17 years – had become very friendly with a younger couple, Cathie and Julian, who live in the next-door house.

Inge had mentioned her time in Windermere to Cathie, including her attendance at Kelsick Grammar, and Cathie had said, "Oh, I think my mother went to school there". However, because Cathie's mother, Angela, was four years older than Inge, it was assumed that they would not have been in the same class, and therefore would not have known each other. Inge never got the opportunity to meet Angela, who also recently passed.

A few weeks ago Cathie began sorting through her mother's belongings. She discovered a box of documents and other mementoes from Angela's own childhood, one of which was entitled 'Angela Morris Recollections'. She was astounded to see, at the bottom of the document, a handwritten reference to Inge.

The note read: **The next term (or the one after) some girls arrived. Inge Adamecz (who spoke German), Giselle Reynaud (French and some English), and the other German girl. I was pleased Inge was put next to me (I think because I had a south country accent and it was easier to understand than the broad dialect of the Lake District). Maths presented no**

unger self



Kelsick Grammar School

problems for Inge, she was very quick. We were told not to ask them questions, but they didn't want to talk anyway. They had grown used to keeping their mouths shut. I played rounders and running races with Inge, and she was good at games, but we never talked.

Cathie immediately showed the notes to Inge, who found it astonishing to see such a detailed reference to her younger self, although she is unable to recall any personal memories about Angela.

Inge stayed at Kelsick Grammar until the end of WW2, after which Inge and Ruth were moved from Windermere to another hostel in Manchester. There Inge attended a much bigger school where she struggled to catch up, leaving school without completing her leaving certificate. The hostel helped her to get a job as a secretary and she worked in Manchester for a couple of years until responding to a recruitment campaign for kibbutzniks in Israel. She loved Israel but soon discovered that kibbutz life wasn't for her, especially as the kibbutz where she was placed was particularly primitive. So after two years there, she moved to Tel Aviv, using her secretarial experience to secure a job with the American Point Four Program. When she decided to return to England four years later, the Program helped her find employment with the U.S. Navy in London. Inge stayed there for several years before moving into advertising. Working in two different agencies, she provided admin support to the international marketing teams working on the Ovaltine and Vauxhall accounts. By this time, she had met and

The next term (or the one after) some new girls arrived. Inge Adamsky (who spoke German), Gwille Raymond (French & spoke some English), & the other German girl I was pleased Inge was put next to me (I think because I had a 3. Coming across & it was easier to understand the the broad dialect of the L District. Inge quickly got Maths presented no problems & Inge, she was v. quick. We were told not to ask them questions, but they didn't want to talk anyway. They had grown used to keeping their mouths shut. I played rounders & running races with Inge, but we never talked.

Angela Morris's handwritten recollections about Inge



Cathie's mother, Angela Morris (nee Davies) as a teenager

married Elliott Hamilton, who worked in the shipping industry, for Cunard. Inge very much enjoyed travelling the high seas with him, especially after she retired from her own career and they moved to Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

Elliott passed away some twenty years ago, after which Inge was fortunate to meet Geoffrey Becde, a retired solicitor who had two grown-up sons from his first marriage. They decided to set up home in London, renting the apartment in Southfields where Inge still lives. Several years later, Cathie Tsoukkas and Julian Hardwick moved into the house next door and the two couples became firm friends.

Cathie's mother, Angela Morris, was born and largely raised in London. But during WW2 the family moved temporarily to Windermere, to escape the Blitz in the capital. Hence Angela was enrolled at Kelsick Grammar School and found herself sitting next to Inge, which is where our story started.



Cathie Tsoukkas (Angela's daughter) and Inge Hamilton today

Inge was astounded to realise the connection between herself and Cathie, who she describes as an "absolutely charming" neighbour and friend. As she told me, "It's been so many years, and I've lived and traveled in so many places, it seems unbelievable that I now find myself living next door to the daughter of the girl I sat next to at school eight decades ago."

She's also delighted to have been given this little window into a time in her life that she has largely forgotten. "You meet people who've kept up with their school friends for their whole lives, retelling their memories together. I've moved around so much, it's been hard to stay in touch with anyone. I've never used a computer or any form of social media, and I'm too old to start learning it now. So, it is incredible that these recollections about my school days literally found their way to my doorstep".

Jo Briggs

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.

RALPH LAND z"l

I was very saddened to read, in your September issue, of the death of Ralph Land, whom I first came across in a 1980s newspaper article about his work in Russia on behalf of this country's industry. When the Berlin Wall came down and I worked in BT Europe and then as an export promoter for the Department of Trade and Industry, I came across him professionally, helping him to establish and run several Central and Eastern European electronic bilateral groups. We hosted industry/government representatives from the region and organised trade missions, all with the aim of increasing the UK's exports to important emerging markets.

I admired him tremendously. He was a remarkable man.

Ivan Sloboda

GABRIELE KEENAGHAN

I recently heard AJR member Gabriele Keenaghan being interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. I would love her to know that my father worked with "Miss Cadbury", of the Quaker Family, in Vienna immediately before the outbreak of WW2. He actively helped Jews to escape the Nazis. He did this until he was advised by Miss Cadbury that he was in danger and that he had to leave.

At the time, my father was a roving correspondent with the English newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*, and was sending reports back to the UK.

I cannot imagine Gabriele's fear as she left Austria, or her distress at leaving her grandmother behind. I hope she is able to get some emotional closure by going back to Vienna as she is about to do. I am so grateful that, in however small a way, my father was courageous enough to help as he did.

The older I get, the more horrific I realise the rise of the Nazi party and their subsequent actions were. We must never be allowed to forget.

Jane John



Note from Editor: AJR member Gabriele Keenaghan was recently interviewed by fellow AJR member Etan Smallman, a respected journalist. Etan wrote a wonderful article which was published in *The Telegraph* on 1 September and can also be seen in full on <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/09/01/escaped-vienna-kindertransport-87-years-ago-aged-99-return/?msocid=0271679df3836cec1c7c70bcf2a06d21>

WHAT ABOUT ALBANIA?

The front page of your August issue included a map of various emigration destinations. But it leaves Albania blank of Jewish emigration.

For many years we had the wonderful (late) Dr Herman of Finchley as our family doctor.

He informed us that King Zog of Albania enabled him to emigrate to his country, and that he eventually became the King's personal doctor!

One wonders if any other refugees had the same luck...?

George Lazarus

CALLING FELLOW NORTHERNERS

As long-standing members of the AJR, living in the north of England, we have greatly benefited from having joined a discussion group, founded by Barbara

Dresner 20 years ago. Over the years we have shared our experiences of growing up as children of those traumatised by their experiences of the Holocaust, its antecedents and its consequences.

The group has helped many of us to understand and adjust to our inherited traumas, feelings of ambiguity and ambivalence about our origins, alongside a sense of 'not belonging', of being 'other'.

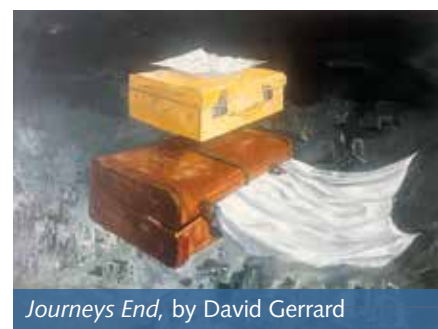
Time stands still for no-one, so we are now an informal network, meeting once or twice a year at one of our homes in Leeds, Manchester, Durham or York. We would welcome any newcomers, including spouses and the next generation, who feel they could benefit from this milieu. If interested, drop us a line!

Dr David Gordon

davidgordon1492@gmail.com

SUITCASES

I read with interest your article *Suitcases full of stories* (September) as I – an artist – painted this very subject as you can see in this image, which I have entitled *Journeys End*.



The painting was inspired by two suitcases I had. The larger, brown suitcase had also travelled the world, to Shanghai and then on to the USA, only to be returned when we were refused entry (that's another story). The smaller, white case was handed down to my wife and I still have it. It contained a newspaper from the time, which I have depicted as floating above.

Underneath the cases is a scene of devastation. This could be anywhere, but I had Japan in mind after the A-bomb

was dropped to end WW2. I hope your readers find the image interesting.

David Gerrard

I wonder if other readers know of the memoir called *Nine Suitcases* by Bela Szolt about the dreadful events in Hungary during the Holocaust?

It was translated and published here some 20 years ago, well reviewed by Tibor Fischer, but described by him as 'not for the squeamish'.

Steven Dornier

DR EMMA SHINDLER

I read the article about Dr Emma Shindler (September) with great interest as my grandmother was Rahel Liebeschuetz, who escaped Germany in 1939 and came to Britain. She was a lifelong AJR member. I knew there had been another woman doctor at Hamburg, but not who that was, so I am really glad that her story has been published.

Rachel Hall

I love that you had two great aunt stories to publish in the same edition. Unfortunately two important, and one unimportant, editorial slips appeared in the article about my aunt, Dr Emma Shindler.

To clarify: Emma began her medical studies in 1913, at a time when just three percent of medical students in Germany were female and Jewish. In January 1920, Emma completed her medical studies and was awarded a PhD for research describing the development of pigmentation of the Iris in the first year of life, at a time when 'racial science', of which eye colour was one element, was emerging.

The point being that Emma showed that there were physiological explanations for eye colour AGAINST the emerging theories about the superiority of certain 'racial' eye colours.

The third point is minor but irritating: my surname is SHINDLER, as typed on the bottom of this letter.

Jeremy Shindler



One of the postcards sent to Dawn's father, written in Yiddish

Redt ir Yidish?

Dawn Waterman had a personal incentive to learn Yiddish and wonders if other AJR members might want to chat...

Like many of us, I've been thinking about writing my dad's Jewish refugee story for years. The AJR's Writing Family History course, led by Nick Barlay, is proving tremendously helpful.

Some of my fellow participants are overwhelmed by the amount of original material they have. I have the opposite problem – all I have is a couple of photos and a few documents.

Particularly poignant are two yellowing postcards (dated June and July 1939) which were sent from Warsaw by my grandparents to my dad – care of his guarantor Mr Rosenberg – in Hackney, London. The cards are hard to read, the writing is cramped and crammed, and there's a feeling that there is so much more they wanted to say.

My dad, Hans, was born in Frankfurt am Main in April 1930 to an unmarried Jewish woman originally from Poland and was adopted, informally, by a Jewish couple, Dora and Max Wassermann, who lived in Wuppertal, north of Cologne, but who were also originally from Poland. As far as he was concerned, they were his parents.

He had been born in Germany so he couldn't be deported back to Poland with his parents following the *Polenaktion*. He was taken by Dora to a Jewish Children's Home in Cologne and then put on a Kindertransport, arriving here in May

1939. He was just nine years old. Dora followed Max to Poland where they both perished,

The postcards are written in German but one of them has an almost illegible postscript in Yiddish. I always wondered what it said, and why the writer had switched languages. Maybe it was the language in which they could really express their love? I started learning Yiddish, hoping that I might one day be able to read, and maybe even translate, these lines.

I noticed recently that the AJR has German and Hungarian speaking groups and wondered whether there was any interest among other AJR members in Yiddish? I'm involved with a charity called The Yiddish Café Trust which puts on various events to promote the use of Yiddish. It has run a monthly Yiddish Open Mic since 2018, and an annual Yiddish-only weekend, the *Sof-Vokh*, since 2022 (the Trust supports young people to attend with the aid of bursaries); in addition, a Yiddish Café Trust theatre troupe – the *London Yiddish Shpilars*, directed by the well-known writer and actor David Schneider – had its first performances this year (at JW3 and the Courtyard Theatre). Other Yiddish activities in London this summer included a *ZumerFest*, featuring both language lessons and klezmer music. There are several teachers offering to teach Yiddish, online and in person, at various levels.

Yiddish was the *mama-loshen* for so many of the Jewish refugees who came to this country before and after the war. Do get in touch with me, via trust@yiddishcafe.com, if you are interested.

REVISITING GLYNDEBOURNE

In August the AJR visited Glyndebourne to once again honour Sir Rudolf Bing.

Forced to flee Nazi Austria in 1934, Bing became General Administrator of Glyndebourne before going on to transform the Metropolitan Opera in New York into one of the world's leading opera houses during a 22-year tenure as its General Manager.

In 2016 the AJR unveiled a special blue plaque at Glyndebourne. Ten years later we brought together a group of Holocaust refugees, survivors, descendants, diplomats and members to celebrate the extraordinary legacy of one of the most influential refugee figures in the history of opera.

Among the distinguished guests were the Austrian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Bernhard Wrabetz, and his wife Joana Wrabetz, who joined AJR members in recognising Bing's enduring legacy and the lasting contribution of Jewish refugees to the cultural fabric of Britain.

The celebration was made even more special by the attendance of AJR members Maurice Peltz and Maria Ault, who will both celebrate their 100th birthdays this November. For Maria, the occasion held particular personal significance. Her mother, Henriette Bewersdorff, was a celebrated opera singer in Germany before the family fled Nazi persecution, making the anniversary celebration at Glyndebourne a poignant connection to



her family's musical heritage. Their presence served as a powerful reminder of the generation whose resilience, achievements and stories continue to inspire future generations.

Remarking on the occasion, Maria Ault said: "This has been a very special day for me. My mother was an opera singer before we escaped Nazi Germany, so being at Glyndebourne to honour Rudolf Bing feels like a wonderful tribute to the courage and achievements of so many Jewish refugees."

Guests gathered for a welcome reception before assembling at the AJR Blue Plaque, where they heard from Gus Christie, Executive Chairman of Glyndebourne and grandson of the festival's founders, John Christie and Audrey Mildmay. Speaking beside the plaque, Christie reflected on Rudolf Bing's pivotal role in shaping Glyndebourne during its formative years and his enduring influence on the international opera world.

Following the commemorative ceremony, guests attended Glyndebourne's acclaimed production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* by Richard

Strauss, conducted by Robin Ticciati with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

The AJR Blue Plaque Scheme was established by our former Trustee Frank Harding to recognise the exceptional achievements of Jewish refugees who rebuilt their lives in Britain after fleeing Nazi persecution. Since the first plaque was unveiled in 2013, the scheme has grown to include 19 plaques across the UK and internationally, commemorating pioneers in science, medicine, education, music, public life and humanitarian rescue.

Sir Rudolf Bing is uniquely honoured with two AJR Blue Plaques. Alongside the Glyndebourne plaque unveiled in 2016, a second plaque was unveiled in Edinburgh in 2017 recognising his role as founder of the Edinburgh International Festival.

The most recent addition to the scheme commemorates the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia and the Czech Refugee Trust at Goodenough College in London. The AJR expects to unveil its next Blue Plaque at Wigmore Hall in honour of the Amadeus Quartet.

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The AJR group outside the House

AJR AT THE HOUSE OF SECRETS

Each year, as part of our quarterly staff meetings, the AJR organises a staff trip somewhere with a meaningful connection to our work and the community we support. This year, the choice was an obvious one: the newly opened **House of Secrets at Trent Park**.

We were particularly fortunate to be joined by broadcaster and writer Robin Lustig, whose father was one of the German-speaking refugees recruited to work as a secret listener at Trent Park during the Second World War.

As a large group, we were warmly welcomed by Giuseppe Albano, Director of the museum, who began by giving us an introduction to the history of this extraordinary house.

From grand country house to wartime intelligence centre

The ground floor of Trent Park is magnificent. The restoration has brought the house back to its original character, with beautiful furnishings and interiors that give a real sense of the world of those who lived and socialised there before the war. Many belonged to the British aristocratic and royal circles of the time.

But behind this glamorous setting lies a very different story.

Moving through a hidden door, we began to discover how Trent Park was transformed during the war into a secret intelligence centre. German prisoners of war were brought to the house, where conversations were secretly recorded using listening devices installed throughout the building.

Down in the basement, a series of small rooms reveals how the secret listeners worked, monitored conversations and recorded what they heard. Seeing the spaces for ourselves brought this extraordinary chapter of wartime history to life.

A remarkable connection to the AJR

The connection between Trent Park and AJR is particularly poignant. Around 100 of the secret listeners were recruited from the German refugee community – people who had themselves fled Nazi persecution and ultimately played a role in helping Britain defeat Nazi Germany.

For an organisation whose history is so closely intertwined with the experiences of Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, this made our visit especially meaningful.

For the AJR team, it was a fascinating and memorable day – combining history, our own organisational heritage and the personal story of Robin Lustig's father.

A huge thank you to Robin for sharing his father's story with us, and to the team at Trent Park for bringing this remarkable history to life.



AJR's Head of Volunteer Services, Fran Horwich (seated) and the editor of the AJR Journal, Jo Briggs, try out their own secret listening



Robin Lustig in one of the M rooms, next to a locker marked with his father's name. When you open the locker you hear Robin's own voice telling Fritz's story

Now, the question is: how are we going to top this next year?

Karen Markham

The mysterious man who

Sir Nicholas Winton is rightly credited with the rescue of 669 children from Czechoslovakia. But



Martin Blake was played by Jonathan Price in the movie *One Life*. Unfortunately, the 1988 reunion depicted in this particular scene is fictitious, as Blake passed away in 1984.

Nicky Winton's work on the Kindertransport famously began with a call from his friend Martin Blake: 'I am off to Prague. I have a most interesting assignment, and I need your help. Come as soon as you can.' What was this assignment? And who was Martin Blake? We know he was played by Jonathan Pryce in the film *One Life*, in the scene where Nicky Winton meets him for lunch and asks what he should do with the scrapbook (something I have discovered could not have happened).

Martin Blake was born in 1903 and was educated at Winchester College, Dartmouth, and Gordon College, Khartoum, where he developed fluency in Arabic. In the 1930s, he taught at Westminster School for which, in the winter of 1937–38, he organised a skiing holiday for the pupils. His close friend Nicky Winton came as a guest.

The following winter, Blake forsook another school skiing trip to spend his Christmas holidays in Prague. He had joined the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC) and was part of Doreen Warriner and Maria Schmolka's team. But he did not stay long. We know that by 12 January 1939 he was back in London in time for

the new school term to begin. He was keen, however, to know how Nicky was getting on in Prague, and there are a couple of letters from Nicky to Martin in the Winton scrapbook. From these it is clear that, in his three or so weeks in Prague, Blake had become deeply involved in the BCRC's work to help rescue anti-Nazi democrats and adult Jews to Britain via Poland. It was Blake who told his friend Nicky that something should be done to help get the German Jewish children languishing in squalid refugee camps to safety.

The Martin Blake trail goes cold after his return to London. What was he doing before his trip to Prague? And what happened afterwards? He had been an active Labour councillor in London in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Before the war, Blake had become chair of the Westminster branch of the League of Nations Union (LNU). Against rearmament, against fascism, pro-peace, pro-refugee and in favour of a world legal order, the LNU had a vociferous voice in the pre-war period.

In May 1936, he chaired the first meeting of the Youth Group of the LNU Westminster Branch, held at his

school. The keynote speaker was Philip Noel-Baker. Interestingly, also on the platform with Blake was the journalist Clare Hollingworth, who later became a key player for the BCRC in Poland. The tenor of the meeting was how to avoid war. In October 1936, again on behalf of the LNU, Blake railed against rearmament: 'It is futile to just throw up hands in despair, expressing the hope that the catastrophe would not come in our lifetime. Our purpose is to make it quite clear that re-armament is not the right policy....' He put his faith in a revitalised League of Nations.

It was during this period that Blake first befriended Nicky Winton, a fellow left-winger passionately interested in world politics. Both young men were very sporty – Nicky a keen fencer and Blake a county-level tennis player (later in life he officiated at Wimbledon tournaments).

In February 1939, Martin wrote a feature in the *Journal of the League of Nations Union*: 'What They Have Done to the Czechs?'. In the magazine he was described as 'knowing Czechoslovakia and Germany well and has just returned from a visit to those countries.' His son, Hugo Blake, relates that his father played a very active role in Winton's

called in Nicky Winton

Mike Levy has unearthed new information about the man who inspired Winton's heroic efforts.

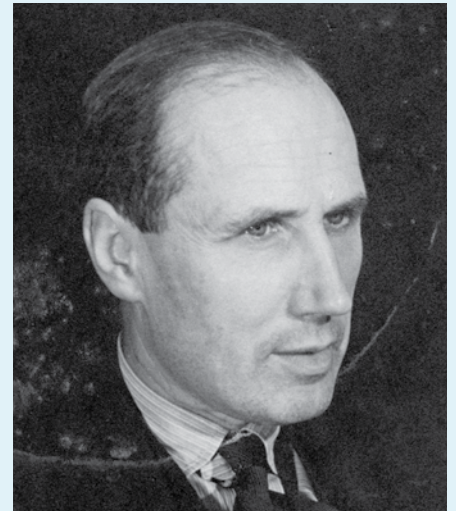
newly established children's section of the BCRC in the months leading up to the war. He worked closely with his friend and Winton's mother at their refugee headquarters in the family house. According to Hugo, one of Martin's roles was to visit offices in London to find new recruits to help as volunteers with Winton's organisation. It was on one of these forays that he met his wife-to-be, Barbara, who also became a linchpin of Winton's committee. According to their son, she never wanted to meet the children off the trains, as it would have been too upsetting. Blake remained very active with Nicky's organisation until late summer 1939, when he took up a post in Cairo. Hugo Blake is very keen to emphasise that his father's role in Winton's Kindertransport was far more active than the one phone call we read about in most history books.

During the war, he served as a senior representative of the British Council. In 1943, he was Director of the Foreign Division and was at a function in Lisbon when the British film star Leslie Howard gave a talk. A few weeks later, Leslie Howard's plane was shot down over the Atlantic. Coincidentally, on that same plane was Wilfrid Israel, de facto leader of the German Jewish community and an architect of the Kindertransport programme in Germany. Martin Blake was due to be on that plane, but another engagement kept him in Lisbon.

During the war, Blake kept up his links with Prague as the British Council's representative to the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile. In 1946, Blake and his young family drove to Prague, where he took up a role with the British Council. Czech secret police records describe Blake as 'Martin Blake, a friend of Czechoslovak people and its culture'.

The period between 1946 and 1949 is a little murky, with some contradictory evidence. According to Czech secret service records, he was still in Prague during the communist takeover in 1948. Then, he was recalled to London by 'Imperialist enemies at the British Embassy for he had proven himself to be a friend of the Party and the people'. And yet, the records show that the secret police also had their eyes on him: 'British Council director: Martin Blake. Main task: inform about and propagate England.'

Whatever the truth, Blake went on to work for the British Council as its senior representative in Jamaica and then Lisbon. In the latter part of his career, he was employed by Atlantic College in Wales before retiring to Lavenham in Suffolk. He died there in 1984, aged 81. This was four years before the fictionalised reunion between Martin Blake and Nicky Winton seen in *One Life*. According to Hugo, the friendship between the two men lasted throughout Blake's life. They never lost touch,



Martin Blake in 1946

Hugo says, and Nicky came to family celebrations.

Why so little was known about Martin Blake is a mystery in itself. Whatever the reason, it is time to put him firmly back into the story, for without Martin Blake, the Winton trains may never have left Prague.

Mike learned more about Martin Blakes's pre-war activities by searching newspaper archives and eventually getting an interview with his son Hugo at his London home. He also supplied the photograph of his father. In Prague, Martin Smok also helped by finding and translating Czech secret service documents about Blake's time there.

ART FOR ARTS SAKE

These lovely watercolours of pomegranates were all produced in our monthly Art Class, which last month took place just before Rosh Hashanah.

The class meets once a month, currently on a Monday, but probably moving to a Tuesday from January. Each month features a different theme, with recent classes focusing on flowers, abstract shapes and David Hockney portraits.

The cost is £10 per class, which covers tuition and all supplies, and all levels are welcome. For more information please contact karendiamond@ajr.org.uk



"Elephants on the landing...?"



Sharpcliffe Hall



The home of the former Leek Refugee Committee at 54 St Edward Street

Lesley Ford, who is the Project Coordinator for the UK Holocaust Map, shares some insights about the latest map entries.

One of the things I particularly enjoy about working on the UK Holocaust Map is the way that, once you start following one story, it so often leads you somewhere else. What initially look like separate records turn out to be connected by people, places, organisations and sometimes quite extraordinary coincidences. It is perhaps not surprising – refugee networks depended on connections – but it is lovely to see those connections emerging from the map.

Our two latest records are a perfect example, and researcher Mike Levy followed a lead from an article in this very Journal to mark this particular two-in-one story at locations on the map.

At 54 St Edward Street in Leek was the office of the **Leek Refugee Aid Committee**, established in 1939 following local appeals on behalf of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. Its chairman was Ronald Argles, a solicitor and active member of the Christian charity Toc H, who lived

with his wife Alice at nearby Sharpcliffe Hall.

And **Sharpcliffe Hall** itself is the subject of our second new record.

The Argles family were already involved in refugee work when, through Toc H and a refugee hostel in Manchester, they became involved in helping Jewish refugees. They helped Hedy Oppenheimer escape from Austria and take refuge with them. Before long they had sponsored around 30 refugee children, housing ten of them at Sharpcliffe Hall and finding homes for most of the others.

One of those children was four-year-old Leonard Kaufmann, who arrived in Britain without his parents. Sharpcliffe Hall must have seemed an enormous and rather frightening place to such a small boy. Leonard remembered that the house was so big that noises echoed through it. His wonderfully childlike conclusion was that he thought there were "elephants on the landing or something!"

Behind that charming memory, of course, was a much more serious story. Leonard's parents and siblings were separated from him, and his brother Kurt, sister Erica and grandparents were all murdered during the Holocaust. Meanwhile, at Sharpcliffe,

Alice Argles cared for the little boy so devotedly that she eventually hoped to adopt him. The relationship lasted throughout their lives.

And so, two apparently different map entries – a solicitor's office in Leek and a country house near Ipstones – turn out to be part of the same story.

There are many more connections waiting to be found. The map now contains a growing collection of records relating to refugee committees: the local groups, individuals and communities who organised practical help, raised money, found homes and supported refugees as they arrived in Britain.

Perhaps this is the month for you to have a look at those records? You never know where one might lead – or what unexpected connections you might uncover...

www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE HOLOCAUST

AJR member Simon James explores the risks AI poses to Holocaust history and calls on us all to help protect the truth.

My late father, a lover of history, used to say “History repeats itself” rather frequently. I am afraid it is happening now, and many of us have become unwitting participants.

Have you noticed that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is seemingly everywhere and that there is a massive push to get the public to use it, and build many new data centres to support its adoption and use? It is touted as a revolution as big as the industrial revolution – major tech companies are planning on spending \$37 billion on AI over the next few years.

However, there are many concerns over the risk of this technological revolution. AI has been developed and is controlled by relatively few large corporations, many of which have very strong political connections, very little accountability, and few or no guardrails. There is a strong relationship between the AI and social media platforms, with both platforms often being developed by the same technology companies. Many of the criticisms that are levelled at the use of social media are now being levelled rightly at AI.

There are of course many benign and even beneficial uses of AI, for example in medicine, where it is helping to recognise patterns from large learning models of x-rays or ECGs to identify disease which cannot be seen by humans. However, AI is also in the hands of those who wish to use it for their own ends, which may be quite evil.

Some social media users are using AI to generate false content, such as doctored videos, images and even textual data. There are many examples of so-called historical photographs being manipulated to generate ‘deepfakes’ – manufactured images and videos of people and/or events which never really existed. Very worryingly, these faked images are sometimes difficult to detect, which makes AI an essential but potentially sinister tool, especially for those who want to re-write history.

When it comes to the heritage of our own community, it is clear that some Holocaust deniers are embracing AI to attempt to re-write the history of the Shoah, creating fake imagery that supports some of the spurious claims that have been in dangerous circulation ever since social media was introduced.

I started seeing the dangerous effect of AI on social media some time ago. Featured within my social media feeds was a post that had been selected for me by an algorithm. It contained a ‘photograph’ of a woman prisoner and her two children, purportedly taken in Auschwitz. In the picture the woman had perfect and expensive clothes, make up and accessories. Her children were well dressed, well



fed and happy. The image was accompanied by a clumsily phased and completely inaccurate story about a real victim of the Holocaust. This misappropriation of a dead person's identity was outrageous and the post was clearly designed to give an inaccurate portrayal of a victim of the Holocaust and conditions in the camp.

Such images now abound on social media. I am not even sure if they are produced by a human using AI or generated automatically by a bot, with little or no human intervention. It is deeply shocking and concerning.

UNESCO provides a stern warning to us all of what is at stake for the preservation of historical truth in a digital era increasingly mediated by AI. It has identified five major concerns in relation to the Holocaust:

1. AI automated content may invent facts about the Holocaust
2. AI may falsify historical evidence: Deepfake Technology
3. AI models can be manipulated to spread hate speech
4. Algorithmic bias can spread Holocaust denial
5. Oversimplifying history

It is essential that we – the descendants of those who lived, genuine experience – join the fight to preserve the true history of the Shoah and challenge bias and falsehoods wherever we see them. It is becoming increasingly difficult to trust anything you see online or in the media, which is partly the aim of those denying history – the subversion of truth itself. Sadly, we must now be on guard always, and question the provenance, intent, factual accuracy and truthfulness of everything we see online and in the media.

My late father did say that history repeats itself. He was right. In the early days of Nazism, the media was used by the Nazis to destroy the truth, to lie and whip up hatred. It is now possible to do this at the touch of a button. Let's make sure that AI is our servant, and not our master.

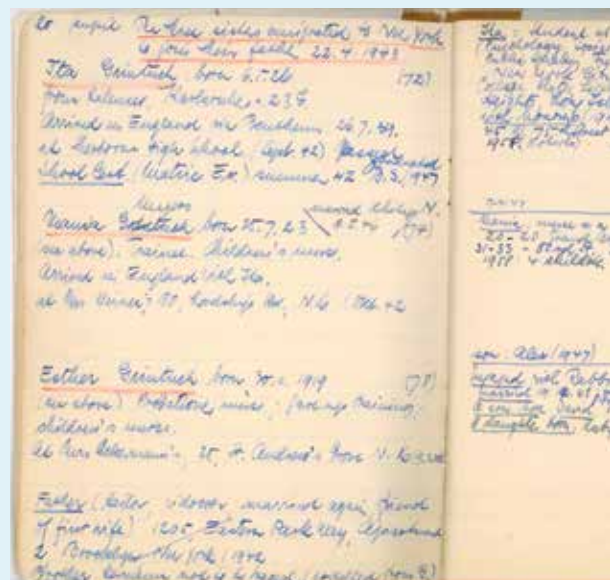
Note from Editor: if you come across any images relating to the Holocaust that you are concerned about please send a link to enquiries@ajr.org.uk and we can check them out for you.

WITH ETERNAL THANKS TO MRS.

Adam Schalit
specialises in
nationality and
family history
research. Yet every
time he tried to
discover more about
his own family's
history he hit a void.
Until he connected
with the AJR...



The family posing outside Jack's clothing shop in Berlin in the early 1930s, exact date unknown



Like many children and grandchildren of survivors, I grew up knowing almost nothing about my grandmother's story. Her escape from Germany; her flight to America. It was reduced to its most basic dimensions. With little to go on, I envisioned fantastical scenes informed only by the sainted name of her rescuer, 'Mrs. Landmann'.

This memory loomed large in my family. I never met my grandmother, who died years before I was born. My grandfather Max spoke of Mrs. Landmann with great reverence, a small pause following every mention, imbuing her name with quiet solemnity, a privilege he reserved for her and my grandmother alone.

Things known and unknown

I had always 'known' that my grandmother and her sisters were rescued by Mrs. Landmann via Kindertransport. Though my present-day work includes a wide breadth of Shoah research, I had hardly delved into the story of my own grandma's survival. The much-abridged version in my mother's retelling left many details spotty, bolstered by a few well-worn anecdotes, stories of loss, echoes that spoke to a community destroyed.

What I could prove was limited: my grandmother, Ita Grintuch, was born 1926 in Zaklikow, Poland, the youngest of three girls and one boy. Her parents, Rehla and Itzhik, known affectionately as

Jack, a tailor, relocated the family to Berlin in the late 1920s. They proudly posed for photographs in front of the small clothing shop Jack operated. *Tailoring: Women's and Men's Fashions*, its sign read. They took an apartment at Kolbergerstraße no. 18. It was to be their last address.

I knew that a few people of remarkable courage and kindness had saved and sheltered my grandmother and her sisters in England before they emigrated to the United States to reunite with Jack, who also survived. The rest of their family was not as fortunate.

But all I had were *bubbe meise* (literally translated: old wives' tales) and my mother's inherited Britishisms to go on – her half-dozen cups of Earl Grey tea each day; the book of the *40 Good Night Tales* she would read me to sleep.

Futile attempts

Searches for Ita and her sisters Esther and Manya in publicly available Kindertransport lists proved futile. Yad Vashem, the Kindertransport Association, no one had them. Without something more substantive, my family's stories would remain just that: stories.

In the fall of 2025, after exhausting other resources, something struck me. What if I was looking at this all wrong? The Kindertransport is a parable of unthinkable choices, but also one of

triumph and of light amidst unimaginable darkness. I was looking in the wrong place.

I turned to the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), one of the foremost repositories of German Jewish life and culture, founded by luminaries such as Rabbi Leo Baeck, Martin Buber, and Hannah Arendt. If the files survived somewhere, it stood to reason, perhaps they were in New York at the LBI.

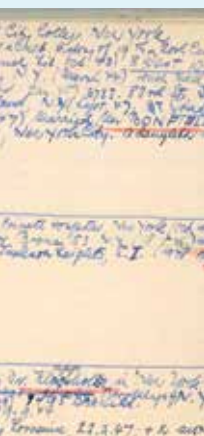
The first breakthrough

I typed 'Landmann, Elisabeth' and hit 'return'... Nothing. I followed with my second-line query, 'Grintuch, Ita'. There it was. Eureka.

Scores of yellowed pages filled with the handwriting of Elisabeth Landmann herself. Her *Refugee Book*, in which she recorded over 60 children whom she rescued. The names are underlined in red pen. Their birth dates, dates of departure to England, their parents' names and fates, all jotted neatly. Many notes are stark in their brevity: 'Suicide', 'Murdered', 'Survived'.

Unlike many rescuers, Mrs. Landmann's interest in the lives she saved didn't stop there. Until her death several decades later, Elisabeth Landmann kept track of every single person she had saved, following them throughout their life arcs, from the sacred to the mundane.

LANDMANN – AND THE AJR



An extract from Mrs Landmann's records



The three sisters, taken during their stay in England. Ita is on the right



Ita on her graduation from nursing school. She would go on to become the director of nursing instruction at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York

Mrs. Landmann had etched these cold facts of the Kinder's lives alongside the details of her own extraordinary heroism, but they were no less remarkable: the education and training they achieved, their social relationships, birthdays and anniversaries, the names of their children. Each one, ultimately a victory against the Nazis.

I realised dozens of families outlined in Landmann's own hand may have no idea where this missing piece had ended up some eighty-odd years later. Depending on one's definition of 'rescued', Mrs. Landmann may also have saved as many as twenty adults, some of them the parents of Kinder for whom she helped to arrange departure papers and exit routes.

The search for more evidence

Mrs. Elisabeth Landmann was born at the end of the nineteenth century in Silesia to a British mother and a German father. A staunch woman who refused to let her own son Christopher be sent to the Hitler Youth, her first act of rescue was to secure his escape to England.

She then turned her attention to the thousands of Jewish children in Berlin, who, by 1938, lacked a similar escape route. She organised all aspects of their documentation and departure, including making contact with parents forced to make an impossible decision.

Decades later, in the 1960s, some of the Kinder Mrs. Landmann rescued began lobbying for her inclusion as Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem, a list to which she was officially added in 1967, when the committee at Yad Vashem identified eight children rescued by Mrs. Landman. Ample grounds for the honour, if incomplete. Yet, the extent of her work had gone largely forgotten. Now, with these 60+ names coming to light, Landmann's place in Holocaust history is secure.

Given all that, one major issue remained: where were the official Kindertransport records relating to her work? Searches in all the usual places revealed nothing. No source, no independent corroboration, just an unbelievable story and a notebook with names underlined in red.

Bingo!

While working with Yad Vashem to record the previously unnamed Kinder and more fully document Mrs. Landmann's rescue work, I stumbled on a social media post from the AJR. My jaw dropped. It seemed just as I was documenting Mrs. Landmann's work, the AJR's own Dr. Amy Williams had found the smoking gun.

For years Dr. Williams had been searching for a tranche of files she had seen reference to earlier in her career. If found, they would affirm the obvious link. In order for the Kinder to reach England,

they required permits to transit through the Netherlands, i.e. Dutch visas. That visa process surely must have left a trail. It had to...

At Yad Vashem, deep in the stacks collecting the metaphorical dust of history, the AJR's Resident Kindertransport Scholar found exactly what she was looking for: files containing original records of Dutch transit visas issued to Kindertransport refugees for passage through the Hook of Holland, before they would board ferries to Britain.

There it was, my grandmother's name, neatly typed alongside hundreds of other refugees: *Ita Grintuch*.

These records had been out there, waiting for over 80 years to be found.

Joining the dots

After connecting with Dr. Williams and the AJR, and receiving the files the AJR held on my grandmother's family, the puzzle fit perfectly. One body of surviving records documented Mrs. Landmann's work; the other documented the children's journey alongside their fellow refugees.

Connecting with other survivors and locating additional testimony added still more detail, the AJR providing rich context and texture to what had

Continued on page 16

With eternal thanks to Mrs. Landmann – and the AJR (cont.)

otherwise been a mystery.

Before stumbling on Mrs. Landmann's *Refugee Book*, much of Ita's past was largely a myth to me: a series of stories lacking facts and figures, a blank journal with no dates. It was frozen in the understanding I had as a boy, first learning that my grandmother was a 'survivor', a child's view of another child's rescue.

A full dossier and a full heart

Through my work, I've put together many research dossiers for survivor families, page counts sometimes numbering well into the thousands. Yet

for Ita, it was zero. Every time I opened the folder marked 'Family', the weight was evident. I felt like the proverbial shoemaker's son, going barefoot on the Berlin streets my family once walked.

With Dr. Williams's discoveries, the work of the AJR, Yad Vashem, and the papers of Elisabeth Landmann herself at the LBI, that folder is filling rapidly. But there are likely countless other families still missing the same part of their own story.

By the end of the war, Grandpa Jack survived numerous deportations and reunited with his daughters in New York. Ita's brother Hermann was deported and murdered in one of the earliest such Aktions. It would not be hyperbole to say that without the heroic work of Elisabeth Landmann and others, Ita and her sisters may not have survived.

In the end, these seemingly fantastical family stories I dismissed as *bubbe meise* were true. We just had no idea how much of the truth had already been forgotten. Of that, I am living proof.

If the names Mrs. Elisabeth Pauline Landmann or Mrs. Alice Atkinson are familiar to you, or if your family remembers connections to St Mary's School / Sherborne / Dorset / Quakers, please reach out to me at adam@passportoptions.com, or to Dr. Amy Williams at the AJR via enquiries@ajr.org.uk. Our hope is to reconnect as many families as possible with a history that has been obscured both by the sheer enormity of the surviving record and by the modesty of many of the people responsible for these rescues.

REVIEW

THE RENOIR GIRLS: A HIDDEN HISTORY OF ART, WAR & BETRAYAL Catherine Ostler SIMON & SCHUSTER UK

Nobody could dream how much the world would change when Pierre-Auguste Renoir painted two young sisters from a Jewish banking dynasty at the height of the Belle Epoch in Paris. The charming double portrait was to become one of the Impressionist artist's most celebrated works. It shows Alice Cahen d'Anvers aged four in pink and Elisabeth, six, in blue at their society home in the city's grand 8th arrondissement. This was in 1881 the same year as his much-acclaimed portrait of their older sister Irène was exhibited at the Paris Salon.

Soon the family owned and splendidly restored Château de Champs-sur-Marne, former home of Madame de Pompadour. Theirs was a glamorous whirling life of race days, opera nights, sun-soaked chateaux, charity functions and parties as well as salons filled with fashionable people interested in art, music and conversation. The five children of matriarch Louise Cahen d'Anvers were born into Paris's golden age, born after the Franco-Prussian

War in 1871. But, as author Catherine Ostler explains, the "incessant fripperies and glamour" would finish abruptly with the First World War. Unease settled in with the infamous Dreyfus Affair, centering on the wrongful conviction of Alfred Dreyfus for treason, bitterly dividing society and increasing antisemitism.

In 1898, Alice married British aristocrat and soldier Charles Townshend – later a Major General – and unlike her sisters' marriages, hers endured. For her wedding she wore "a delicious toilette of white satin with a silk muslin fichu and a trail of orange blossom under a snowfall of white tulle". This was from Morin-Blossier "an extraordinarily expensive couture house." Her family also glittered in wonderful clothes and certainly Ostler, former editor of *Tatler*, is at her best describing the period. But, after war started in 1918, everything was shattered. The girls' two brothers Robert and Charles fought bravely and Irène's son Nissim de Camondo was mentioned in dispatches for courage before being killed during aerial combat. Renoir himself had two sons who were badly injured. Society ladies and relatives led by Alice – who like her husband was brave – rallied to the war effort as nurses. She was awarded a *Croix de guerre* for her work at the front.

Afterwards life eventually started to

settle before clouds gathered again with the Nazi invasion. By then, Louise and her husband Louis had already died in their eighties. Nobody was safe under hostilities and the family's many branches of aunts, uncles and cousins were scattered in different directions under the occupation and Vichy France. All faced an accelerating campaign to persecute Jews, even those who had adopted other religions.

By then Elisabeth, the girl in blue, was already twice divorced with her third marriage plans halted after her fiancé died of war wounds. Although a long converted Catholic, this was not enough and frail Elisabeth was betrayed in hiding. Wealth and distinction meant little and the family also faced other losses including Irène's daughter Béatrice, her ex son-in-law Léon Reinach and their two children Fanny and Bertrand. They all tragically perished in Auschwitz after being deported from Drancy Internment Camp. Irène and her daughter by her second marriage, Claude – known as Pussy – survived in plain sight. Diminutive Alice again showed her mettle but suspense deepened as this book was finished with new revelatory evidence uncovering light on longstanding rumours about her parenthood.

Janet Weston

ANOTHER PEAK INTO WITTGENSTEIN'S POKER

On 25 October 1946, eighty years ago, an extraordinary event took place in Cambridge, involving two of the most famous philosophers of the 20th century, Karl Popper and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Both were from Vienna and both were Jews from assimilated families who could not return to Vienna after the Anschluss in 1938.

Popper had spent the war in New Zealand before coming to Britain, where he spent most of his distinguished career at the LSE. Wittgenstein, arguably the more famous and influential of the two, had studied at Cambridge between 1911-13, and then returned to Cambridge in 1930, where he spent most of the rest of his life, before dying of prostate cancer.

The furious ten-minute argument between the two men is the subject of a superb book, *Wittgenstein's Poker*, written by David Edmonds and John Eidinow, and published by Faber twenty-five years ago, in 2001. It is one of the best books on modern philosophy, as well as on the impact of Jews from central Europe on British culture.

Eighty years ago the Cambridge Moral Science Club – a weekly discussion group for philosophers, students and guests, held one of its regular meetings at King's College. Guest speaker Dr. Karl Popper asked 'Are There Philosophical Problems?'. Wittgenstein was in the audience, alongside Bertrand Russell and other eminent figures.

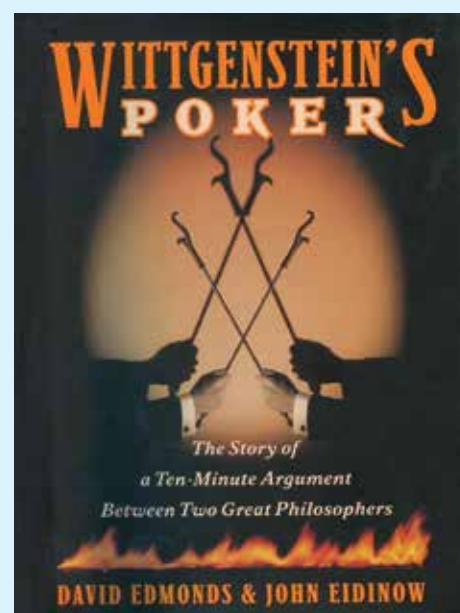
News of what followed travelled far and wide. Popper later wrote, 'In a surprisingly short time I received a letter from New Zealand asking if it was true that Wittgenstein and I had come to blows, both armed with pokers.'

In their book Edmonds and Eidinow wrote that 'Popper put forward a series of what he insisted were real philosophical problems. Wittgenstein summarily dismissed them all. Popper later recalled that Wittgenstein "had been nervously playing with the poker", which he used "like a conductor's baton to emphasise his assertions", and when a question came up about the status of ethics, Wittgenstein challenged him to give an example of a moral rule. "I replied: 'Not to threaten visiting lecturers with pokers.'" Whereupon Wittgenstein, in a rage, threw the poker down and stormed out of the room, banging the door behind him.'

Some witnesses gave very different versions of what happened that evening. 'To Stephen Toulmin, sitting only six feet away,' according to *Wittgenstein's Poker*, 'nothing at all out of the ordinary is occurring; nothing that in hindsight would merit the term "incident"'. According to Toulmin, Popper only made his famous remark about not threatening people with pokers after Wittgenstein had stormed out.

Another famous witness was Isaiah Berlin, then an Oxford don who had earlier that year been awarded a CBE. In a two-part interview for BBC2, shown immediately after his death, Berlin told his biographer, Michael Ignatieff, what he had seen.

One reason this event attracted such attention then and since, according to



Edmonds and Eidinow, was that 'By 1946, Wittgenstein apart, the high noon of Cambridge philosophy had passed.' The centre of gravity moved to Oxford and, crucially, started shifting from central European emigres to English-born philosophers, though an obvious exception was Isaiah Berlin, who also had an interesting encounter with Wittgenstein at the Moral Sciences Club, albeit much less combative.

A further reason for the fascination with this encounter between the two Viennese philosophers was that Wittgenstein was so famous and attracted numerous disciples, especially in Cambridge. Popper was more of a maverick, not because he was a Jewish refugee, but because he was so difficult. There was a well-known joke that he should have renamed his famous book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, *The Open Society By One of its Enemies*.

In his review of *Wittgenstein's Poker* in *The New Yorker*, Adam Gopnik wrote, 'Though Wittgenstein is the star of *Wittgenstein's Poker*, Popper is, I think, meant to be its hero: while Wittgenstein's puzzles made for the bigger reputation, Popper's problems presented the bigger ambition. Yet Popper suffered from the shortest half-life, and wore the smallest halo, of any great thinker who has ever lived.'

David Herman

OBITUARIES

Francoise ROBERTSON

Born: 10 September 1939, Brussels

Died: 6 July 2026, Edinburgh



Francoise had an unusually adventurous life. Born just one week after war was declared, she was eight months old when the Germans invaded Brussels. Her father George joined the Belgium army while her mother, Nan, carried Francoise to the coast, in the hope of finding a boat to England.

With them were hordes of other refugees, all trying to escape the invading forces. They were subjected to many air raids. On one occasion, Nan threw herself and Francoise into a ditch, to avoid a bomb, and on another, they left a small hotel a few hours before it was destroyed. Because Francoise was such a smiley and bubbly baby, Nan had less difficulty than others obtaining food and milk on their travels.

Their perilous adventures are too many to describe here but were well recorded by Nan. Five weeks after leaving Brussels, they boarded a boat at St Malo, eventually arriving at Francoise's grandparents' house in Birmingham.

Meanwhile, George had been captured several times and sent to concentration camps, but managed to escape each time, eventually hiding in the south of France, where he worked with the French resistance. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre at the end of the war, at which point he rejoined his young family (I had been born in 1943, four years after Francoise) in England.

The family moved to a semi-detached Victorian house in South Croydon in 1946. We were both brought up in the Jewish faith yet within a predominantly

Christian suburban community, which sometimes made life challenging.

As she grew older, Francoise grew in confidence. She attended Croham Hurst Girls School, where our mother taught English and French. Francoise was a very attractive girl and keen on sports, particularly tennis, hockey and lacrosse. It was the era of Elvis Presley, and Francoise relished the sense of disturbance and revolt, as the family moved from somewhat austere, to more relaxed times.

Our parents were much affected by their wartime experiences and, following a business failure, our father went away to find other work, and became increasingly absent. Francoise and I became temporarily estranged from him. Our parents divorced when Francoise was sixteen. These difficult times influenced her adolescent years; she became defiant, and there was much slamming of doors, and staying out late at night.

After leaving school, she attended a teachers' training college, in Twickenham, to work in primary schools. Whilst there, she met her first husband, Derek Wood, and they married when she was 22 years old, in 1961, holding the reception in the garden of our house in Croydon. They began life together in a modern house in Hemel Hempstead, where Jonathan was born. Later she moved to Peterborough, where Julian was born. She divorced, remarried Ian Pettigrew, and Gordan was born. A few years later they all moved to Edinburgh.

When we were both older, we reconnected with our father, who was living in Paris with his second wife, Janine, from whom we gained two French stepsisters, Beatrice and Aline. We enjoyed some memorable seaside holidays in the south of France with our French family. Francoise' love of fashion developed from these experiences, and

her continental roots.

Francoise was an attentive and dutiful daughter to our mother, and a very loving mother, and grandmother. During her years in Edinburgh, she divorced and married again, this time to Grahame. She became fully involved in the social, religious, and cultural life of the city, frequently attending a wide variety of events at The Fringe, ranging through music, dance, theatre, opera, art and comedy. She also worked tirelessly in schools, to explain to younger generations the history of the holocaust, a tribute to her early life experiences, and those of our parents.

Despite the age and geographical distance, between us, Katie and I managed to meet with Francoise many times on her visits to London, and on family occasions, such as birthdays, weddings, and funerals, including those, sadly, for our mother, our aunt Betty, our uncle Bob, and more recently, her late husband, Grahame.

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Wilem FRISCHMANN

Born: 27 January 1931, Ungvar, Czechoslovakia (now in Ukraine)

Died: 20 August 2026, London



Wilem Frischmann became one of the UK's most innovative post-War architects, responsible for a number of London's best-known skyscrapers.

Thirteen-year-old Wilem and his family were deported from Czechoslovakia in 1944 to Auschwitz, where his parents and younger sister were murdered. He and his brother survived a death march, before he arrived as a 14-year-old in the UK at the end of the War. He studied building technology at Imperial College London before writing his PhD thesis on how it was possible to build tall buildings on clay, something that architects had been reluctant to plan on the clay that is so prevalent in London.

He joined Pell and Partners in 1958, and become their chairman ten years later, after which the company was renamed Pell Frischmann. Against the thinking of the time, he was convinced that it was indeed possible to build tall buildings on London's clay and he designed the plans for central

London's 34-storey 117-metre Centre Point tower, to be built alongside Tottenham Court Road station above the tube tunnels and sewers.

After the successful building of the skyscraper in 1966, and the initial hostile reaction that it provoked, it is now a listed building and an established part of London's landscape, incorporating luxury flats. He then worked on many other tall buildings in London, including the 47-storey NatWest Tower (now renamed Tower 42). Its successful and enduring construction in London's clay pointed the way for other architects to follow suit and design many other skyscrapers in the capital, including the Gherkin, the Cheese Grater, the Walkie Talkie in the City, and those in Canary Wharf.

Wilem was asked to produce a report into why part of Ronan Point, a residential tower block in East London, had collapsed following a gas explosion in 1968, killing four residents. His findings led to new building regulations and the ban of certain materials used in panels.

Wilem's ambitions knew few limits. In the 1970s he proposed a cross-Channel bridge which included a 12-lane motorway with buildings in the middle. He also predicted that one day improvements in building technology would enable two mile-high skyscrapers to be built, in each of which hundreds of thousands of people would live.

Pell Frischmann grew into a global company, designing tall buildings far and wide around the world. It was also called upon to help design the large concrete and steel casing to seal off the ruined nuclear reactor at Chernobyl in 1986.

Wilem settled and lived in Twickenham. His wife Sylvia predeceased him and he is survived by their two children. Daughter Justine achieved fame independently in a very different field, that of pop music during the BritPop era. She co-founded the band Suede in 1988, before leaving it in 1991 to start her own band Elastica, which was voted best new band in the Brit awards, and whose first LP became the UK's fastest-selling debut album, selling over a million copies. Justine was also the long-term partner of Damon Albarn of the band Blur from 1991 to 1998. She now works as an artist in USA. She has commented *"I think my approach and aesthetics reveal internal struggles and speak to my family origins and history"*

(interview in *The Make*, May 2012).

Wilem's achievements endure visibly in today's London skyline and in the new ways of designing tall buildings which he devised.

David Wirth



Centre Point, London

LOOKING FOR?

MUMBAI

Adam Sharp is researching his family genealogy hoping to learn more about the life of Jewish refugees in Mumbai during WW2. They included Adam's great-uncle, I am. My great-uncle survived WWII – he escaped Poland via Lithuania, Japan, Burma, and settled in Mumbai in 1942, where he stayed until 1947.

jr.citizen@gmail.com

SS NAVEMAR FROM SEVILLE

Beatrice Fraenkel has been fascinated by our recent articles on Breslau as that is where her family came from. Her mother

left as a 17 year old in September 1939 and was able to travel by train to the UK, to be placed with a non-Jewish family in south Manchester. Her two younger sisters were taken to Palestine by an uncle where they eventually settled permanently. However, her grandmother, then 49, and great-grandmother, then 79, boarded the SS Navemar in Seville on 7 August 1941 to join relatives in New York. Beatrice is curious to know how they might have travelled from Breslau to Seville, and book a transatlantic passage. She would love to hear from anyone whose relative was on the same ship.

beatrice.fraenkel@me.com

WHAT'S ON

www.ajr.org.uk/ajr-events/

Across the UK and online, the AJR offers a vibrant programme of events designed to inform, connect, and inspire. Our programme is updated regularly, so this is just a selection – see our website for full details of our latest programme.

OCT 15  Kinder Lunch with guest speaker Etan Smallman, Journalist and 4G AJR member Etan will share a fascinating perspective from the next generations of the Kinder story. 📍 North London Venue	OCT 22  Dr Amy Williams – The Czech Kindertransports Amy will share her latest research about the children who escaped from Czechoslovakia and their remarkable journeys to and within Britain. 📍 Online	OCT 28  AJR Special Oxford Event Join us to visit Christ Church College in Oxford with lunch in the Great Hall followed by a private viewing of ancient Jewish manuscripts. 📍 Oxford	NOV 10  AJR's Annual Kristallnacht Service 2026 With Kindertransportee Inge Gershfield; Jon Pearce MP, UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues; and a delegation from the Union of Jewish Students. 📍 North West London
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ENGAGE WITH US ONLINE

DATE AND TIME	TOPIC	ZOOM ID
Monday 5 October @ 4pm	AJR Monthly Quiz – test your knowledge	852 9442 7759
Tuesday 13 October @ 4pm	Alan Aziz – The history of Technion and Israel	869 6745 9561
Monday 14 October @ 4pm	Porozmawiajmy po polsku – Lets speak Polish!	835 8252 6036
Tuesday 20 October @ 4pm	Rachel Meller – Author of <i>The Box With The Sunflower Clasp</i>	878 3935 9905
Monday 26 October @ 4pm	Alistair Hodgson – The De Havilland Aircraft Company	863 5873 3108
Wednesday 28 October @ 4pm	Martin Winstone – Murderers among us: Holocaust perpetrators in the UK	811 1691 0437
Every Monday @ 10am	German conversation	882 8761 1039
Every Monday @ 10.30am	Yoga and seated exercise	852 4688 9439
Every Tuesday @ 11am	Shelley's Exercise class	884 6694 5622
Alternate Wednesdays @ 11am	Poetry Please	882 4622 5393
Alternate Wednesdays @ 2.30pm	Dementia Carer Support Group	wendy@ajr.org.uk

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DATE AND TIME	LOCATION	CO-ORDINATOR
Thursday 1 October Morning	Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 5 October Morning	Art Class	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 7 October Lunchtime	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 8 October Afternoon	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Thursday 8 October Afternoon	Newcastle	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 12 October Lunchtime	Stanmore/Edgware (The Power of Music)	Ros Hart
Wednesday 14 October Morning	Golders Green (Bob Sinfeld – No Laughing Matter)	Ros Hart
Monday 19 October Lunchtime	Brighton	Ros Hart
Tuesday 20 October Lunchtime	North Lancs	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 21 October Lunchtime	South Manchester	Michal Mocton
Thursday 22 October Lunchtime	North London	Ros Hart
Monday 26 October Lunchtime	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Wednesday 28 October Lunchtime	Kingston	Ros Hart



Scan here to see all our events

Contact your local co-ordinator for more details about local events:

Agnes Isaacs	Scotland and Newcastle	agnes@ajr.org.uk	07908 156 361
Ros Hart	London and South East	roshart@ajr.org.uk	07966 969 951
Karen Diamond	London and South East	karendiamond@ajr.org.uk	07966 631 778
Michal Mocton	Northern England	michalmocton@ajr.org.uk	07966 886 535

Check your inbox for our regular newsletters containing latest details of upcoming events