

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Kindertransport MBE for Bertha Leverton

Germany awards a further honour for her contribution to education

Ronald Channing

Bertha Leverton, founder of the reunion of Kindertransport, has been awarded the MBE for services to the Jewish people. She has also been honoured by Germany's prestigious Foundation for Democracy and Tolerance for her many tours to address students and teachers on her childhood experiences.

Born Berta Engelhard in Munich in 1923, the eldest of three children, Bertha enjoyed a happy childhood imbued with Jewish religious tradition. With Hitler's accession to power, it became commonplace for mobs to attack the children as they went to and from their Jewish school. Following Kristallnacht, her father determined that Berta, her brother Theo and her sister Inge should join the Kindertransport to England. They arrived at Dovercourt camp near Harwich in a bitterly cold winter and she was sent to a childless couple in Coventry who treated her as an unpaid maid. Thankfully, her parents escaped and were reunited with their children in England in 1944. Berta married in 1945 and had three children.

In 1988 Bertha consulted the archives of the *Jewish Chronicle* to discover her own history and resolved to organise a reunion of Kindertransportees, reaching many by speaking on BBC Woman's Hour. More than 1,000 delegates attended. Conferences took place also in Jerusalem in 1994 and London in 1999, when a commemorative plaque was unveiled in the House of Commons by Speaker Betty Boothroyd. The movement was



Germany's Interior Minister Otto Schilly, presenting Bertha Leverton with the Foundation for Democracy and Tolerance award in Berlin, commends her for speaking about her experiences on tours of schools, universities and other centres in Germany. She was awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Germany in 1993.

welcomed into the AJR, whose support has ensured its active continuation.

Bertha continues to play a leading role, keeping in touch with members by telephone and editing the *Kindertransport Newsletter*. In recent years she has compiled and co-edited *I Came Alone*, a compendium of Kindertransport children's stories, supported a teaching pack for schools, inspired and appeared in the Oscar-award-winning film *Into the Arms of Strangers*, organised a belated Barmitzvah ceremony for the Kinder, and responded to Chief Rabbi Sacks and Home Secretary David Blunkett at the unveiling of the Kindertransport statue organised by World Jewish Relief at Liverpool Street Station in London.

On the day the Queen's birthday honours were announced, Bertha received a card of congratulations from Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, and Rabbi Cohen expressed to her the delight of her fellow members at Stanmore Synagogue. 'It is a great honour which is meant not only for me', Bertha said, 'but will be shared by all the Kinder worldwide who were saved by Britain.'

The General Settlement Fund - a breakthrough, of sorts

The signing of a £12.5m (€18.2m) accord at the end of May between the Austrian government and the Austrian Jewish community has once again shifted the focus in the long-running saga of the distribution of monies from the Austrian General Settlement Fund.

In accepting this sum, made available from the residual monies of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund established to pay compensation to victims used as slave and forced labourers during the Nazi era, the Austrian Jewish community has agreed to drop its support for a lawsuit - *Whiteman v Republic of Austria* - being heard in the United States. As part of the arrangement, the Austrian Jewish community has also agreed to withdraw the claims it has itself submitted to the General Settlement Fund.

The withdrawal of the Austrian Jewish community's support for the US litigation could pave the way for the suit to be dismissed altogether and - if that were to happen - Austria would have secured the prerequisite end to litigation called for in the Washington Agreement of January 2001. The Washington Agreement provides for the General Settlement Fund, which in turn will provide compensation for a comprehensive range of properties and personal valuables expropriated from Austrian Jewry during the Holocaust.

In the event that the *Whiteman* lawsuit is withdrawn or dismissed, attention will turn once again to the Austrian National Fund, which is processing applications to the General Settlement Fund. While the National Fund is only part of the way through investigating and assessing the almost 20,000 claims it has received, its General Secretary, Hannah Lessing, has assured applicants that payments will begin once all claims have been processed. Following the agreement between the government and the

(Continued on page 2)

Austrian Jewish community, she said: 'We will do the utmost we can to have as many claims as possible ready the moment there is legal closure [i.e. an end to litigation].'

In a letter to the trustees of the National Fund, several Austrian survivors have already demanded an increase in the number of staff available to the National Fund so that applications can be handled swiftly and with the necessary priority. The letter also calls for Austria to signal its intent by making an advance payment to those who have applied to the General Settlement Fund.

Responding to the agreement with the country's Jewish community, Austria's Foreign Minister Ursula Plasnik said: 'It is my great concern that elderly victims receive payment before the end of their lifetime. Already at this juncture further consideration should be given to how payments to the claimants can be made as quickly as possible. Even though all claims have not yet been assessed, I am in favour of giving immediate consideration to possible ways and means of realising advance payments to entitled persons.'

Although not impinging on the General Settlement Fund, a separate US lawsuit contesting the ownership of paintings by the artist Gustav Klimt has been voluntarily withdrawn. The plaintiff, Maria Altmann, and the defendant, the Austrian government, have agreed to participate in a tribunal in Austria and have pledged not to appeal against the final decision.

With the withdrawal or dismissal of these lawsuits, there will be no impediments to Austria fulfilling its moral and legal obligation to pay compensation to survivors worldwide for the material losses suffered during the Holocaust era.

Michael Newman

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Germania Judaica: Cologne library of Jewish life

Germania Judaica is an academic library in Cologne devoted to German-speaking Jewry. It is funded by the City of Cologne and the *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia. The Germania Judaica library and society were founded in 1959 by a group of citizens eager to create an instrument enabling people to obtain objective facts on the life, history and culture of Jews in German-speaking countries. The objective was to prevent prejudice towards Jewry.

The first chairman of Germania Judaica was Heinrich Böll, the German author and Nobel Prize laureate. Today - more than 45 years later - the Library holds over 85,000 titles and research publications on all aspects of the history of German-speaking Jews from the sixteenth century onwards. Germania Judaica's 'jewel in the crown' is its holding of over 500 German Jewish newspapers and journals, the oldest of them dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century. On the basis of these newspapers Germania Judaica also participates in the project German Jewish Periodicals, which is funded by the German Research Foundation (see www.compactmemory.de).

Germania Judaica maintains extensive contacts with similar institutions worldwide and publishes a regular directory of research projects (Arbeits-informationen) relating to the history of German Jewry and antisemitism (for the latest edition, that of 2004, see www.germaniajudaica.de).

The principal clientele of the Library are academic staff of the University of Cologne as well as of universities throughout Germany, Europe and even the USA, Israel and Japan. Media professionals, teachers and pupils, as well as other interested people from Cologne, are also readers at Germania Judaica. The main interest of readers is the fate of Jews in Europe during the Nazi period, but there is also considerable interest in the life of the German Jewish communities today.

An excellent starting point for genealogical research into German Jewish families which may be of particular interest to AJR members is the website www.germaniajudaica.de/kontakt.htm.

Everyone is welcome to use our wide range of literature and research publications. For further information, please contact:

Germania Judaica
Kölner Bibliothek zur Geschichte des deutschen Judentums e.V.
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AJR TEA

SUNDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2005,
3.00 PM

at

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A booking form is inserted into this issue of the Journal. On the back of the ticket application form there is a form for brochure space. If you would like to support the AJR even further, kindly complete the brochure form and return it to us.

We look forward to seeing you at the AJR Tea

Should you require further details, please telephone us on 020 8385 3070

Arts and Events Diary July

27 June to 3 July Jewish Music Institute Barry Weinberg Jewish Choral Festival. Tel Viv Bellos 07956 912 567

28 June to 8 August 'The Art of Eva Hirschberger' at the Etz Chaim Gallery, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, Oaklands Gate, Northwood. Tel 01923 822592

Until 21 August 'Closing the door? Immigrants to Britain 1905-2005' Special exhibition marking the centenary of the 1905 Aliens Act. Jewish Museum, Camden Town, tel 020 7284 1997

Until 2 October 'The Last Goodbye: The Rescue of Children from Nazi Europe' Exhibition on the Kindertransport. Jewish Museum, Finchley, tel 020 8439 1143

Mon 4 July Prof Ralph Andereg (Switzerland and Cologne), 'Switzerland, the UNO and the EU'. Club 43

Mon 11 Club 43. End of season informal evening

Tues 12 'Immigrants and the Health Service'. Prof Paul Weindling and Dr Edwin Borman on the role of refugee doctors, dentists and nurses in the NHS. Chaired by Baroness Julia Neuberger. Jewish Museum, Camden Town

Wed-Fri 27-29 'Jews, Empire and Race'. International conference. Parkes Institute, University of Southampton. Tel 023 8059 2261

When the war was over

Martha Blend

After the nomadic existence of the war years - evacuation to escape from the Blitz and, later, the flying bombs - marriage put me in touch with new experiences and lifestyles. At this time, the war had not long been over. London was like a weary old lady, grey and battered and with many destroyed houses like missing teeth in the middle of terraces. There was still food rationing but at least my husband and I were able to settle in one place, a small top-floor flat in Islington. We couldn't afford to furnish it properly on his salary as assistant to a local general practitioner, but this didn't bother us too much.

From this vantage point I was able to observe the world of the senior doctor's establishment. He lived down the road from us in a splendid Georgian house with five floors. The top two floors were occupied by an elderly widow and the manageress of the local dairy respectively. The rest was the doctor's domain. At the bottom of the garden was a small brick building - the surgery. A conduit running along the garden wall allowed the clamour of the bells from the surgery to be reproduced in the house.

To serve this household, which included the doctor's wife and two grown-up children, seemed to require a veritable army. There was Minnie, a gaunt woman whose role was to clean the surgery. This she did selectively, choosing for her special attention the brass plate and the miniature scales used to weigh drugs for private patients. The cobwebs between the bottles of tincts and mists were beneath her notice.

In the house reigned Jeanie, the housekeeper. She had a strong Scots accent and suffered from a deaf husband. Her duties were general and included

some cleaning and cooking. Alongside her was Nursie, the children's nurse now redundant as to her original function but who helped with answering the phone and other duties.

Once a fortnight came Florrie, the seamstress. Her job was to turn sheets sides to middle, repair old curtains and generally do any sewing that was required by different members of the family. This she did on an ancient Singer hand machine. The springtime brought Nobby, the gardener, to prune the roses and plant cabbages in the vegetable patch near the surgery.

Another regular attender was Mrs Jones, the baker who supplied the household with bread and cakes, and Cohen, the greengrocer who did likewise for fruit and vegetables. Harmer the butcher delivered meat once a week. How strictly he kept to the rationing was not clear but he discharged his produce into a safe which was next to the basement door and to which he had the key.

Down the road was Hutch, the garage-owner, a lugubrious man in brown overalls who serviced the family's cars, including an ancient Morris Minor named Christabelle which needed double declutching and got stuck in the tramlines at Highbury Corner. As the doctor's assistant, my husband was allowed to use this contraption on his visits to patients before he could afford to buy his own car. This was particularly necessary on Saturday afternoon when the senior partner and his wife went to watch Arsenal play and practise - nothing was allowed to interfere with this important activity.

What happened to this constellation when the doctor retired I have no idea, but it was something of an education for me to watch it in its heyday.

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The Hungarian Gold Train: a proposed settlement

In bringing a class action litigation against the US administration, plaintiffs in the Hungarian Gold Train lawsuit have forced the American government to examine its own role in the appropriation of Holocaust-era assets. Having been a moral beacon for Holocaust victims worldwide, the US now finds itself endowing a \$25.5m compensation fund: the Hungarian Gold Train Settlement.

History does not cover in glory the US soldiers who intercepted the 24 box cars containing property and personal possessions looted from the Hungarian Jewish community following the occupation of Hungary in 1944. What the Nazis stole from the Jews, the US soldiers took from the Nazis. Similarly, the choicest art works removed from Jewish ownership by leading Nazis were in turn pilfered by the invading Red Army in Germany in 1945.

The litigation was initiated in May 2001 by a group of Hungarian

survivors who contest that, while members of US forces stole part of the \$200m worth of loot, the rest was auctioned off in New York. While it is accepted that some of the money raised during the auction was invested in erecting Holocaust memorials, no effort was made to return the loot to Hungarian Holocaust survivors. The lawsuit also claims that some high-ranking US army officials even furnished their offices with valuables taken from the train.

The Hungarian Gold Train Settlement proposes that \$21m of the \$25.5m be allocated to fund social services programmes to benefit the neediest of Hungarian Nazi victims, with most of this money being allocated to Hungary, Canada, the US and Israel. The precise distribution plan will be decided by US courts this September but it is likely to be recommended that \$500,000 be set aside for the 'collection of documents and artefacts relating to the Gold Train' for educational and archival purposes.

The remaining monies, not exceeding \$4m, will be consumed in legal fees. The US government will also be issuing a formal statement of acknowledgment regarding the unseemly episode.

Unless you wish to exclude yourself from the Settlement, anyone who receives a Court Notice or any information about the Settlement does not need to act, but further details may be obtained by contacting the Claims Conference - making a reverse charges call to 001 646 519 8701 or by emailing galit.dardashtian@claimscon.org

For further information on developments in this case, see www.HungarianGoldTrain.org Interested parties can also contact Brent Wilson, the lead litigation lawyer, via his company's website www.hagens-berman.com/goldtrain, which contains descriptions and photos of possessions auctioned off shortly after the war.

Corey Simon and Michael Newman

Sixty years on, a synagogue once more



The Hechingen synagogue the morning after Kristallnacht and how it looks today



In May 2004 my wife Cynthia and I, together with our friends Rita and Ricardo Dos Santos, visited my hometown of Hechingen in south Germany from which my father and I fled in May 1939. The synagogue was ransacked on Kristallnacht and by 1942 no Jews remained alive in Hechingen. The synagogue was used as an electrical stock room right up to the early 1980s, when a number of local non-Jews led by Dr Adolf Vees, a dentist, decided that it should be restored exactly as it was prior to Kristallnacht.

The work was completed at a cost of over DM5 million and in 1986 it was

renamed the Alte Synagoge, henceforth to be used as a meeting/concert hall, with the upstairs ladies' gallery now a museum about the Jews of Hechingen and my family. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Harry Jacobi, a friend who was at the time a rabbi in Zurich, declared it was a credit to everyone that people could now say 'Here is the old synagogue!' rather than there being a plaque noting that on the site had stood the Hechingen synagogue.

This May, after visiting the graves of my mother and numerous other members of my family in the Jewish cemetery, we went again to the synagogue, where Ricardo and

I attached *mezuzot* to the doors. We saw there was now an ark and that with about 60 Jews (mainly Russian) living in Hechingen, services were again being held there. Rita, an outstanding pianist, was so impressed that she offered to play a piano recital to benefit the synagogue and she duly did so to a rapturous reception. On Saturday morning the four of us prayed in the synagogue. Unfortunately there was no *minyán* so we could not open the ark or say *kaddish*. For all of us it was a deeply emotional experience.

The synagogue is kept going by one man, a Russian widower by the name of Yfraim Yakubov, who takes the services and provided us with a *kiddush* that brought tears to our eyes. When we tried to thank him, he thanked us for giving him the *mitzvah* of having us in his home. We left sobbing with emotion but also with pride. Despite Hitler, 60 years on, the Jews are back and the synagogue is a synagogue once more.

Gerald Granston

Good vibes in Vienna

Ken Saunders

My first return visit to Austria in 1961 as a re-modelled Euro-Britisher was a bewildering experience. Confusion set in immediately I stepped off the coach. Memories came flooding back: the Heimwehr and shooting in the streets, fights in school, tuberculosis treatment at the St Anna Kinderspital, the Crème-schnitten from the 'Zuckerbäcker' across the road from the Manner chocolate factory, and so on and so forth. I was in Vienna on that occasion following an invitation by the Austrian TUC to the college where I was an adult student to visit industrial undertakings. Having discovered my Austrian origin, the education officer drove me to the street of my birthplace and my old school, which added to my feelings of ambivalence about the country. The course and the visits to factories remained our primary objective, but at the age of 40, I suppose I had the maturity to take in some of the political climate as well. The country was now a republic. It was also the time of party leader Bruno Kreisky, the future chancellor, and Kurt Waldheim, then a delegate to the UN.

'My first return visit to Austria in 1961 as a re-modelled Euro-Britisher was a bewildering experience.'

With regard to my 2005 visit, while I had not kept in touch, after a further 44 years, with the political situation, I knew that many of the old Nazis were resting in the municipal cemeteries. I was also aware that a new generation of historians had begun to question the established versions of the Anschluss period and to provide realistic appraisals of the years 1936-45. At my university I was so wrapped up in lecture preparation and research that I was able to pick up no more than occasional scraps of information about someone in Vienna inviting former Austrian Jewish refugees - and entertaining them! - until the AJR circular confirmed the reality of the invitations.

Much thought had evidently been given to the itinerary, which began with a three-hour tour of Vienna. You could choose one of two coaches, depending on whether you wanted an English- or German-language introduction to the city. Everything seemed so different from what was in my memory - other than the famous St Stephans Kirche. The buildings struck me as solid and clean and life appeared as civilised as could be.

'The atmosphere was festive and one could detect a feeling of gratitude for the welcoming experience we had all had.'

The formal name of our hosts for the week was Jewish Welcome Service Vienna. Hospitality was provided by the 4-star Hotel Stefanie in the Taborstrasse. On the Tuesday it was Afternoon Tea in the Town Hall, taking place in the Senate Committee Room of Vienna City. Busy waiting staff provided us with Sacher Torte, additional snacks and ample coffee. Following appropriate addresses by the Deputy Mayor, Sepp Rieder, and others, small groups of us, accompanied by a guide, were taken on a tour of the historical areas. Wednesday too was an important day. It was marked out as a visit to the seat and home of the President of Austria: the Hofburg (Court Building). The President greeted us as guests both of the Republic of Austria and of the City of Vienna. Welcoming addresses and tasty refreshments were in good supply once more prior to our return to the Stephanie.

Anyone who has visited Vienna knows of the Heurigen. Thursday was free until late afternoon, when transport was available to take us to Grinzing. What you expect there is *Stimmung* (good feeling). The wine and music amply catered for that. A substantial hot and cold finger buffet followed, which, together with the good company at the table, made this a

pleasant event.

Friday was a day to reflect on our identity. Special mini-buses took a small group of us to the big cemetery (Zentralfriedhof) way out from the hotel. It was a rare opportunity to pay our respects to departed relatives. The early evening was devoted to a Shabbat service in the famous Seitenstetten Tempel which was shared with the local Jewish community. The final kosher meal was a special treat: we commuted to a dining hall annexed to the synagogue where tables laid with dishes of 'Gefilte fish with farvel and salad' awaited us. Speeches from the 'top table' concluded the occasion. The atmosphere was festive and one could detect a feeling of gratitude for the welcoming experience we had all had. Mr and Mrs Mariotti looked after us very well with regard to travel, information, and organisation. The care they provided for our group of 80 (a mix of English, American, Israeli, Argentinian, Canadian and a German ex-Wiener) was indeed 'für alles'.

Saturday was free. We also had some

'As I walked through the streets on my own and observed life - shops, markets, restaurants - I felt like a tourist myself. This was not the Vienna I knew in 1939 or 1961. I had some good vibes this time: a younger generation had taken over.'

free time earlier in the week, when I managed to visit the Dokumentationsarchiv close to the synagogue to trace my mother and sister on the 'Totenliste' of Kladovo, then in Yugoslavia. As I walked through the streets on my own and observed life - shops, markets, restaurants - I felt like a tourist myself. This was not the Vienna I knew in 1939 or 1961. I had some good vibes this time: a younger generation had taken over.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

RICHARD GRUNBERGER

Sir - F. Lustig (May issue) claims that Richard Grunberger 'frequently implied that those who differed from him were either fools or knaves'. I knew Richard Grunberger for many years and can assure Mr Lustig that his interpretation is mistaken. Richard always argued his case and his views strongly and with facts to support them. But I also know that over the years he changed some of those views when persuaded that they were not tenable. I also believe that the publication of strongly-held controversial articles in the Journal contributed greatly to maintaining its readers' interest, especially as their letters - supporting or dissenting, sometimes even unnecessarily personal - were always printed.

*Eric Sanders
London W12*

Sir - I note with dismay that there has not yet been a condign homage paid to your late and great editor-in-chief, Richard Grunberger. Apart from a brief notice in the issue published immediately following his death, there have been a few letters, some of them typically mealy-mouthed, but no trumpets. When are you going to do justice to the most distinguished editor this Journal has ever had, more distinguished than many of its readers deserved or were able to appreciate? Already a pall of mediocrity is descending on your pages. You find room for five columns of puffery on George Weidenfeld and not a column inch for RG. But I suppose correspondents such as Philip Lang (June issue) and others of his ilk get the paper they deserve.

*Victor Ross
Great Chart, Kent*

Mr Ross appears not to have seen the April issue, which included extracts from an interview Richard Grunberger gave for the filming of the project 'Continental Britons: Refugee Voices',

focusing on, inter alia, how he saw his role as Editor-in-Chief; an obituary; an appraisal; and three-and-a-half columns of letters devoted to him. The May issue included a further four columns of letters devoted to Richard (HS).

IRENE CORBACH

Sir - I am glad you published an appreciation of Irene Corbach's life and work. I only attended the Jawne's English School Certificate Course from Easter to December 1938 in Düsseldorf. Even so, the Corbachs picked up my name. Sadly, Dieter died before I had an opportunity to meet him, but the correspondence with Irene continued until last year. I had the pleasure and privilege of spending a whole afternoon with Irene during my last visit to Germany some years ago and appreciated the effort they had both put in to have Cologne Jewry and its institutions commemorated. I sincerely hope that someone can be found to carry on their splendid work in their memory.

*Ilse J. Eton (née Ursell)
St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex*

WENDI WILSON

Sir - Wendi Wilson breezed into our house like a breath of fresh air. She will always be remembered for her consideration and care. We will remember Wendi as someone who always put others first, no matter what trials and tribulations she had of her own. We have fond memories of her visits and cosy chats and help provided over a cup of coffee.

*Annelie and Avi Elmkes
London NW11*

SERIOUS MISPRINT

Sir - The AJR Journal is usually not subject to serious misprints. Unfortunately, one such disfigures Gloria Tessler's Art Notes in the May

2005 issue, where Hellmuth Weissenborn's name is printed Wussenborn. As an old family friend of both Hellmuth and his second wife Lesley MacDonald, I wish to put this right. Hellmuth Weissenborn was a fine artist. He was born and trained in Leipzig, where he was a professor at the Kunstakademie before emigrating to England. He was not a Jew himself but had a Jewish wife and was an outspoken anti-Nazi, also without the Jewish connection. His early years in England were hard and his first marriage did not survive the strain. He later gained recognition for his excellent work as a painter, graphic artist and book illustrator. He also taught at Ravensbourne College of Art. After the war there were exhibitions of his work in various cities in Germany, including Leipzig. In this country he had many Jewish friends. He deserves better than having his name so badly garbled in our journal.

*Anna E. C. Harvey
Gillingham, Dorset*

AUSTRIAN 'GIFT HORSE'

Sir - Judging by your May issue, I seem to have become unpopular with two of your readers - Francis Steiner of Deddington and A. Kessler of Cheam - for suggesting that the offer to Holocaust survivors of a free week's stay in Vienna was a 'cheap gesture' by the Austrian government. With regard to Mr Steiner, I do not understand why he thinks I am prejudiced against the Austrians of today. I have never written anything to suggest this and, indeed, I am not. I have been to Vienna about half a dozen times and loved it, and I regard, for example, Heidemarie Blazej, the Austrian Social Attaché in London, as a friend. I even had lunch with former Ambassador Alexander Christiani!

However, dear Mr Steiner, I know Deddington, the beautiful village where you live. My father was a doctor in Banbury, the 'big' town six miles away. From Vienna to Banbury was quite a wrench for my parents. I do not forgive the Austrians, thankfully mostly dead, who caused this journey! As for Mr Kessler, I do not think that the sum of £8,500 that we have received from the Austrians is in any way sufficient reparation. Nor is a pension of about £2,000 per annum, when, to receive it,

I first had to pay the Austrian government more than £2,000. You accuse me of *chutzpah*, Mr Kessler, and you say that I am looking a gift horse in the mouth. Please do tell: what was the 'gift'?

Peter Phillips
Loudwater, Herts
peterphillips@supanet.com

Sir - I must assume that your correspondent A. Kessler (May issue) was a refugee from Nazi Austria in the 1930s. If so, he and his family must at that time have been subjected to expropriation, mental and/or physical persecution, anguish and trauma - experiences that no citizen should ever have to face in a civilised society. To interpret, therefore, rejecting the derisory level of 'compensation' by the Austrian government ('people in authority', as he puts it) as looking a 'gift horse in the mouth' reflects a lack of self-respect, and, more important, a sad lack of respect for the suffering of his family and friends and millions of us like them.

Dr Emil Landes
London N6

Sir - Together with Greek-speaking friends - one of them a Wehrmacht officer's grandson - I have been helping non-Jewish Cretan ex-partisans who survived Mauthausen to claim German compensation. Between the first and second tranches of payments, several of these men died. German law seems to say that their next of kin should receive what was due to the former prisoner. Nevertheless, the heirs have now been informed that, because there is insufficient money in the fund and after consultation with survivor organisations, the remaining money will go to actual survivors, except that those heirs who write in, waiving further claims, will graciously be granted 500 euros. Now I see from the *AJR Journal* for June that similar Jewish heirs are to receive substantial sums. What am I to say to my Cretans, some of whom helped Jews and Allied soldiers?

George Landers
Crete

The agreement to pay heirs of Jewish Holocaust survivors was negotiated by

the Jewish Claims Conference and the German Foundation: Remembrance, Responsibility and Future, the institution created to pay compensation to former slave and forced labourers. Regrettably, similar terms were not reached by other partner agencies such as the International Organisation for Migration, which represents non-Jewish Nazi victims. That said, paying compensation to heirs could have been avoided altogether had applications by survivors been processed with the necessary speed and accuracy (Michael Newman, Director, Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK)).

'HATEFUL TITLES'

Sir - I profoundly disagree with Martha Blend that 'refugee' and 'evacuee' are 'hateful titles' (May issue). When the need was greatest, the Avner family of Coventry took me and my sister Ruth into their home under the first of these designations, and, after the bombing of Coventry, the Devey family of Alcester in Warwickshire made me a member of their wonderful family under the second. I am deeply grateful to both, bear both titles proudly, and am glad to subscribe to a journal whose very masthead proclaims itself an organ of the Association of Jewish Refugees.

Prof S. S. Praver
Oxford

'NOT ALL GERMANS WERE MURDERERS'

Sir - To say that 'Not all Germans were murderers' (Letters, May issue) does not mean that they were not co-conspirators, accessories before and after the facts and collaborators. Hitler never killed anybody: he had others to do it for him. Rudolph Flick didn't kill anybody himself and yet 40,000 Jews turned slave labourers died in his mines and factories. Heydrich never raised a finger; he only summoned the Wannsee Conference. Six million Jews, 16 million Soviet citizens, six million Poles and many others were killed and it takes an eager multitude to achieve that, however efficiently carried out. Too many benefited from murder; they merely prove the rule.

Frank Bright
Ipswich

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The 11 cityscapes painted by **John Virtue** in his two years as **National Gallery** Associate Artist are a stunning evocation of London in black and white. Their massive and brooding quality, dominated by the Thames as it swoops towards St Paul's, shows the hubris of the city darkened by clouds. These are not intimate paintings: they imply an elemental space that dwarfs the city. St Paul's rotunda seems to swim in a series of storm-tossed mirages, and strangely these black and white *impasto* images convey colour as well as density and bad weather.

Virtue believes that using black and white forces the artist to be more inventive. He chose two Thames sites: the Oxo Tower and the north bank on the roof of Somerset House, looking east to the City of London. Both the abstract and the figurative have a place in Virtue's paintings. His influences are the great English landscape painters of their day, Constable and Turner. But Virtue's dark and brooding city appears at first sight to owe nothing to these masters. He literally takes a canvas and throws everything at it - black ink or shellac - using his hands or a J cloth. His paintings are like a staring eye or the vortex of a storm, making you uncomfortably aware of being dwarfed by unseen forces.

Just as Constable's elegiac landscapes seem bathed in dew, in Virtue's the white of the sky after rain bathes the city in that dampness so familiar to Londoners. The National Gallery offers something more than the usual accompanying artist video. Here Virtue, who resembles a youthful Picasso, is interviewed by Paul Schama and tells him 'London is just Mondrian writ large.'

A portrait of the artist from cradle to grave is the unusual subject of a photographic show at the **National Portrait Gallery**, encompassing the



Frida on White Bench 1939. Nickolas Muray © Nickolas Muray Photo Archives. Courtesy NPG

life - and, literally, death - of the dynamic Mexican Jewish painter **Frida Kahlo** on the eve of her own Tate Modern exhibition. **Frida Kahlo: Portraits of an Icon** features the work of many celebrated photographers, including **Edward Weston**, **Imogen Cunningham** and **Manuel Alvarez Bravo**, who have been captivated by Kahlo's sheer presence and have created in 50 photographs an image of the artist as muse, as a work of art in herself. In black and white or colour, they show off her plaited and ornamented hair and all the extravaganza of Mexican jewellery. It conjures up a visual history of magic realism straight out of the pages of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

The spectacular woman who married Diego Rivera in 1929 appears proud, insouciant and quizzical. Her eyebrows meet over a pair of penetrating eyes and a firm, slightly hirsute upper lip. A goat or a monkey is often part of the picture, and in one photograph she is painting *The Wounded Table*, which reflects her own focused and mystical energy. And then comes the expected tragic ending: the visibly fading artist in her wheelchair and, finally, on her death bed in 1954 depicted by **Lola Alvarez Bravo**, still in lace and ribbons, her nails immaculately painted.

REVIEWS

Children 'under the Nazis'

WITNESSES OF WAR: CHILDREN'S LIVES UNDER THE NAZIS

by Nicholas Stargardt

Jonathan Cape, 2005, 336pp., £20

The author describes the experiences not only of German (Aryan) but also Polish and Jewish children 'under the Nazis'. The first chapter, on German children, provides a mirror-image of what occurred in Britain: food shortages, labour shortages, war games and an eagerness on the part of those too young to fight to help with the war effort. But here the resemblance ends: German factories were kept working by forced labour and luxury goods plundered from the occupied territories began to arrive in German cities. The evacuation of schoolchildren was delayed until late 1940.

Throughout the war propaganda ensured that morale among the general population was kept up. A policeman writing to his wife outlines his part in the extermination of Jews but asks her not to think about it too much: the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy 'was apparently responsible for all the ills of the world'. As the Wehrmacht retreated, this attitude changed to a feeling that if the Jews and Bolsheviks were indeed so powerful, it was a mistake to have taken them on. Some Germans even feared revenge for the ill-treatment of the Jews they 'didn't know about'.

While German children spent the early part of the war in the safety of the countryside, albeit under the stern discipline of the Hitler Youth, Jewish children were frequent witnesses to brutality. One particularly distressing account is of a group of Jewish children whose parents had been shot by the Einsatzgruppen in the previous 11 days. They were locked up in a house without food or water. In the view of the local military commander, had the children been 'eliminated immediately' this situation could have been avoided.

Polish children, though not destined for extermination, suffered hunger and the loss of relatives to forced labour. Some blond children were snatched from their Polish families, to be brought up as Germans. Many were never reunited with their families, from whom they had become estranged.

For some German children the last part of the war meant loss of fathers and other relatives on the Russian front. As they were brought up to accept German supremacy as axiomatic, the defeat of their army came as a shock. Teenagers were now called up to fight and young children armed to defend Berlin. Everywhere there was devastation and people on the move: Germans moving westwards to escape the Russians, concentration camp prisoners on forced marches, liberated PoWs trying to get home. So deeply entrenched was the Nazi ideology that few people who saw the ragged remnants of the concentration camps pass though their villages offered them food.

Some of the background information Nicholas Stargardt provides is already well documented: the book could have been slimmer and more focused on the children. Nevertheless, it is a well-researched and moving account of the lives of several groups of children in wartime Europe.

Martha Blend

An undoubted masterpiece

SUITE FRANÇAISE

by Irène Némirovsky

Editions Denoel, 2004, 434pp. £22.00

The AJR Journal's December Newsround contained a reference to Irène Némirovsky's posthumous novel *Suite Française*, written shortly before her death in Auschwitz in 1942. But the assertion that she is the French equivalent of Anne Frank is misleading. She was an author with no less than 18 titles to her credit and was 39 when she died.

Némirovsky, a White Russian from a wealthy Jewish background, arrived in Paris aged 16 in 1919. She studied French literature at the Sorbonne, at the same time embarking on a whirlwind high society life. This

background clearly provided the fertile soil from which she drew the rich characterisations that are her strength as a writer.

In 1926 Irène married Mikhail Epstein, also a Jewish White Russian, and their daughters Denise and Elisabeth were born in 1929 and 1937 respectively. After the German invasion the family moved to Burgundy, where in 1942 Irène was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. Her husband sent frantic letters to Pétain, among others, assuring them of Irène's antisemitism, her baptism in 1939 and her anti-Bolshevik feelings. As a result, he too was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. A month after her arrival there Irène died of typhoid.

Suite Française consists of two sections: 'Storm in June' and 'Dolce'. From Irène's notes we learn that she intended to follow these with two or three further sections, documenting the impact of the war and German occupation on the lives of the French people.

'Storm in June' follows several individuals and families in the panic exodus from Paris in June 1940 as the Germans are about to arrive. In a few short sharp brushstrokes Irène paints their characters and with brilliant descriptions and social comment follows them in their flight.

In 'Dolce' we find ourselves in a small town in Burgundy where the German army has taken up residence. We meet 'old friends' from the first part of the book and individuals from various echelons of society. Irène sketches people with the skill of a caricaturist and shows us how they adapt to living with the occupying Germans.

Irène Némirovsky is a powerful, mature writer. The strong antisemitism found in her other works might be explained by an exceptionally unhappy childhood and her relationship with her mother. *Suite Française* is, however, an undoubted masterpiece. When it was published last year, it won much acclaim, including the coveted Prix Renaudot. I understand that an English version will be available next year.

Irene Scherbel-Ball

Strands of memory

A MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIR

by Ellis Douek

Peter Halban, 2004, 224pp., £18.99

When is a refugee not a refugee? The answer may be gleaned from Ellis Douek's fascinating memoir. 'Wherever I have found myself has seemed the proper place for me to be,' he asserts here. In common with many Jews of a similar background, Douek's family had been settled peaceably in the Middle East for centuries. The need to move, therefore, could be regarded as a matter of choice rather than compulsion.

The family's 'Middle Eastern Affair' may have begun in 1492, when the Doueks found refuge in Aleppo after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. One ancestor, an agent in Aleppo of the Levant Company formed by British merchants under James I, was appointed consul and became a British subject. Douek's mother's paternal family, originally from Persia, had been in Mesopotamia, now Iraq, since the French Revolution.

A retired ENT consultant at Guy's Hospital and brother of cookery writer Claudia Roden, Douek was born in Cairo, where his grandfather had migrated from Aleppo after the opening of the Suez Canal. As a young child, he moved with his family to Columbia and returned to Egypt shortly after the outbreak of World War II. A significant episode occurred when the family docked in Genoa in 1940 on their way home and were mindful to remain in Italy for some time. At the British consulate, where they went to give notice of their plans, the clerk 'looked at us with horror.' Aware that Italy was soon to enter the war on the German side, the consul arranged for this unsuspecting Jewish family to leave straightaway, on the last passenger ship.

Douek's earliest memory is watching the funeral of King Fouad from his grandmother's balcony in Cairo. He shares this during his national service with a fellow officer at a military hospital in Glasgow, whose earliest recollection is very different. Michael Sternberg, born in Vienna, remembers an outing with his school. 'I waved a little Nazi flag with the swastika when

the teacher sent me away. "Not you, Sternberg," he said. "You must go home."

The blissful days of childhood and early adolescence in Egypt are captured with great effect - the silence of the *feloukas* at dawn across the Nile, the 'earthly paradise' of summers by the sea in Alexandria, the loving and comfortable home and large extended family, and Maria, the beloved Catholic nanny. But with the establishment of Israel and the new climate of Egyptian nationalism, the family's long 'Middle Eastern Affair' was heading towards the rupture brought about by the 1956 Suez War.

Douek's revisiting of his student days vividly recreates the *Zeitgeist* of the 1950s when, like many young people from privileged backgrounds, he flirted with Communism in Paris and later joined CND. One key to the optimistic tone of the 'strands of memory' he has skilfully woven together may well be his recognition that by presenting himself as a foreigner, he could best navigate the implacable English class system.

Emma Klein

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

German-speaking refugees

The need to preserve unpublished documentation for the future

In the March issue of the *AJR Journal* Professor Edward Timms outlined the project of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at Sussex University to document the existence and location of unpublished materials relating to German-Jewish refugees in Britain. Professor Timms stated that while the Centre seeks to locate such collections, the University of Sussex is unable to receive and preserve the documents themselves. Readers of the *AJR Journal* and potential contributors to the database project might like to know that the Wiener Library, apart from being one of the major sources whose holdings will be recorded by the project, is actively seeking to take in these kinds of papers.

We have a particular interest in family papers and private correspondence recording the experiences and fate of individuals - although we also have a significant amount of institutional archives including that of the Reunion of the Kindertransport (depositor: Bertha Leverton).

We are often asked to take in papers,

photos and 'memorabilia' after a refugee or survivor has died because his or her family cannot read German and has little interest in the detailed history of their family. In one recent notable case, the Library acquired a collection of private documentation only because our Librarian, Katharine Hübschmann, gave up her Sunday to rescue 12 boxes of letters and photographs from a skip, where the family had disposed of it (in fact, the relatives of the deceased refugee were delighted to see the papers go to a good home, but had not thought of contacting us directly).

If you have any papers you think might be of interest to the Wiener Library, please contact us. We can also offer advice on the best ways of storing documentation for long-term preservation.

**Ben Barkow, Director,
Wiener Library**

For enquiries, please contact:
Howard Falksohn, Archivist
The Wiener Library, 4 Devonshire Street
London W1W 5BH Tel: 020 7636 7247
Email: howard@wienerlibrary.co.uk

Letter from Israel

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Spending a few days in Eilat in the dead of winter is almost like going to another country. Day after day the sun shines out of a cobalt sky and the sea sparkles while storms rage in the rest of Israel.

From the hotel window one looks out over a glassy sea against the backdrop of the mountains of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, where all seems peaceful and serene. Boats skim the surface, a few brave souls brave the chilly water and palm trees sway in the breeze.

Meanwhile, the weather reports from the north of the country speak of icy temperatures, flooded roads and gale-force winds. The feeling is surreal. The dissonance is heightened when one hears that some schoolboys have come from Manchester to learn skiing in the Golan Heights. All this in a country that is but a fraction of the size of England.

The tourist trade appears to be picking up, and English and French tourists can be seen and heard in the hotel dining room and around the swimming pool. New hotels are being built and old ones renovated. Eilat is finally getting ready for the long-awaited revival of the tourist boom of previous years. The town boasts some really splendid hotels, where the object seems to be to delight and pamper guests to the highest degree.

The drive back through the Negev reveals an unusual sight. The arid hills are covered with a green fuzz of grass and patches of wild flowers. However transient they may be, they are a rare delight.

Instead of driving straight home, I make for my daughter's house in Zikhron Ya'akov, where my baby-sitting services are required. There, the cold and rainy weather keeps me confined to the house for a week, while the Mediterranean Sea pounds the coast below.

Barred by the 'Aryan clause', a law which prevented Jews from joining Austrian sports clubs, and determined to counter stereotypes that the Jews were intellectual giants but physical weaklings, in 1909 the Vienna Jewish community defiantly created its own sports club, calling it Hakoah - Hebrew for Strength. Hakoah's athletes came to compete successfully against other Austrian teams in a wide range of sports. And not only Austrian teams: in 1924 their soccer team gained a celebrated 5-0 victory against West Ham in an exhibition match, becoming the first foreign team to beat English opponents on their home turf. But it was the women's swim team that had the highest profile. Recruited in their teens by their single-minded trainer Zsigo Wertheimer, a legendary disciplinarian who would throw his shoes at any slackers in the pool, they worked hard - and, it seems, played hard - developing both the world-wide connections and the self-discipline that would enable them to survive, watching from afar as the Vienna of their youth was engulfed by the Holocaust.

Fascinated by this untold story, Yaron Zilberman, an Israeli film director, recently reunited several of the core members of the women's swim team in his film *Watermarks*. Zilberman opens the film by visiting each woman in her own home. One by one, they show us their photo albums, share their memories, and walk us around their far-flung neighbourhoods in Israel, the US and Britain. Later in the film the women return as a group to Vienna, swimming together for one last time in Hakoah's luxurious pool, appropriated by the Nazis soon after the Anschluss, wearing bathing suits with prominent blue Jewish stars carefully patterned after their original uniforms.

Playing a prominent role in Zilberman's film is Ann Marie Pisker (née Pick). At one point in *Watermarks*, she seeks to explain the trauma of starting a new life after fleeing Austria in the late 1930s. She recalls how much

PROFILE

Howard Spier

Ann Marie Pisker A feisty swimmer from Vienna



she had liked living in Austria and how, having made her way to Britain, she found it hard to adjust to 'the Anglo-Saxon mentality': 'I had to change completely.' Only those who have emigrated, she says, can understand how traumatic an experience it can be: 'I left with two suitcases and five pounds. You have no idea. You sink or you swim. And when you're young, you swim!'

Calling on Ann Marie Pisker in her spacious south-west London home, I was instantaneously struck by her elegance, her charm - her imperiousness even. Yet somehow, the Americanism *feisty* is the description that leaps to mind above all others.

Ann Marie was born in Vienna, as were her parents and grandparents on both sides. She was born into a 'Jewish bourgeois family', she tells me. Her father was in imports and exports. The apparently well-assimilated family rarely showed much interest in Judaism. Nor did antisemitism play much of a role in her childhood.

Ann Marie's mother died in 1932. Two

years later her father brought Ann Marie over to England to enter her in a south coast school where she could learn English, but where she was the only Jewish girl out of 80 pupils. Bored, within a year she had returned to Vienna. Later, after the Anschluss, the sympathetic headmistress invited her to return to the school and give German lessons. Her father followed her to England but was interned for three years on the Isle of Man. Ann Marie has lost none of her immense bitterness over his internment. After the war he returned to Vienna to resume his business career.

In 1939 Ann Marie moved to Bath, taking up a job in the drapery department in a department store. She thoroughly enjoyed the retail business. The job lasted only a year or so; she lost it evidently for security reasons - 'when the Navy moved in to Bath'. In the early 1940s, helped by a Jewish refugee organisation, she moved to London, in 1941 marrying a water polo player from Hakoah. Soon she was offered a job in Peter Jones department store, this time selling jumpers - she loved every minute of it.

Soon after the war the family moved to St Johns Wood and she worked in London's West End for a Czech Jewish textile wholesaler, doing what she describes as various rag trade jobs. In 1960 her son was born and in the mid-1960s they moved to south-west London to be closer to her sister, who lived in Kingston.

Ann Marie told me that Yaron Zilberman had been encouraged by the unexpected interest shown in *Watermarks* and was now talking about doing a second film. At the same time, she showed me a Swedish book on the Hakoah swimming team, proudly pointing out that the author was coming over to London in a few days to meet her. Perhaps there would be an English translation. Ann Marie was clearly overjoyed that at long last the story of the Viennese Hakoah team was being written.

INSIDE the AJR

Newcastle group relive memories of Vienna

Gerda Lawrence, a member of our group, spoke to us about her recent visit to Vienna, a visit arranged by the AJR and facilitated by the Jewish Welcome Service in Vienna. Gerda spoke movingly about her earlier years in the Austrian capital and her feelings as she relived her memories. Other members too recalled their feelings on returning to the place of their birth.

Kurt Schapira

Next meeting: Sun 25 Sept (prov.)

A fine day in Surrey

A fine day brought us to Kingston this season, to Ruth Korn, who was our host - but was so busy looking after a record number of members and 'foreign' visitors that she hardly had time to sit down and join in the chat. We not only enjoyed her delicious delicacies but also the surrounding Water Garden at its most beautiful. Myrna kept us in order and informed - as usual. We look forward to our annual summer lunch, this year with Edmée and Tom Barta. Details to follow.

Vernon Saunders

North London discuss return to country of origin

Over 25 members joined a discussion on 'Have you returned to your country of origin?' A substantial number had not and felt no great desire to do so. The reasons for going back varied but, significantly, nostalgia was not the main driving force. It would seem that once there, it was the younger element of the population who welcomed the visitors most openly.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: Thur 28 July. Michael Anvoner, 'Wills'

Hull reminiscences over coffee and snacks

Meeting at Bob Rosner's home, we were delighted when two members who hadn't met for 50 years recognised each other and shared memories. Bob reported on his visit to Beth Shalom for Stephen Smith's Yom Hashoah lecture, while Northern Groups' Co-ordinator Susanne Green recounted her visits to Cracow and

Auschwitz. We all shared reminiscences over coffee and snacks.

Bob Rosner

Next meeting: Sun 16 Oct at home of Harold Rose

HGS lecture on current state of Holocaust claims

This was to have been a lecture (on our first anniversary) by Richard Grunberger. Sadly, it could not take place, but Michael Newman stepped into the gap, with a most interesting account of the state of the various outstanding claims by Holocaust survivors. There were many questions, with answers often including useful hints on pursuing claims.

Paul Cohn

Next meeting: Mon 11 July, 10.30 am. *The Rothschilds - the Musical*, presented by Walter Woyda

Deep down in darkest Norfolk

We met once again in Norwich for a fabulous lunch with highlights provided by Myrna from the delis of distant Wembley. Having watched a video by Magen David Adom, we welcomed Tanya, a new member - a hidden child from Holland who runs an organic farm single-handedly in darkest Norfolk. How many more potential members are out there?

Frank Bright

Next meeting: Sun 27 Nov, 12.00

Ilford: Churchill, Britain and British Jewry

James Taylor, the Churchill Museum's Head of Research, gave us an interesting talk, explaining, among other things, how this new museum is coming on stream and what we can expect to see in the future. Without Churchill at the helm, the outcome for Britain and the Jewish people here would certainly have been different.

Meta Rosehill

Helping Hands in Brighton & Hove Sarid

Helping Hands co-ordinator Sarah Wiles spoke about the organisation which covers the Brighton and Hove area. It is in touch with all the Jewish organisations and has a help line manned 24 hours a day for practical advice and help when possible. It has about 50 volunteers and is partly financed by voluntary contributions.

Rudi Simmonds

Next meeting: Mon 18 July. Prof Scarlett Epstein, 'Village Voices - 50 Years of Rural Transformation in South India'

Essex: joint meeting with Ilford

In a joint meeting with the Ilford Group, we said a few words about our lives, past and present, and were strangers no longer. The wonderful food laid on by the ladies helped to turn the meeting into a most enjoyable party. People who had never met before discovered they had much in common. A sightseeing tour of Southend for our visitors completed the day.

Julie Franks

Next meeting: Tues 12 July. Details tba

Weald of Kent discussion on ins and outs of Holocaust claims

A very good attendance at a meeting at the Camden Centre was addressed by Michael Newman, who explained the ins and outs of his Holocaust Claims office to the satisfaction of most people present. Would it all be sorted out in our lifetime? Jane Dickson kindly took care of the refreshments.

Inge Ball

Next meeting: Wed 27 July. Eli Benson from Magen David Adom

Israeli music in South London

Walter Woyda presented a wide selection of Israeli music: excellent tapes from Hasidic to Klezmer to Gypsy to 'pop', including tapes by famous Israeli artists such as Esther Ofarim and Shlomo Artzi. The most pleasant afternoon concluded with *Jerusalem the Golden* and *Hatikva*. Thank you, Walter Woyda and all the helpers for your hard work and dedication.

Inge Gredley

Next meeting: Thur 14 July. Michael Newman, 'Claims update'

Ilford: fraternising with Southend group

Having been warmly greeted by Otto Deutch over coffee and cakes, we introduced ourselves to one another and heard some sad - and, at the same time, brave - stories. Over a delicious lunch we had ample opportunity for further conversation with the Southend members and many old friends were reunited. We finished off with a short sightseeing trip of the area. A day well spent!

Meta Rosehill

Next meeting: Tues 5 July. Regional get-together in Cambridge

Spreading happiness in Pinner

Bettine Le Beau provided a recipe for happiness as in her book (no longer in print). You must like yourself (so that others warm to you), be positive, look on

the bright side, but don't expect perfection. Life is not all black-and-white and there must be give-and-take in a relationship. Her infectious style spread a message of happiness throughout the audience. *Walter Weg*

Next meeting: Thur 7 July. Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith, 'Use and Misuse of Photography during the Holocaust'

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

5 July Regional Get-together in Cambridge (whole day; speakers and lunch). For details call Head Office on 020 8385 3070

Pinner 7 July. Rabbi Frank Dabba-Smith
Sheffield 3 July at home of Steve Mendelsson

West Midlands (Birmingham) 10 July. For details, call Head Office

Bristol/Bath 19 July. For details, call Head Office

DIARY DATES

5 July Southern Groups Get-together, Cambridge
10-17 July Northern Groups holiday, St Annes
13 July Day out, St Annes
16 August Northern Groups Get-together, Manchester
18 September Annual Tea, Watford
23-30 October Bournemouth holiday
9 November Kristallnacht
Please make a note in your diary - this year's annual tea will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Watford on Sunday 18 September. Ticket application forms can be found in this and in future issues of the *AJR Journal*.

For information about any of the above events, please call us on 020 8385 3070.



Ilford group on visit to Southend

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Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

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Max and Jane Dickson
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KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Paul Balint AJR Day Centre
15 Cleve Road, London, NW6
Tel: 020 7328 0208

KT-AJR Kindertransport
special interest group

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT CLEVE ROAD

Monday 4 JULY 2005
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

**Interview with German author
Verena Rabe, who is publishing a
novel relating to the KT**

Reservations required
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Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
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July Afternoon Entertainment

Sun 3 CLOSED

Mon 4 KT LUNCH - Kards &
Games Klub

Tue 5 CLOSED

Wed 6 Sheila Games

Thur 7 Guyathrie Peiris &
Bill Patrick

Sun 10 CLOSED

Mon 11 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 12 CLOSED

Wed 13 Mike Mirandi

Thur 14 Francis Spiegel

Sun 17 DAY CENTRE OPEN

Mon 18 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 19 CLOSED

Wed 20 Madeleine Whiteson

Thur 21 Margaret Opdahl

Sun 24 CLOSED

Mon 25 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 26 CLOSED

Wed 27 Joe Kay

Thur 28 Katinka Seiner

Sun 31 CLOSED

AJR DAY OUT

Join us for a trip to Westcliff &
Southend Day Centre

Wednesday 27 July 2005

Coach leaving Cleve Road at 10.00 am

£18 per person to include transport,
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Please contact Carol Rossen on
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020 8385 3072

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Members requiring benefit advice please
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Editorials and articles published, and opinions expressed, in *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birthday

Kadish. Belated happy birthday to darling Debbie. Keep smiling. Lots of love from your friend Laura.

Deaths

Goldsmith. Walter, my love, my life, died peacefully on 31 May. He was the most unassuming man, a gentleman among men who will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Hanna.

Hirschfeld. Ludwig Louis. Much loved and caring husband, father and brother. Deeply mourned and sadly missed by his wife, Ann, sons Richard and Barry, brother Werner, nieces Lindy and Peta, and all his family. A patient and wise teacher to so many for so many years.

The AJR sends its congratulations and best wishes to Carl F. Flesch, a former member of the AJR's Executive and Board, on the occasion of his 95th birthday.

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Nina Brailowsky-Buick illustrated a poem in a book which belonged to my grandmother. The illustrations are the original water colours and are done with great skill. The dedication reads (in German): 'Presented to Blanche Dugdale, great-hearted champion of Jewish youth, with grateful respect.' Blanche (or Baffy) Dugdale, a niece of Arthur Balfour, wrote his biography and was deeply involved in the Zionist cause. Any information about either of these women or the connection between them, please contact Alice Renton, Mount Harry House, Offham, Lewes, Sussex BN7 3QW tel 01273 474 456 mountharry@btopenworld.com

Breslau. My late parents were members of the AJR, of which my father was a board member. He lived and studied in Breslau - now Wroclaw - before coming to England in 1939. A lady at Wroclaw University is writing a book about Jews who had to leave Breslau. If you have anything which might help her in her research, please contact me, Stephen Nelken, at sandbnelken@btinternet.com

I am co-authoring a book on the **contribution of German and Austrian refugees to the British Forces in WWII.** If you came to the UK as a Jewish refugee before 1939 and enlisted in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps and/or you were in a fighting unit of the British Forces or intelligence services or ATS during WWII, please contact Dr Helen Fry, 38 Temple Gardens, London NW11 0LL

My mother, Josephine Wilson (maiden name), went to **Bunce Court School.** Anyone with information on Ruth Weingarten, David Muller, Claus Eilemberg, Gunter and Martin Heinz (twins) and Frank Arbach, please contact Corri Thelwall at corrithealwall@hotmail.com

Getzel and Avram Czarny, the children of Leah and David Czarny. The family lived in Czestochowa and Itza (near Radom), Poland. One of their sons was seen during liberation from Blechhammer concentration camp. The other family names are: Blajchman, Krakauer, Szyff, Rekszowicz, Zylbergold, Zajdenberg, Czarny and Majerowicz. Any information, please contact Mrs Annette Renschowicz, 953 East 79th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11236, tel 001 718 531 5789

Joseph (Joe) Folger, nickname **Hesie.** Left Berlin via Holland for Dovercourt 1939. From late 1939 to mid-1941 was at Whittingham Castle, Lord Balfour's estate, where there were 150 children aged 14 to 16. Any information, please call AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070

Hedi Schoop, Austrian ceramics artist who fled to California in the 1930s. Any information please to Margot McKinnon margot.mckinnon@ntlworld.com

I am writing a history of **Scotland's smaller Jewish communities** and would like to hear from or about anyone who came to Aberdeen, Ayr, Dundee, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Greenock and Inverness. Please contact Dr Nathan Abrams, Lecturer in History, Crombie Annexe, Meston Walk, Aberdeen AB24 3FX tel 01224 273 110 n.abrams@abdn.ac.uk

Ruth Sendler, born **Marcus** on 16 November 1909, presumably in Berlin, daughter of painter Otto Marcus and Elisabeth born Sendler. Ruth, a dancer, emigrated to London in the 1930s (?), joined the Royal Ballet, and played a role in the film *The Red Shoes* (1948). I would also like to determine the fate of a **sculpture** my grandfather Arthur Lewin-Funcke made of Ruth in 1923. Any information on Ruth and/or the sculpture, please contact Karin Weyert, Gebr. Meyer-Strasse 48, D-32758 Detmold, Germany tel 49 5232 88873

Louis Shipman, a founder member of AJR, was also a friend of Paul Davids, father of my mother-in-law, Susie Shipman. Any information on either Louis Shipman or Paul Davids please to Terry Freedman at terry@terryfreedman.com

During the Third Reich **Johanna (Hanna) Solf** gathered around her what became known as the Solf Circle, who helped Jews get out of Germany or in any way possible. She and her daughter Lagi Ballestrem-Solf survived the Volksgerichtshof and Ravensbrück. Any information on her please to her grandson, Eugen Solf, at Geschwister-Scholl-Strasse 17, D-61476 Kronberg, Germany eugen@solf-kronberg.de

Anna Stolberg née Klein wishes to make contact with relatives or other pupils who attended Vienna's Hauptschule Leipzigerplatz in 1938. Tel Barbara Dorrity, AJR Northern Region Social Worker, on 0161 368 5088

Harry Yaol arrived Leeds 1939, made aliyah 1947. Any information please to Shimon Soreq at shimons@sde.org.il

Central Office for Holocaust Claims

Michael Newman

Swiss banks deadline

Applications for dormant accounts published on the Swiss bank website must be submitted by **13 July 2005.** The 2005 Swiss list is available online at www.crt-ii.org or www.swissbankclaims.com

Swiss Banks Settlement

In assessing how any residual funds of the \$1.25 billion Swiss Banks Settlement (Holocaust Victims Asset Litigation) should be spent, it has emerged that to the end of May this year \$735 million has been paid out to Holocaust victims. In addition to awards to former slave and forced labourers, compensation has been paid to Nazi victims who were either denied entry into Switzerland to escape persecution or expelled from it, as well as to those who were abused in that country. By far the largest category of awards has come from the Deposited Assets class of the Settlement: more than \$210m has so far been paid to approximately 2,900 applicants.

Claims Conference negotiations

Following successful negotiations with the German government, the Claims Conference has announced that Jewish Nazi victims who were incarcerated for at least six months in certain labour camps in Hungary, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria during the Second World War are now eligible to receive pension payments from the Federal government.

The Article 2 Fund makes monthly payments of €270 to survivors who do not yet receive a Holocaust compensation pension and who meet the strict eligibility criteria, available from this office.

Further help

Written enquiries should be sent to Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to michael@ajr.org.uk Assistance can be provided strictly by appointment at the Holocaust Survivors Centre in Hendon, north London. For an appointment, please ring 020 8385 3074.



with Ronald Channing

At the invitation of the Holocaust Education Trust's (HET) dynamic young director, Karen Pollock, I joined Holocaust survivors, refugees, members of parliament and many other dedicated HET supporters at the sixth annual Student Ambassador Awards ceremony in the splendour of a very crowded Moses Room in the House of Lords. Even the Trust's founding father and chairman, Lord Janner, perched happily near me on a side table while following the well articulated presentations made by the representatives of the four school teams that had reached the final. It was immediately apparent that they shared an exceptional knowledge of the Holocaust and of Auschwitz, which they conveyed with mature presentational skills, a depth of conviction and an overriding sense of purpose.

The Holocaust Educational Trust has been taking students and their teachers to the former Nazi death camp at Auschwitz as the climax to their *Lessons from Auschwitz* course, which uses history to teach the young people of our increasingly multicultural society about the dangers of racism. Open to participants from schools across the country, the course focuses on a one-day visit to the former death camp. All participants attend pre-visit seminars, but the vastness of Auschwitz-Birkenau can be overwhelming and almost invariably a visit is acknowledged to have been a life-changing experience.

The students are asked to share their experiences within their schools and communities, especially on Holocaust Memorial Day. From their activity reports to the HET, four teams of two were invited to present their personal reflections to a panel at the House of Lords. The chairman of the judges, Ivan Lewis MP, outlined the purpose of the HET course, which, he said, was to combat racism among young people in their formative years. 'The Trust', he said, 'takes people from different

backgrounds and religious beliefs and supports the development of an active new generation.' That was the way they sought to tackle discrimination. He referred to the racist comments he still encountered on the doorstep when canvassing during the recent parliamentary elections.

Lisa Hagan and Bhavna Sharma, representing Bablake School in Coventry, gave an alternating narrative like two newscasters. 'There is no why here', they quoted an Auschwitz guard, but today there was a collective responsibility to oppose such inhumanity. The team were active members of Amnesty International, had constructed a facsimile camp bunk into which the inmates were packed to demonstrate how they were forced to exist, and had participated in the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies at Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, whose outstanding work among children continues to receive the support of the AJR.

Asha Patel and Jack Boyce, from Mill Hill School in Derbyshire, saw suitcases inscribed with the names of their former owners as an 'identity card' to each of those who were murdered. It came home to them how lucky they were that they could leave the camp. Walking in a place where so many human beings were destroyed filled them with feelings of horror, fear and grief, but, above all, anger at the silent witnesses and the deniers. 'I will not let this be forgotten', said Asha, whose own moving poem *The Mistake of History*, recalled 'Every day brought death', which she saw as 'the only key to freedom'. They were determined always to speak out against prejudice and fear and concluded with the challenge 'Will you?'

It was no surprise to learn that the teams from Coventry and Derbyshire had both been named as Student Ambassadors for the coming year, but it was clear that every participating student had learned lessons for life.

Newsround

Israel's President visits new Berlin Holocaust memorial

Israeli President Moshe Katsav has visited Germany's newly opened national Holocaust memorial during a visit marking 40 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Walking amid the monument's grey slabs, he stopped in the below-ground museum, where he read a display of letters from prisoners. The memorial, close to the Brandenburg Gate, has finally been opened to the public following years of debate over how best to remember the victims of the Holocaust. President Katsav also spoke of his 'satisfaction' at the way Germany was combating antisemitism and racism. Germany had an honoured place in the international community and was 'a true friend to the state of Israel', he said.

Germany's foreign minister awarded Leo Baeck prize

Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, has been awarded the annual Leo Baeck prize by Germany's Central Council of Jews. The Council's leader, Paul Spiegel, said that Mr Fischer was 'an important part of the process of understanding between Jews and non-Jews in Germany as well as between Germany and Israel'.

Pope Benedict to visit Cologne synagogue

Pope Benedict intends to visit the main synagogue in Cologne during a trip to the city for World Youth Day later this year. He will be the second Pope in history to visit a synagogue.

Austrian far-right activist says he spied for Israel

Peter Sichrovsky, the Jewish former general-secretary of Austria's far-right Freedom Party, has claimed that he worked for Mossad while serving alongside Party leader Jörg Haider when the latter was close to Saddam Hussein. According to a report in the *Jewish Chronicle*, he claims he 'wanted to help Israel. I am no James Bond.'

Holocaust heroes honoured

Yad Vashem has posthumously honoured a Dutch couple and a Pole for rescuing Jews during the Second World War. Albertus and Margaretha Haverkort of Holland and Zofia Wroblewska-Wiewiorowska of Poland, who hid nine Jews from the Nazis, were named Righteous Gentiles.