

## A history of the Kindertransports

The appearance of a history of the Kindertransports is an event of considerable interest to the many AJR members who were themselves Kindertransportees and to the wider community of Jewish refugees in general. Surprisingly, no proper academic history of the Kindertransports in English exists. The last comprehensive book on the subject, Barry Turner's ... *And the Policeman Smiled: 10,000 Children Escape from Nazi Europe*, was published by Bloomsbury in 1990. As its sometimes breathlessly urgent style and its sentimental title indicate, it was written by a journalist, not a historian. Though it remains a serviceable study, it is now showing its age. Nor does the more recent study in German by Rebekka Göpfert fill the gap.

*Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport* by Vera K. Fast, published in London and New York by I. B. Tauris in 2011, promises to be a welcome addition to the field. Fast, a retired archivist and historian from Canada, conducted much of her research at the University of Southampton, thanks to a visiting fellowship for study at the Hartley Library. Her discovery of the papers of Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld, deposited at the library, led to one of the most striking features of her book, the inclusion of the transports of children brought over after the war as a final chapter in the Kindertransport story. For though Rabbi Dr Schonfeld had already distinguished himself by his efforts on behalf of the pre-war Kindertransports, his post-war exploits, in the absence of the government backing that had underpinned the earlier rescue scheme, were arguably his finest hour.

Historical purists may contend that the later transports composed of children who survived the camps or in hiding were not properly part of the Kindertransport initiative that sprang into being after the Home Secretary's decision in November 1938 to allow 10,000 endangered children from Germany into Britain without the usual formalities of visas and passports.

But the inclusion of the post-1945 transports makes possible a broadening of focus and a comparative dimension that Turner's study lacks. The post-war transports may only have numbered hundreds, but they should not be wholly overshadowed by their now famous pre-war predecessors.

However, by adding the later transports, Fast is forced to reduce the amount of space devoted to the Kindertransports of 1938/39, which must



A party of refugee girls at an English reception camp  
PHOTO: WIENER LIBRARY

form the main focus of any study of this subject. Whereas Turner devoted all 281 pages of his book, packed with detail from the files of the Refugee Children's Movement, the main body responsible for supporting the children in Britain, to those who came in 1938/39, Fast devotes only 168 of her 198 pages to them. The result is, inevitably, a sketchier picture; Fast's tendency to concentrate on such admittedly interesting minorities as Orthodox Jewish children and the Christian children designated as Jews under the Nuremberg Laws ('non-Aryan Christians') further reduces the amount of space devoted to the children of assimilated German- and Austrian-Jewish families, who were the large majority.

Given the amount of published research on the Jewish refugees from Hitler in Britain that has been carried out since Turner's study appeared in 1990, it is disappointing that Fast gives the post-war period only some 20 pages, in her chapter 'In Later Years'. This is

plainly insufficient for a study of the settlement of the Kindertransportees over a period of some 65 post-war years, and it leaves much of their later lives in Britain and their interaction with the wider community of the refugees from Hitler in Britain uncovered. Indeed, Fast hardly seems aware of the existence of the large, active and vibrant community of refugees from Germany and Austria that developed in the post-war decades in areas like north-west London.

As if to prove that point, the AJR does not appear in the book's index, rating a mention only in the list of abbreviations (!) and in a couple of footnotes. While Bertha Levertson features prominently, the Kindertransport organisation that she founded, now affiliated to the AJR as AJR-KT, does not. The now adult Kindertransportees appear, in Fast's account, as atomised individuals left to cope largely on their own in a foreign land – 'separated from their heritage and history', as the blurb on the book's inside cover puts it. This is hard to square with the avowed intention of the AJR, a body that numbered thousands of former refugees as its members, to preserve the precious cultural heritage of German Jewry.

Fast says nothing about any refugee organisations, social networks, publications or activities in which the former Kindertransportees might have participated – the Hyphen, for example, founded in 1948 precisely to cater for that in-between generation of refugees who had not reached adulthood in Germany, but who were too old on arrival in Britain to integrate seamlessly into British society. Fast's lack of familiarity with the post-war refugee community also leads her to reach some very questionable conclusions, such as that it was 'very unusual' for former Kindertransportees to marry non-Jews; I would estimate that at least one in five did so. This book is a useful addition to its field, but a truly authoritative study of the subject remains to be written.

**Anthony Grenville**

*continued overleaf*

## Cultural intermediaries

On Sunday, 24 July 2011, a recital was held at the Royal Academy of Music in London in memory of Hannah Horovitz (1936-2010), well known in musical circles as a remarkably energetic and innovative music promoter who introduced a large number of young and previously unknown foreign artists to British audiences. One of these was the famous Hungarian pianist András Schiff, who generously offered to give the recital as a tribute to Hannah Horovitz, as she had organised his first concerts in Britain in the 1970s.



Hannah Horovitz

The musical scene in Britain was transformed by the arrival of the Jewish refugees fleeing from Germany and Austria after 1933. One need only mention such names as the singer Richard Tauber, the composers Berthold Goldschmidt and Franz Reizenstein, the violinist Max Rostal, the three refugee members of the Amadeus Quartet, and the musicologist and broadcaster Hans Keller; and both the opera at Glyndebourne and the first Edinburgh International Festival of 1947, then largely a musical event, were heavily dependent for their foundation on refugee expertise, in particular that of Rudolf Bing. The outstanding quality of the musical tradition that the refugees from Germany and Austria brought with them to Britain was underlined by the programme chosen by Schiff for his recital: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, with a piece by the Hungarian-Jewish composer György Kurtág, written in memory of the pianist's own mother.

The entire event was imbued with the spirit of the cultural riches that the refugees from Hitler brought to Britain. The guests were welcomed by Hannah Horovitz's sister, Elly Miller, the elder daughter of the celebrated publisher Bela Horovitz, founder of the world-famous publishing house Phaidon Press, who with her husband Harvey Miller helped to run the press after her father's sudden death in 1955. Also present was Joseph Horovitz, Bela Horovitz's son, a highly distinguished composer and arranger and for many years a professor at the Royal College of Music. His Fifth String Quartet, originally composed for the sixtieth birthday of the eminent refugee art historian Ernst Gombrich, was played in London in 1988, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria by Hitler which caused the Horovitz family to flee Vienna for London. Genera-

## AJR's 70th Anniversary Celebrations: Reception at Austrian Ambassador's Residence

A reception at the Austrian Ambassador's Residence in London's Belgrave Square in July provided a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the 70 years' existence of the AJR and the remarkable contribution the refugees have made to Britain.

Dr Emil Brix, the Austrian Ambassador, said that the AJR had 'great achievements' to its credit since its founding days, having helped tens of thousands of refugees from Austria newly arrived in Britain. Yet it was important, he stressed, for Austria to face its past and it was doing that. Jewish life, he said, was thriving again in Austria, Jewish cemeteries were being restored, and many Holocaust survivors were 'going into Austria's schools to tell tomorrow's generation of that dark chapter in Austrian history.' He congratulated the AJR on '70 years of impressive, unflinching and tireless work'.

AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman noted that the refugees excelled in

numerous areas of life, including art, politics, science and medicine as well as law, cinematography, architecture and literature. They had also brought their 'distinctive cultural identity', perhaps best represented by the Vienna-born Rudolf Bing, who could take credit for establishing both the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and the Edinburgh Festival. While 'our shared history is seared into our con-



(From left) HE Dr Emil Brix, Austrian Ambassador; unknown person; Martin Reichard, Counsellor (Press & Information), Austrian Embassy; AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman

PHOTO: AUSTRIAN EMBASSY

sciousness', Andrew said, in all the events the AJR had organised to mark its 70th anniversary, it had emphasised that these were opportunities 'to celebrate the seminal achievements and remarkable contributions' the Jewish refugees had made to this country.

Edward Timms, Research Professor in History at the University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies, gave a brief introduction to his book *Taking Up the Torch: English Institutions, German Dialectics and Multi-Cultural Commitments*, whose publication coincided with the AJR's anniversary.

tions of children have enjoyed Horovitz's humorous cantata *Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo*, as TV viewers have enjoyed his musical accompaniments to series like *Rumpole of the Bailey*.

The most famous of the refugee dynasties is the Freud family, as the recent death of the artist Lucian Freud has reminded us; the achievements of the Horovitz family show that the Freuds are by no means a unique phenomenon. Fittingly, the opening tribute to Hannah Horovitz was delivered by the leading historian of refugee cultural networks in Britain, Daniel Snowman, author of *The Hitler Émigrés: The Cultural Impact on*

*Britain of Refugees from Nazism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002). Movingly, Snowman played extracts from an interview with Hannah Horovitz, in which she spoke of herself as a bridge between two cultures, a cultural intermediary who interpreted the nuances of Central European culture to the British and, in her role as Deputy Director of the British Council's Visiting Arts Unit, forged links between Britain and the international cultural community, in the hope of reducing British insularity.

The Jewish refugees from Hitler in Britain have every reason to be proud of the contribution that they have made to the cultural life of Britain. Even among refugees who became civil servants, a pronounced strain of commitment to culture made itself felt. Claus Moser, head of the Central Statistical Office, the predecessor of today's Office for National Statistics, served as Chairman of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, while John Burgh became Director-General of the British Council. Hannah Horovitz acted as mediator between two cultural traditions and thereby also enriched her adopted homeland.

Anthony Grenville

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## A TALE OF THREE CITIES

**M**y brother tells me he was at the Westbahnhof on 6 September 1938 when I fled from Vienna. My parents must have been there. Anyone else? I don't know. My mind has chosen to blot out the moments of leave-taking.

I'm on a train, on my way to Paris, where I am to spend three days on my way to England. I share the compartment with a pleasant young woman who offers me sweets. So I'm going to Paris? Yes. To learn French? Yes. She gets off the train, with many good wishes for my stay in Paris. I'm alone.

The journey takes 23 hours. I try to sleep but can't. We are close to the French border and I can feel my heart knocking against my ribs. Stories

have been circulating in Vienna about Jews being taken off trains, searched, interrogated. A conductor enters the compartment, wants to see my passport (still Austrian without the tell-tale J) and my ticket. I have taken off my shoes and put them on the luggage rack and point this out to him sheepishly. He smiles broadly: 'Quite right too. Off with them if they pinch!'

And that's it. There are French voices. There is France. There is freedom.

For three days I stayed in Paris with relatives who were waiting for their Australian visa, and it took me by storm. I was to live and work there from 1947 to 1949, and each day the city charmed me with its beauty.

On 10 September 1938 I left Paris with a heavy heart for a new life in England.

London, after Paris, was something of a disappointment. It seemed somewhat staid, lacking excitement. True, there were things that impressed me. In Vienna's neat little parks you were sternly told that 'Das Betreten des Rasens ist verboten.' In London's magnificent public gardens no one kept off the grass. People walked across it, children played games on it, lovers loved each other on it. I also admired the picture houses, which seemed to me more like palaces than cinemas.

I actually didn't spend much time in London between 1938 and 1945. There were three short-lived domestic jobs before the war and I was there during the Blitz. The rest of the time I spent in various parts of England.

In July 1945 I left Britain to work for the US army in Germany and, after intervals in

Paris and Sydney, my husband and I finally settled in London in January 1952. And that's when my love affair with London began. It wasn't the *coup de foudre* I had experienced for Paris. London grew on me.

The other day my true-blue friend Dorothy (some of my best friends vote Conservative) complained: 'My dear, London isn't what it used to be when I was a gal!' I know what she meant. When she was a 'gal' London was *English*, London was *white*. Nowadays, anywhere in the city, one finds every shade from the palest white to the darkest black and hears a multitude of languages. True, London in 1952 was different – but not necessarily better. Some folk would let rooms to 'Gentiles only'; others discouraged dogs and the Irish from applying for accommodation.

Nevertheless, even then, there was much to appreciate about London. And I don't just mean such obvious tourist attractions as Westminster Abbey and the Tower. Then, as now, you could escape the hustle of a busy road and find refuge in a tranquil square, just a few steps way. Or you could visit any of

London's great art galleries and museums for free!

And what about Kenwood on Hampstead Heath? Only six kilometres from Trafalgar Square, it offers you not only magnificent views of the city but allows you to combine admiring Rembrandt's self-portrait in an elegant 18th century house with rambling, swimming, fishing and flying kites.

There are three cities, then, vying for my affection. There is Vienna, the city of my birth, where I spent my formative years; there is Paris; and there is London.

Vienna will always be part of me. I go there occasionally and what had once seemed the centre of the universe now strikes me as rather provincial. Yet the street names evoke memories, both good and bad, and I try to hold on to the good ones and keep the ghosts at bay.

Paris, which I visit frequently, will never cease to seduce me.

But there is no doubt in my mind where I wish to spend whatever is left of my life. I know I'll never be English and have no problems with that. But, after almost 60 years of continuous residence, I'd feel honoured if I were allowed to call myself a Londoner.

Edith Argy

*I know I'll never be English and have no problems with that. But, after almost 60 years of continuous residence, I'd feel honoured if I were allowed to call myself a Londoner.*

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**The Chairman,  
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wish all  
AJR members a  
Happy, Healthy and  
Peaceful New Year**

## A Kindertransport memoir

*Daisy Roessler-Rubin sadly passed away in March this year in Ra'anana, Israel, shortly after she had completed this article (Ed.).*

**O**n 5 June 1939 I left Berlin on a Kindertransport. Only two adults were allowed to see us off and we had to say our goodbyes in a special waiting room. The scene remains in my memory to this very day.

Everyone in tears, little children grasping their mothers' skirts not understanding what was going on, older ones trying to keep a stiff upper lip and to be brave.

I was 12 years old and was asked to look after a little girl called Lisa. The volunteers who were to accompany us to England asked most of us 'older ones' to assist with the younger travellers, some of whom were only four years old!

When the time came to leave, we all trooped outside and waiting on the platform were police and SA men. They actually helped us on to the train and a few policemen called out 'Gute Reise!'

We had identification cards around our necks with our name and destination and we were allowed one medium-sized suitcase and a small bag.

The train started to move and there we sat, hugging our treasures – dolls, teddy bears, photos, etc. Now and then policemen entered the compartment to search us and our luggage.

This happened three or four times until we reached the Dutch border. There the train stopped and we were searched for the last time. We crossed the border, stopped again and we were free!

There were lots of people waiting there. They shouted 'Welcome' and handed us food and drinks as well as toys for the younger children. Then on to Hoek van Holland for the next phase of our long, long journey.

Most of us had never seen the sea before, so our misery was somewhat alleviated by the view. We boarded the ferry, were assigned our berths, served a warm meal, and off we went to sleep after a long, sad and eventful day.

On the morning of 6 June we disembarked and stepped on to British soil. It was a lovely day. While our luggage was taken into a large hangar and assembled in alphabetical order, we sat outside on the lush green grass. Once our cases were identified, we boarded a train which took us to Liverpool Street Station. Our volunteers took us across the road into a large hall and sorted us out with regard to where and to whom we would be sent.

A new identification card with name and destination was placed around my neck. I was put in charge of two smaller girls, and we were each handed a ten-

shilling note. It was a lot of money in those days – about a fifth of a working man's weekly wage.

We then boarded another train at King's Cross Station, which, I was later told, was the renowned Flying Scotsman. We were put under the charge of the guard, who sat us down in the dining car. When he explained who we were to the other passengers it was the first time I had heard the word 'refugee'.



Daisy Roessler-Rubin

The two girls soon nodded off, leaning on my shoulders. Everyone smiled at us and ordered food and drink for us. I knew no English, so all I could do was smile back.

Our destination turned out to be Newcastle, where we were met by two ladies. We were driven to Sunderland and reached what was to be our new home: No. 2 Kensington Esplanade, a four-storey, double-fronted upper-middle-class Victorian mansion.

Miss Schlüssel the matron, Miss Rosenberg the cook, Rose and Maud the maids waited to receive us and show us to our rooms. After we had had a bath and a snack, they sent us straight to bed.

Next morning, Regina, the oldest, showed us round the house. We were divided into three groups: little ones, middle ones and big ones – 27 in all.

The house had three large reception rooms, a butler's pantry and the house-keeper's sitting-room with a coal-fired Aga oven and pulleys overhead to dry the laundry and dressers along one wall for plates, cups, bowls, etc. Next door there was a kitchen with sinks, gas cooker, a long wooden table and saucepans, frying pans and other utensils hanging on one wall.

Then there was a back door that led on to a yard with two low buildings. One had once been a stable but now housed a fire engine, while the other was a laundry room with a low, coal-fired oven, on top of which was a huge cauldron for boiling soiled clothes, a table and a mangle. We would

help the laundry women fold the washing.

Inside the house there were three floors with four bedrooms on each. The biggest, on the first floor, had been converted into a bathroom with four washbasins and three bath cubicles.

We were mostly six girls to a room with each girl having separate cupboard space. The beds, bed linen and towels were all brand new.

On the next floor, two rooms were bedrooms for the girls, a third was fitted out as a sick bay, and the fourth was Matron's room. The rooms above were for the cook, the maids and bathrooms.

Downstairs, the largest room was our play and sitting room. As usual in those old houses, there was just one small coal fireplace. It was always cold – even in the summer. Next door was our dining room, with matron's office opposite. Anyone who has seen the television programme *Upstairs, Downstairs* would be able to visualise our new home.

At first, all but the youngest girls went to the local schools, but left after two weeks as the committee decided that the priority should be English lessons.

They hired a most wonderful, delightful and kind retired teacher – Miss Robinson, who came each day. The older girls learned in the mornings and the rest in the afternoons. She looked and dressed like Mary Poppins, as traditional British nannies used to dress. She really cared for us. Every girl received a photo album for her birthday with a loving greeting on the front page.

The postman's arrival was an eagerly awaited event. He would arrive waving a handful of letters from afar.

The summer of 1939 was hot and sunny. We went to the beach crocodile fashion – two by two. People would stop us with good wishes, money for ice cream and even cinema tickets. I remember seeing *The Great Dictator* with Charlie Chaplin.

Sunderland had two synagogues – Rabbi Rabinowitz was the minister of the Federation and Rabbi Toporoff of the United. On Shabbat we alternated between the two and small groups of girls would be invited for tea by some of the congregants. Rabbi Toporoff always conducted the seder for us.

We were looked after by the Jewish doctors and dentists, received clothes and shoes from the local shopkeepers, and were treated well by all.

But then came the big change! It was at 12 midday, Sunday 3 September 1939 that matron asked us to assemble in the playroom, sit quietly on the floor, and listen.

I remember Mr Chamberlain declaring

*continued opposite*

## An eventful journey

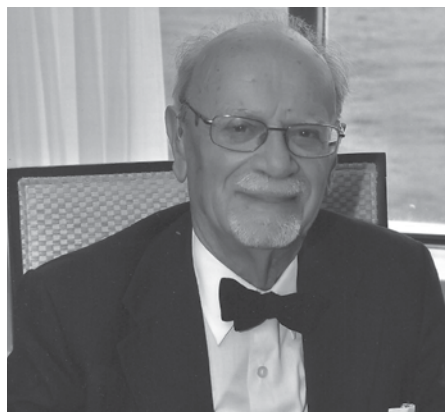
Almost every year for the last 20 years, my wife and I have spent a couple of weeks on holiday in the Czech Republic. We went there again in June this year – but there was a difference. A few weeks before leaving Newcastle, I received a letter from the mayor of Stribro, the town where I was born, inviting us for a two-day visit and bearing the news that I had been awarded Honorary Citizenship of the town, which we had visited once before.

Stribro is a pretty town in western Bohemia lying on a rocky promontory above the River Mze (Mies in German, also the German name of the town) and with a 900-year history. In the Middle Ages, it was famous for its silver mines (silver in Czech is *stribro*) and has always been an important link on the route from Nuremberg to Prague. The town declined in the 17th century due to the ravages of the Thirty Years' War and pestilence, but had a revival 100 years later with the re-opening of the mines, this time for mining lead. This period also coincides with the influx of German miners and the town became predominantly German-speaking. Being in Sudetenland after Munich, from 1938 to 1945 it became part of Germany.

My parents and sister lived in the town in 1913-23 and I was born there in 1918. My father was deputy station master and my sister started her early school years there. At that time, there was in Stribro a Jewish community of about 150, forming around 3 per cent of the town's population. Today the only remaining elements of the Jewish community are the Jewish cemetery, a gate in the ruins of the town walls called the 'Jewish gate', and three damaged Torah scrolls in the town museum.

Our journey to Stribro began about 25 km from Prague, where we were staying for our holiday, with a friend who

drove us via Pilsen, where we stopped at the well maintained Jewish cemetery containing the graves of my maternal grandparents. On our arrival in Stribro, we were met by the lady in charge of the town's chronicle and, after a brief rest, were taken to the local Jewish cemetery. With a few exceptions, the remaining Jewish population of the town perished in the Holocaust. Thus there is a large



Pavel Novak

empty space in the cemetery – a moving sight.

The next stop was the town museum, which is housed in a former monastery and is undergoing an extensive reconstruction. Following a tour of the new premises, we inspected one of the (damaged) Torah scrolls. For dinner we invited the mayor, deputy mayor and the chronicler to a restaurant situated in the house in which I had lived during the first five years of my life.

The next day we attended a festive meeting of the town council, where, in the presence of the local MP, a member of the Senate, the director of the research institute in Prague where I had worked in 1945-67 and other dignitaries, I was presented with a certificate of Honorary Citizenship and a DVD of the remaining text of the Torah scroll from the town museum. In my

response to the mayor's address, among others, I recalled the lives of my parents and sister in the town and their fate in the Holocaust, spoke about my life and family, and linked my Central European background with the town's history.

A couple of days after our return from Stribro, we were driven by the head of the office of the Prague Jewish community in charge of the preservation of Jewish monuments to Hostomice, another small town in western Bohemia and about 40 km from Prague. My father was born there and, as a boy, I spent many good holidays with my grandparents there. I was pleased to see that the small house in which my grandfather had had a draper's shop (now a pharmacy) and the house in which my grandparents had lived (now the home of the local Protestant clergyman and a prayer hall in the former barn) were well maintained.

The nearby 300-year-old Jewish cemetery (see also *AJR Journal*, December 2007), which used to serve the whole district, lies on a small hill hidden by tall trees and shrubs; several years ago it was declared a protected monument. We found the graves, including those of my paternal great-grandparents and grandparents, and the whole space well looked after. A construction of a new, stone white-washed surrounding wall is more than half-finished.

After a brief visit to old friends (who used to look after the cemetery and who remembered my grandparents), and the inevitable coffee and cake, we adjourned back to Hostomice town square for lunch in a pub (now quite a respectable restaurant), which I remember well from my childhood holidays. And then back to our holiday near Prague and meetings with the few remaining old friends.

Pavel Novak

*A Kindertransport memoir continued* war without understanding most of his speech. Immediately afterwards, the air raid siren wailed for the first time. We took our gas masks off our numbered towel hooks and, together with our most valued possessions, proceeded down into the cellar, which served as an air raid shelter.

The cellar consisted of three parts – coal, general storage and wine. We sat on the side of the empty wine shelves clutching our bags. After the 'all clear' we climbed out again.

As the war progressed, the air raid

wardens came to check on us. Our building was at the entrance of an underground railway tunnel and was always one of the main targets.

Gradually everything changed. At first, letters would still arrive, but then they got less and less until they stopped altogether. Most of the girls never saw their families again. I was one of the lucky ones.

Windows were blacked out, food and clothing coupons were introduced, and we had to go to the shelter night after night.

After each air raid houses were destroyed and people were killed and

injured. The beaches were closed off with barbed wire and many of the local children were evacuated to safer locations.

The Refugee Hostel for Girls in Sunderland was one of the best in the United Kingdom. We were never short of anything, but food and clothes became scarcer as the war carried on.

A few of us 'girls', now scattered worldwide, are still regularly in contact, and always remember the kindness and care we received from the Sunderland Jewish Community.

Daisy Roessler-Rubin



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### RELOCATION OF THE AJR CENTRE

Sir – As Chairman of the AJR, I was shocked to read the intolerant and, I have to say, ignorant letter from Walther Kohn. Factually, the AJR is using the premises of Belsize Square Synagogue as a tenant for its Day Centre. We could just as well have gone to a United Synagogue. We chose, however, to go to our close friends at Belsize Square, back to our roots and back to where we started our Day Centre over 25 years ago.

Perhaps Mr Kohn should come and sample what the AJR Centre has to offer, either now at Cleve Road or from January in Belsize Square, and maybe then he will see the error of his ways.

I can do no better than to end with citing a measured and suitable response from our friend Paul Burger, Chairman of Belsize Square Synagogue (see his letter below).

*Andrew Kaufman, Chairman,  
Association of Jewish Refugees*

Sir – As Chairman of Belsize Square Synagogue, Walther Kohn's letter in your last edition has been drawn to my attention by several of our 'shared' members. We at Belsize Square have always valued the relationship we have with the AJR and it is not for me to comment on the content of this letter.

I would, however, like to correct the factual errors. Belsize Square is an Independent Synagogue, which over the last 70 years has prided itself on opening our doors to all Jews of any denomination in our community. I would like to assure your readers that Orthodox, Masorti, Reform and Liberal Jews frequently attend our services and are most welcome.

We look forward to continuing and extending our excellent relationship with members of the AJR.

*Paul Burger, Chairman,  
Belsize Square Synagogue*

Sir – Shame. Sadness. Sorrow. Just three of the sentiments Walther Kohn evoked in me when I read his observations about the relocating of the Paul Balint Centre to Belsize Square.

What is so sad is that he has still to learn the lesson Hitler taught so well – that 'A Jew is a Jew is a Jew' and that specific allegiance, or indeed intensity of observance, is of no consequence.

May our New Year and Days of

Penitence offer the Walther Kohns in our society the chance to seek out the commonalities of all their fellow Jews and together enjoy a year of understanding, peace and harmony.

*Jack Lynes, Pinner, Middx*

Sir – I and my Holocaust survivor parents have long been associated with the AJR and moved from and to all its premises. Many members of the AJR have been, and still are, members of Belsize Square Synagogue. The threats quoted by Mr Kohn are completely offensive.

As a Jew, I was brought up in the United Synagogue before transferring to German Liberale services and congregations familiar to my background, which is a joy. Belsize Square Synagogue welcomes all Jews.

The venue chosen by the AJR's Trustees would have been discussed and approved. Hermolis would have been contacted and other venues sourced. Walther Kohn hoped it would not be too late to find a different venue, but we look forward to welcoming the AJR to our *Kehila* and its pleasant, practical premises.

*Helen Grunberg, London NW10*

Sir – I am a member of the United Synagogue and I find Mr Walther Kohn's letter rather narrow-minded. Members of the Paul Balint Centre go there for their entertainment and to meet and mix with friends. As it is now being relocated to Belsize Square Synagogue, people will be going to the AJR club and not to pray in the Synagogue.

*Dorli Neale, Edgware, Middx*

Sir – Does Walther Kohn really believe that the religiously observant would not go to Belsize Square Synagogue because it is a Liberal synagogue? What appalling bigotry – particularly since Belsize Square does not even belong to 'Liberal Judaism'. It was founded by German Jews as a place to worship when they fled their homeland and settled in England.

Also, when Mr Kohn refers to the Chief Rabbi, may I point out that Lord Sacks is only Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations and not of all British Jewry. I would also like to know where and when Lord Sacks called 'them' destroyers of the faith. Is he referring to 'Progressive' Jews or the congregants of Belsize Square?

Assuming Mr Kohn has quoted Lord Sacks correctly, I should point out that, although Lord Sacks is a brilliant broadcaster, he is hardly someone likely to bring unity to our very divided religion: I remind you of his behaviour at the funeral of his friend Rabbi Gryn and his fatuous letter to Rabbi Padwa.

Lastly, surely Mr Kohn can do better than quote a 19th-century rabbi who said that Reform Jews 'have permitted that which God has forbidden us.' Does he not believe in progress? He obviously does not believe in 'Progressive' Judaism. Belsize Square was founded as a synagogue for German-speaking refugees. I cannot think of a better venue for the Paul Balint Centre.

*Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts*

### PAYING LAST RESPECTS

Sir – I have recently returned from Maly Trostinec, where my dear parents and sister were taken from Vienna on 10 May 1942 and shot on arrival.

Some 1,500 Jews from Vienna, Cologne and East Prussia suffered likewise. Though I knew my parents and sister had perished, I have known the terrible details only since 2002, when I visited the Austrian State Archive in Vienna. This was confirmed by Yad Vashem. Since then, I made up my mind that I wanted to go there, to pay my last respects and say Kaddish.

How I was to go about it, I had no idea. I didn't have the confidence to make this journey on my own. The answer came when, at an informal meeting at the Austrian Embassy, the Ambassador told me about a lady in Vienna who was organising a trip to Minsk and Maly Trostinec. This seemed the perfect answer. So it was that I joined this small group and, with the help of a local guide, we were taken to the forest where our people perished. I said Kaddish and was able to dedicate a plaque on one of the trees to the memory of my loved ones. There was a memorial service at the Jewish cemetery and an extensive tour of the former ghetto.

I came back mentally and physically exhausted, but pleased that I was able to say my last goodbye, which I was not able to do as a child when I left Vienna. All this just two weeks before my second barmitzvah.

*Otto Deutsch, Southend-on-Sea*

### 'THE ENGLISH GERMAN GIRL': FACT AND FICTION

Sir – Regarding the review in your July issue of the novel *The English German Girl* by Jake Wallis Simons: three of our KTA members in the US read the advance copy of this book, which was sent to us. I immediately pointed out errors to the author, but was told it was too late to change anything. Here are some of the major mistakes all three of us found:

1. Until leaving Berlin in June 1939, I and

one of the persons who also came from Berlin clearly recall that Jews were not required to wear the Jewish star then.

2. Jews were able to buy groceries at that time, the same as the rest of the population. Only after the war began were Jews restricted to shopping late in the day.

3. After the war began, there was no longer any possibility of writing letters directly to England.

4. Cutlery was not taken away from Jews then – only valuables like gold, jewellery, and some real silver.

5. It seems very unlikely that the father would have insulted the policeman, who was only trying to be helpful. My own father was grateful to a policeman friend who warned that action against Jews would be taken in a few days.

6. The word 'pfui' was not constantly used by educated people: it only would have been used when things were really disgusting or dirty.

The other doubtful part is about the Kremer family, who were supposedly very orthodox. Since abortions are not permitted in the Jewish religion, it is very unlikely that such a family would have opted for this so-called procedure. It is shocking that any family, orthodox or not, would have done this without at least talking to the girl about it. Of course, we realise this is a novel, but it is based on history and should therefore not have distorted the facts.

*Margaret Goldberger,  
Corresponding Secretary,  
Kindertransport Association,  
Hicksville, New York*

### LONDON'S BURNING

Sir – I am writing on the fourth night of rioting and we are now witnessing arson on a grand scale. Nobody could have guessed this, but it should not come as a surprise. The growing disenchantment of sections of society has been in evidence for a long time. The psyche of the perpetrators of the crime is well known. How is it that their actions were not anticipated? The answer lies in the incompetence of the establishment.

Watching the TV channels induces despair, particularly when hearing the platitudes of the leaders of our society instead of a logical dissertation of the state of affairs, leading to a satisfactory conclusion and correct actions. A propos society, Mrs Thatcher pronounced that 'there is no such thing as Society', only to be contradicted by our PM, proclaiming a 'Big Society'. We don't hear much about that now. Now we shall hear even less about it!

Meanwhile, the hacking scandal is relegated to the back burner, but buckets of whitewash are ready on standby, while gallons of printing ink ensure a large readership. We see the police being attacked as they watch immobile the

arsonists, bomb-throwers and looters, grabbing anything they can find behind the broken glass. The use of truncheons seems forbidden, as are water cannons, because the law-makers fear the culprits would claim compensation under the 'Human Rights Act'!

The world is seeing in disbelief the utter ineptness and sheer incompetence of the British establishment's leaders. Assuming the Olympics will not be cancelled, will foreign ticket-holders trust our police to provide their security? This country, like several others, is in financial turmoil, created by the banks, whom of necessity we trust. The three pillars of the establishment – parliament, police and press – have tumbled. No wonder one can hear the outcry 'There is something rotten in the state.'

*Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx*

### DOZENT LEDERER

Sir – I have just read the letter by Maria Hull (née Lederer) about her father, Dr Richard Lederer. I too lived in Baghdad, from 1935 to 1942, and met her father on many occasions as a number of refugees or escapees from Hitler's regime lived there, sometimes passing through to settle in the Far East. We got to know almost all the German-speaking Jewish refugees, who also became firm friends.

European cultural activities in Baghdad were practically nil, so we often invited each other to parties, where we held mock trials, debates and poetry readings or listened to recorded classical music. We formed a private club and called it 'The Enemies of Baghdad Life', these evenings often turning into drinks parties with home-made food. I still have some of the doggerel I wrote and read out at these events. I also met the young baby Prince Feisal and was invited by his father, King Ghazi, to print a kiss on his forehead on a visit to lunch at the palace.

*(Mrs) Reni Chapman (née Schüler),  
Leicester*

### OPPORTUNITY PASSED

Sir – A few weeks ago, I was catching up on the latest world events on Sky News. As many readers will know, each night they invite two guests to review the next day's papers. On this occasion, the guests were Eve Pollard and Sir Robert Winston. They discussed the death of Lucian Freud and it occurred to me that all three of these people were second-generation Jewish refugees. How incredible! My friend Eve Pollard, ex-editor of the *Sunday Mirror* and *Sunday Express*, has spoken at a number of AJR group meetings but, despite our best efforts, Sir Robert Winston has declined. Sadly, our opportunity to invite Lucian Freud has now passed.

*Hazel Beiny, AJR Southern Region  
Outreach Co-Ordinator*

### 'OBSESSION WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA'

Sir – I find the title of Margarete Stern's letter (June) rather inaccurate. The word obsession usually means a fetish or mania and I don't think her sister's feelings about Czechoslovakia were a mania. I believe her sister had an admiration for a genuine democratic state before the Second World War, a feeling I could share with her. I was born and bred in that country and loved it. Most of us would not believe what happened later.

*Hana Nermut, Harrow*

Sir – I am very grateful to Susanne Medas and Heinz Vogel (July) for pointing out my error regarding the late President Masaryk. It was definitely Tomas Mazaryk whom I had in mind, whom my sister so much admired and whose picture is still in this flat. What I do not understand is that my sister adored him to such an extent even after his death but she doesn't seem to remember all the facts clearly either!

I am learning such a lot through your correspondence pages.

*(Mrs) Margarete Stern, London NW3*

### 'DE-JUDAISATION' OF THE HOLOCAUST

Sir – Kitty Hart-Moxon's harsh criticism of Peter Simpson (May, Letters) is unjustified. If Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) was instituted with the aim of including other mass killings, it should have been called Genocide Day from the word go.

The Europeans initiated HMD to assuage their conscience – they had much to atone for – with Tony Blair coming on board later. We must never forget that Britain shut the gates of Palestine, thereby sealing the fate of countless escapees in their greatest hour of need. The Christian world always felt more comfortable with Jews as the eternal victims, but, since they began to hit back, Israelis, and by extension Jews, are portrayed as cruel oppressors by the liberal-left and 'Jews for Hire'. This victimhood has been transferred to the Palestinians, with Israelis grotesquely portrayed as the new Nazis. The Palestinians too are trying to jump on the HMD bandwagon with their 'Holocaust' and what may seem unfitting today becomes the norm tomorrow.

I rarely attend HMD as I always come away dismayed. However, I did make the effort this year. The MC sounded like an actor with splendid diction, but the words were clearly not his. There were readings, poems and citations, but no mention of the six million. If Mrs Hart-Moxon was there, I wonder if it registered with her that Jews were only mentioned once, included in the tally of victims. Never mind the enormity of the Holocaust and that the 'Final Solution' was about Jews. The uninitiated would hardly learn that the Nazis were out to murder every Jewish man, woman and child.

*continued on page 16*

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

You don't have to be Jewish to be a Hungarian photographer, but it certainly helps. The **Royal Academy of Arts'** current exhibition, **Eyewitness: Hungarian Photography in the 20th Century** (until 2 October), features, among others, **Brassaï, Capa, Kertész, Moholy-Nagy** and **Munkácsi**, many of whom were forced out of Hitler's Europe and went on to influence the course of modern urban photography.

All were Jewish, but not all admitted it. Their influence on European art ranged from fashion photography to eye-witness



André Kertész, *Satiric Dancer*, Paris 1926, silver gelatine print 252 x 203 mm, Hungarian Museum of Photography © Estate of André Kertész/Higher Pictures

accounts of war, from glamour to social democracy, and in some cases abstraction. Their camera work is immediate and vibrant; their sense of alienation gives it edge.

Hungarian photography is the acknowledged root of all photo-journalism, spawning the growth of picture agencies such as Keystone Press. There are controversial war images, for instance Robert Capa's *Death of a Loyalist Militiaman*, which some believe to be a fake. Yet Capa is often considered the greatest war photographer, recording the Spanish Civil War and the D-Day landings.

These Hungarians were rootless, longing for self-expression. They were treated like enemy aliens in the USA and even had their cameras confiscated. Colin Ford, co-curator with Peter Baki of this exhibition, suggests that their photographic genius may be attributed to an inability to express themselves in a foreign language. Knowing my own highly voluble Hungarian family, I am a little sceptical.

For André Kertész, life as a photographer began when he was given a camera as a barmitzvah present. Moving to Paris in 1925, he portrayed Parisian life, often featuring dancers. László Moholy-Nagy was a Bauhaus teacher in 1922 and pioneer of photomontage, in which he explored the importance of light in his experimental images. Martin Munkácsi took up fashion photography with *Harper's Bazaar* in the USA in 1934, moving fashion outdoors, liberating it from the confines of the studio and adding his own dynamic touch.

One of the most moving photographs in the show is Capa's *Collaborator Woman Who Had a German Soldier's Child*. This narrative masterpiece sends shudders through your spine as the young woman is marched through the streets of Chartres by a jeering crowd, trying to remember that she fell in love, not with a Nazi officer but with a man.

The annual **BP Portrait Award**, at the **National Portrait Gallery**, maintains its high standard this year. In the past, the judges have flirted with super-realism, a technique by which the painting so resembles a photograph that you can barely see the difference. This year, **Ian Cumberland's** photo-realistic

portrait of an unshaven, smirking man with a blonde quiff, *Just to Feel Normal*, wins third prize. The judges chose **Wim Heldens's** portrait of a ponderous young man in a black jumper as first prize-winner. His *Distracted* recalls the subtle play of light and shade of the Dutch Masters, while in the second prize-winner, **Louis Smith's** full-length painting in a rococo gilded frame, *Holly*, an artfully draped nude, handcuffed to a rock, like Prometheus, gazes beatifically to heaven. Another nod to the Old Masters, it is a cynical reference to Renaissance artists such as Guido Reni, who painted San Sebastian pierced with arrows.

## REVIEWS

### Theatre

#### Enfant terrible

##### THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

*Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate, London*  
directed by Thom Sutherland;  
produced by Nick Robinson

Forget everything you have read about Anne Frank. Forget the shining optimism, the youthful grace, the sheer wonder of the Dutch girl who became the emblem of the Nazi tragedy. Here is an Anne you have never seen before – an awkward, unattractive, bolshie teenager, a girl on the brink of self-discovery but so loud and loutish you want to hit her. This is not the sensitive, endearing face with the mischievous eyes peeping out of the cover of the famous diary. This is an *enfant terrible*, confined not by walls alone but by the enforced silencing of her own spirit.

One of the bleaker aspects of the story of the girl hidden in an Amsterdam attic with two squabbling families, a cat and a pompous dentist is the point made by her sister Margot: they don't need the Nazis to destroy them – they are destroying themselves.

Director Thom Sutherland seems to stress this point by making Anne less of a hero and more of a human being. In portraying her, Helen Phillips presents the precocious, obtrusive energy of the teenager everyone tries, but fails, to understand. Could the beloved Anne of the diary also be this obstreperous monster? Perhaps – and indeed why not? – but somehow it challenges every myth about the young writer that we have nourished in over half a century of idealised romanticism.

In the play, this sullen Anne holds the tension between her own loving family and the bickering van Pels couple – Petronella, played with whingeing self-pity by Jean Perkins, and her weak husband, Herman (James Bartholomew), who – like the cat – is accused of taking what little food they have from the mouths of the children, including his own son, Peter (Ross Hatt). Anne, as we know, develops a deep friendship with Peter, a gentle soul buffeted by his coarse parents, and it is through this inevitable longing for each other in the midst of an alien, imprisoned community that her self-awareness grows and she moves gradually into an understanding of her plight, briefly touching the adult she will never become.

Sutherland's direction manages to isolate each character within his or her walled-up space and successfully integrate them into the whole. There is Edith Frank (Doris Zajer), hurt and mystified by Anne's rejection of her, seeking comfort in the love and anxiety of her older daughter, Margot (Rachel Lee Kolis), the finicky, self-

indulgent dentist, Fritz Pfeffer (Stephen McGlynn), and the noble, refined influence of Anne's father, Otto Frank (Anthony Wise), destined to be the sole survivor of this tragic family saga.

When the Nazis storm in through the secret door, the families, bitter and truculent, know their fate but will never know their betrayer. Anne's prescience through her diary senses what is to come despite the purity of her faith in the future.

As Otto is left to reminisce, we can also ponder the fact that there are neither children nor adults in this story: all are ageless victims of the reign of terror.

Does it work? Perhaps it does take not an angel but an angry child to tell this story. The characters are faithful to the book and Otto's bond with Anne stands out from the rest. But Anne succeeds only partly in her struggle to leave her boisterous nature behind as she emerges into the chrysalis of maturity.

Gloria Tessler

### A gripping and tragic story

**DER FALL SIMON ABELES: EINE KRITISCHE ANFRAGE AN DIE ZUGÄNGLICHEN QUELLEN**  
(The Case of Simon Abeles: A Critical Investigation of Accessible Sources)  
by Marie Vachenaue

Berlin: Frank & Timme (tel +49 (0) 30 88 66 79 11; email info@frank-timme.de), 270 pp., € 29.80

It is 1694, Prague – a time and place still firmly lodged in the Middle Ages. It is an age of religious intolerance. The Protestants were already exiled in 1620 or forced to convert to Catholicism. The Jews live in the narrow streets of the ghetto, are locked up at night, and are obliged to wear distinctive dress during the day. Some indeed manage to become rich and they do have their commercial and economic use. Yet they have to buy favours and are looked at with superstition, fear and distaste by their Gentile neighbours.

This is the setting of the story of Simon Abeles. Having quarrelled with his father, the ten-year-old Jewish boy flees to the Jesuits (the author points out that they have no relation to the Jesuits of today) and declares he wishes to be baptised. The Jesuits, unprepared, place him in the charge of an already converted Jew for a few days. Simon's father manages to get him back and hides him at home for over half a year while giving out that Simon has been sent away. The child dies of an epileptic fit and is given a Jewish funeral in as inconspicuous a manner as possible. But the Jesuits get to hear of it and are convinced Simon has been murdered by his father.

Nowadays, social workers rather than Jesuits might have pointed an accusing finger at the father. However, from the testimony of those around him, it does not seem that Simon had been forcefully imprisoned in his father's house.

The author thinks that the gravity of the situation and its repercussions might have been impressed on the boy. In any case, we know the father had intended to smuggle him away during the carnival season.

This is only half the story, but it has appalling consequences – for Simon's family and others on whom suspicion falls.

Marie Vachenaue, a German, Roman Catholic and herself born in Prague, came across the Simon Abeles story, became intrigued by it, and spent the next 15 years carrying out meticulous research. The book is indeed a work of thoroughgoing scholarship. But it is more than that. It is a gripping and tragic story that fascinates the general reader too. One hopes for an English translation.

Gerda Mayer

### 'German-speaking Exiles in the Performing Arts in Britain'

The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies will hold a conference on 'German-speaking Exiles in the Performing Arts in Britain' from 14 to 16 September 2011 at the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, 32 Russell Square, London WC1.

The conference will include papers on prominent émigrés, ranging from the actors Anton Walbrook and Martin Miller to the journalist and film-maker Edmund Wolf, the artist Margarete Berger-Hamerschlag, the choreographer Hilde Holger, and the photographer and cameraman Wolf Suschitzky.

There will be contributions by the theatre specialist Günther Rühle on the director Peter Zadek, by Bernard Keefe on 'German as a Language of Music', and by Anthony Grenville on 'Lutz Weltmann and AJR Information'.

There will also be a presentation of Bea Lewkowicz's film 'Continental Britons'.

To view the full conference programme, go to the website of the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies (igrs@sas.ac.uk) and follow the link to 'Events'. To register for the conference, please contact Jane Lewin (tel 020 7862 8966) by Friday, 2 September 2011.

### Nuremberg Library restitution

The Nuremberg Municipal Library is searching for the previous owners, respectively the legal successors, of books in their collection, the so-called 'Sammlung IKG' (previously the 'Streicher-Library').

This collection is a permanent loan of the Jewish Community of Nuremberg to the City of Nuremberg, which states that it has been able to retribute quite a number of books to the families of their previous owners in different parts of the world.

The Library has now compiled, and published on its homepage, an additional search list naming 390 persons from 107 towns in former German-speaking parts of Europe. In its holdings are 2,154 books whose previous owners are known. Further search lists will be published in the near future.

The search list is available at [www.stadtbibliothek.nuernberg.de/spezialbibliothek/sammlung\\_ikg.html](http://www.stadtbibliothek.nuernberg.de/spezialbibliothek/sammlung_ikg.html)

### Lithuanian property compensation

Lithuania's parliament, the Seimas, has announced it will pay US\$ 52 million over ten years in compensation for private property confiscated from Jews during the Nazi occupation as a demonstration of goodwill and 'understanding of the tragedy the Jewish community suffered during the Holocaust'.

The properties in question are currently in the hands of the Lithuanian government, which intends to begin paying into a special compensation fund next year. Part of the funds will be used to restore Jewish heritage sites, while an additional \$1.25 m will be paid next year directly to Holocaust survivors.

Reacting to the announcement, the World Jewish Restitution Organisation said: 'While the amount which will be paid over the next decade represents only a small fraction of the value of the communal and religious property which was owned by the Jewish community prior to World War II, the passage of the law is historic, reflecting the Lithuanian government's recognition of its moral obligation to return or provide compensation for stolen Jewish property.'

Michael Newman

### ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY SEPTEMBER

**Sun 11** Joel Finler (author of *The Hollywood Story*), 'I Didn't Know He Was Jewish! Behind the Scenes of British Cinema' An illustrated lecture including many brilliant Jewish immigrants and refugees: writers Emeric Pressburger and Ruth Praver, directors Zoltan Korda and Karel Reisz, production designers Ken Adam and Alfred Junge, cameramen Otto Heller and Max Green, and many, many more ... At Jewish Museum, Camden Town, 3.00 pm, tel 020 7284 7384

**Mon 12** Jim Burtles, 'Glimpses of the

**Past (a Photo Tour of the Adriatic and Aegean)' Club 43**

**Wed 14** B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Geoffrey Ben-Nathan, 'Defending Israel in the Media' 2.30 pm at the Harts. Tel 020 8954 6502

**Mon 19** Dr Marian Malet, 'Litz Pisk: Dancer, Graphic Artist and Theatre Practitioner' Club 43

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Ernst Flesch on 020 7624 7740 or Leni Ehrenberg on 020 7286 9698

## THE WRONG MUNICH?

A BBC report about Munich's new Jewish Museum started a train of thought. Maybe it's time to visit the city where it all started. Where Hitler settled as an unknown, where Nazism was born and grew, where the *Putsch* was attempted, where the SA was formed, where Germans voted for the Party in greater numbers than elsewhere, where the main synagogue was destroyed months even before Kristallnacht, and where the Nazis' first camp was opened ... where my father was imprisoned.

After all, Berlin seems to give the impression of acknowledging its past: the vast memorial to Europe's murdered Jews, the impressive Jewish Museum with its moving Holocaust annex, the carefully reconstructed Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue, the Topography of Terror, the *Stolpersteine*.

I go online. But the official tourist website is puzzling and troubling. I can see no references to the city's Nazi past. Or to Hitler. Or the Holocaust. The Jewish Museum is not among the pictured museums – I cannot locate it anywhere on the website. Have I missed something?

But I've found a reference to the memorial to Sophie Scholl. She was the student, who, together with her brother Hans and some friends, printed leaflets urging Germans to rise up against the Nazi regime. They secretly distributed the leaflets at Munich University. But the caretaker saw them. They were arrested, tortured and guillotined. They deserve their memorial. But there do not appear to be many other memorials relating to that time.

In Munich, I visit the tourist office. I buy a map and transport guide. There are 25 tourist sites listed – but nothing I wish to see. And no Jewish Museum? Is this the right Munich? Are there two Munichs in Germany? Have I come to the wrong one? I ask if there are any *Stolpersteine*, but am politely informed that the city does not permit these.

I join a guided walking tour. We are led to the Michael Jackson shrine outside the hotel where he once stayed.

Next, the model of Munich's centre, created so that the visually impaired can physically feel the city with their hands – Germany always did respect its disabled. Next, the imposing Frauenkirche. But we are told nothing of its history and architecture – just in and out. I lose the will, apologise and leave. It must be the



New Jewish Museum, Munich

wrong Munich.

But no – look at the map! *There's* the Jewish Museum – not far away, down a side street. In Berlin, the Jewish Museum was signposted everywhere. Here, it's secret, tucked away. It's a strange square building. Windows only downstairs. Lots of brickwork and no windows for the floors above. I feel uncomfortable.

I go upstairs to see the exhibits. There's the usual collection of objects relating to Jewish ritual and customs. And a long timeline, but just with single sentences to cover the events. I hear taped voices of elderly Munich residents coming out of the wall. Is that all? Hundreds of years of Jewish life represented by just this? Maybe the second floor is better. But I find only a temporary exhibition of – well, I don't know – it's all very trendy and modern, but what does it all mean?

There is hardly anyone else in the whole museum – not surprising really. Maybe those visitors walked in by mistake. Or it was too cold outside. The lady in the café is delighted to have a customer at last. Near the exit there is a bookshop – and it's excellent. I must remember to recommend at

least the bookshop. The Museum should just be this bookshop. Look, a historical guidebook detailing 52 places in Munich with Nazi connections. It's surely a banned publication. I look around – luckily no one has seen me. I buy it and am grateful the assistant has furtively handed it over. But there's a man coming towards me. I avert my eyes – phew, he's walked by.

The square outside is empty. I take out my guidebook. The new building opposite is a synagogue. The facades seem modelled on the Western Wall – with no windows. And there is a new Jewish community centre – with restaurant, crèche, meeting rooms, and armed guard. Are the three buildings a new ghetto? ('You Jews go there, while we live here. What do you mean that's not right? Our city has paid for it, so stop complaining!')

Secret book in hand, I return to the city centre and see it anew. Here is the site of the destroyed main synagogue, there is the road where the Nazi salute had to be given. Hitler lived in this house, Eva Braun lived in that one. Here is the Hofbräuhaus, where Hitler first stood up to proclaim his beliefs. And there was the gallery of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition. Here the Luftwaffe had its headquarters. Hitler frequented the Café Heck there, and this is the Torbräu Hotel, where 22 men swore allegiance to Hitler, marking the birth of the SA. Shall I inform the hotel's guests? Here was the shop where Hitler first met Eva Braun, and that was the Osteria, Hitler's favourite restaurant.

I locate the Palace of Justice where Sophie Scholl and her brother were taken and executed. I read that the main station had been due for reconstruction as the vast terminus for new super-fast trains to take travellers across the 'Greater Germanic Reich'. Here is the central police station, formerly home to interrogated and tortured prisoners before they were sent to camps. I learn that the mayor had been driven out of the New Town Hall in the Marienplatz

*continued opposite*

### Intern Lena leaves, having made a 'tremendous impression'

Lena Mangold, an intern from the German organisation Action Reconciliation Service for Peace, has left the AJR at the end of her 12-month stay. Lena regularly visited five AJR members, helped out at the AJR Centre, and spent the rest of the time working at the AJR office in Stanmore.



Lena with 'befriendee' Johanna Waller, who celebrated her 105th birthday in August

'Over the last year I've learned a lot about Jewish history, culture and traditions. It's been a great privilege to hear the members' narrations first hand and to spend time with these amazing people. Altogether, my time with the AJR has been enriching and my expectations have been exceeded by far,' Lena said.

Lena 'has made a tremendous impression at the AJR,' said Carol Hart, the AJR's Head of Volunteer Services. 'Her smiling face and caring nature have endeared

### Northern Second Generation Meeting

in North Manchester  
Sunday 16 October 2011  
10.00 am – 4.00 pm

There will be plenty of time for  
discussions on subjects  
members choose

All Second and Third Generation  
members living in the North  
welcome

For further information,  
please contact  
Barbara Dresner Dorrity  
on 0161 368 5088 or at  
barbara@ajr.org.uk

her to all the AJR members she has befriended as well as the staff she has worked with.'

From October, Lena will be studying Maths at the University of Sussex, a new period in her life to which she is looking forward very much.

### HOOK OF HOLLAND

You are cordially invited to the  
festive unveiling of the sculpture  
'Channel Crossing to Life'

on 30 November 2011  
at 3.00 pm  
at Queen Emmaboulevard

Please confirm your participation to  
Lisa Bechner on  
tel + 49 3060401021  
or at [lisa.bechner@berlin.de](mailto:lisa.bechner@berlin.de)

Please send recollections of your  
transit through the Hook of Holland  
for documentation purposes

Lisa Bechner (previously Schaefer),  
Sir Erich Reich and  
sculptor Frank Meisler  
are members of the  
Initiative Berliner Kinderdenkmal

[www.kindertransporte-1938-39.eu](http://www.kindertransporte-1938-39.eu)

### The wrong Munich? *continued*

for refusing to hoist the swastika. Yes, it's the right Munich. And the book also indicates Dachau.

On the Munich transport map, Dachau is a suburban town, not a camp. Why didn't they ever want to rename the town? People are clearly prepared to live in Dachau. The book states that the camp was established just two months after the Nazis won power – they certainly wasted no time.

At Dachau Station, I notice a leaflet inviting me to stay at the 'Youth Guesthouse Dachau'. It apparently has 4-bed and 2-bed rooms, each with shower/toilet, and there is TV, table tennis and billiards. Where I'm heading had different facilities.

A bus stop is signposted 'KZ-Denkmal'. So convenient – the actual words 'concentration' and 'camp' don't appear. Of course, it's not actually a camp – it's a 'Denkmal' – a memorial – like a plaque or statue. ('It's a camp, stupid! Just say it, it won't hurt!')

Coachloads of tourists and schoolchildren. I see Germany's first-ever 'Arbeit macht frei' sign. An enormous site with vast, open spaces. Empty barracks and prisons. Dachau had its own gas chamber and crematorium, but they're tiny compared with those at Auschwitz.

An execution site in a corner. The area for the ashes. A museum with detailed displays and information – lots of numbers and dates and lists and photos and testimonies, which would take hours. A Carmelite convent, a Jewish memorial, a Catholic sanctuary and a Protestant chapel. Groups of visitors being shown around. Individuals listening on audio-guides.

I visit the archives office. I give the official my father's details, and he informs me: my father had arrived from Flossenbürg and was liberated on 29 April. I had never known these details, as my father had kept silent. Had he arrived on a death march? The official will research this and let me know. I leave my details, look around and leave. Can he be normal to work here every day, and then go home to his family? But they always said that about the SS.

My head is full. So I take the train to the Olympic site. The Games were held here in 1972 (really so soon after the war?) and World Cup finals twice subsequently. The hills were rubble from the war. I see the spider's web design that is such a feature. A very successful Games, I recall – except for just one thing. Here is the memorial to the 11 Israeli athletes and the one German police officer who died in 1972 when the terrorists struck and the Games were

halted. The mention of the one German police officer seems odd in context – but his death must be acknowledged too. A German dying in his effort to save Jews, after all. Like Sophie Scholl. Looks good for the city.

I return to the shops and the bustle. The most affluent part of Germany. Wonderful cakes and coffee. Expensive jewellery shops. Department stores heaving. My secret book is hidden. I got away with it. I am now a normal tourist. No one here knows why I have come. I am safe.

On the flight back I wonder why, when so many cities' airports have named their airports after their famous sons – John Lennon, George Best, JFK, Charles de Gaulle – Munich has not named its airport after its own Sophie Scholl. But then people will ask about her and discover what was happening then.

Clearly Munich cannot erect the equivalent of blue plaques onto its buildings of Nazi and Holocaust interest. But it could acknowledge its past role a little bit more. Maybe like Berlin. Permit *Stolpersteine*. And add other sites onto its tourist website and into its guide books. Just to reassure tourists like me that they're in the right city.

David Wirth

# INSIDE the AJR

## Glasgow afternoon of 'togetherness'

A dozen of us clambered onto a minibus and set off for the Clyde coastal resort of Largs, intent on spending an afternoon of 'togetherness' over cakes, tea and/or ice cream at the famous Nardini's. The bonding excursion was a great success due to the meticulous organisation by Agnes Isaacs and Anthea Berg. *Halina Moss*

## Cardiff 'Children of the Third Reich'

A well illustrated and highly informative talk by the Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn, given both to refugees and pupils from Monkton House School and followed by much thought-provoking dialogue between them and us. *Marian Lane*

## Ealing '21 Aldgate'

The story of a young Jewish woman, Clara, who, to her husband's dismay, takes a job as assistant to French artist Paul Maze, friend and art teacher of Winston Churchill. *Marianne Black*

**Next meeting: 6 Sept. 'Mitzvah Day Charities'**

## Northern Region Groups gathering, Leeds



**Happy 70th Birthday to the AJR:**  
(From left) Rear Hannah Goldstone  
(Third Generation), Tania Nelson (Second  
Generation) Front Iby Knill, Ann Cohen

## Iford 'The CST: Why, When and How?'

We had an interesting, illustrated talk by Mark Gardner, Director of Communications of the Community Security Trust, on the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes. *Rolf Penzias*

**Next meeting: 7 Sept. Bernard Ecker, 'Do You Believe in Coincidences?'**

## Pinner A Jack the Ripper theory

Myra Sampson told us a grandson of Queen Victoria had an affair with a prostitute and had some politically dangerous friends. So action was taken to remove his contacts and the grandson was sent to India. As good a theory as any! *Paul Samet*

**Next meeting: 1 Sept. Ros Adams, 'Cartoons and How to Read Them'**

## Newcastle The story of a 'Righteous Gentile'

It was a full house for a showing of the DVD 'In the Name of Their Mothers', a documentary on Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker instrumental in saving the lives of 2,500 children from the Warsaw ghetto. Irena was recognised by Yad Vashem as a 'Righteous Gentile'. *Agnes Isaacs*

## Welwyn GC Hospitality and conversation enjoyed

We enjoyed Monica Rosenbaum's hospitality. Subjects we discussed included reminiscences of recipes from members' pasts, medication and its effectiveness, religion, and future AJR events. It was lovely to visit a group I set up six years ago. *Myrna Glass*

**Next meeting: 15 Sept. Social Get-together**

## A most enjoyable holiday

The July trip to Eastbourne, my first experience of AJR travel, turned out to be a most enjoyable holiday. From the moment we deposited our luggage outside 15 Cleve Road to being taken back home by taxi, everything was arranged so efficiently that we could just sit back and relax.

After a short coach ride, we were welcomed by the staff of the Lansdowne, a large traditional hotel, where accommodation and food were more than adequate.

A few steps through the gardens in front of the hotel allowed immediate access to the promenades and strolls in the bracing sea air.

We were free to join outings, such as to Brighton, Herstmonceux Castle and the theatre (on an especially wet afternoon). We were even invited to the local *shul*. Every effort was made to entertain us in the evening with a programme ranging from quizzes, card games and a musical performance to discussions. Many members of the group already knew each other, but newcomers were made to feel very welcome. What struck me most about my fellow holiday-makers was their *joie de vivre* and sense of humour.

And for me, there was an encounter with one of the ladies, Rita Brent née Heller, who recognised my name and told me she had been employed by my mother to look after my cousin and me in Berlin in the dark days of 1938. She had clear memories of my immediate family. Her entry in my childhood autograph album, which I brought with me to England, still exists.

Above all, everyone appreciated the wonderful care of Carol, Andrea and Annie, who worked untiringly and cheerfully for us and were always there to lend a helping hand when needed. *Gabriele Weil*

## HGS Court life 'behind the scenes'

We were educated and entertained by the anecdotes of Roger Sanders, who spent his life as a barrister and judge. Court life 'behind the scenes' and interactions between the accused and barrister all spoke of the fundamental humanity of the English justice system. *Laszlo Roman*

**Next meeting: 12 Sept. Darren Welstead, 'The Bank of England: The Story Behind the Credit Crunch'**

## Enthralling afternoon in Edgware

Rob Lowe gave us a most entertaining programme singing and quoting from pieces by Gilbert and Sullivan. We also learned about the personal history of these two men. An enthralling afternoon. *Hazel Beiny*

**Next meeting: 20 Sept. Joy Hooper, 'Tickets to All Parts of the World - The Story of Mr Thomas Cook'**

## ALSO MEETING IN SEPTEMBER

**Kingston upon Thames CF 1 Sept. Darren Welstead from the Bank of England and lunch at home of Susan Zisman**

**Norfolk 5 Sept. Lunchtime Get-together**

**Wessex 12 Sept. Lunch and Alan Cohen, 'Women of the Bible'**

## Essex double bill

We enjoyed a Powerpoint presentation by Bridget McGing on 'My Father's Roses' and celebrated the birthday of Otto Deutsch, who has been chairman of the group since its inception 9 years ago. *Myrna Glass*

**Next meeting: 13 Sept. Tim Pike, Bank of England**

## Café Imperial A jolly good morning

We debated whether Anthony Grenville's article in the July issue was accurate in relation to the sinking of the *Arandora Star*. Members seemed to think it was in 1940, not later - clearly a typo. A jolly good morning enjoyed by all. *Hazel Beiny*

## Documentary on legendary Hakoah swimmers

*Watermarks*, an affectionate documentary directed by Yaron Zilberman, reunites the female swimmers of the legendary Hakoah sports club of Vienna, founded to counter the 'Aryans only' policy adopted by many Austrian clubs in the 1930s. The really memorable event of the afternoon was the arrival of Ann Marie Pisker, one of the original Hakoah team and a sprightly lady in her nineties. She was only too happy to answer the many questions. Also present were Claire Blendford, her son Jeff and her daughter Marion, who showed us medals and a cup won by her late father, also an active member of Hakoah. *Ernest Simon*

**Brighton & Hove Sarid '21 Aldgate'**

An insight into family members at the address in question from the book's author Patricia Friedberg. Clara had a remarkable life, working for Paul Maze, an artist and friend of Winston Churchill.

*Shirley Huberman*

**Next meeting: 19 Sept. Rob Lowe, 'A Musical Presentation on Gilbert and Sullivan'**

**Manchester Important work on the Holocaust**

Caroline Slifkin, a freelance Holocaust educator who uses visual art in her work with schools, treated us to a magnificent show of pieces produced by youngsters. We wish Caroline every success with her important work.

*Werner Lachs*

**Radlett From story to film?**

Patricia Friedberg related the history of a Jewish family in London's East End between the wars as told in her book '21 Aldgate', concentrating on one of the younger members, Clara. Hopefully this story will be turned into a film.

*Fritz Starer*

**Next meeting: 21 Sept. Karen Goodman, AJR Trustee and Head of Norwood Children's Services**

**Enjoyable afternoon in Wembley**

We gathered at our comfortable venue for a most enjoyable afternoon.

*Ruth Pearson*

**Next meeting: 14 Sept. Social Get-together**

**AJR GROUP CONTACTS**

**Bradford Continental Friends**  
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

**Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)**  
Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

**Bristol/Bath**  
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

**Cambridge**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Cardiff**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Cleve Road, AJR Centre**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Dundee**  
Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

**Ealing**  
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

**East Midlands (Nottingham)**  
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

**Edgware**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3077

**Edinburgh**  
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

**Essex (Westcliff)**  
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

**Glasgow**  
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

**Harrogate**  
Inge Little 01423 886254

**Hendon**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Hertfordshire**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**HGS**  
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

**Hull**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Ilford**  
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

**Leeds HSFA**  
Trude Silman 0113 237 1872

**Liverpool**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Manchester**  
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

**Newcastle**  
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

**Rumbustious production**

Rumbustious, uproarious and wildly energetic – this was a brilliantly staged production of 'The Beggar's Opera' at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. The excellent cast put heart, soul and liver into depicting the sleazy low-life of 18th century London. A most enjoyable outing on a perfect summer's afternoon. Thank you, organisers!

*Hanne R. Freedman*

**North London A wonderful morning**

We must have hit a lucky streak – two excellent speakers in succession! Maurice Collins showed us part of his collection of artefacts from around the beginning of the 20th century. Maurice's manner of presentation made this a wonderful morning.

*Herbert Haberberg*

**Next meeting: 22 (not 29) Sept. David Wass, 'Shoplifting – The Story Behind It'**

**Temple Fortune talk on Alzheimer's disease**

Julie Bruntell of the Alzheimer's Society gave us a very informative talk on the various forms of dementia, of which Alzheimer's is the most common. The Society produces many useful booklets and provides advice.

*Harriet Hodes*

**Next meeting: 15 Sept. Separated Child Foundation**

**West Midlands (Birmingham) Annual Garden Party**

We held our Annual Garden Party at the home of Eileen and Ernst Aris in Streetly. It was most enjoyable to be able to sit outside for once and eat the delicacies prepared for us. Many thanks to Eileen and Ernst for being such excellent hosts.

*Fred Austin*

**Next meeting: 13 Sept. Howard Falksohn, 'Children of the Third Reich'**

*continued on page 15*

**Norfolk (Norwich)**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**North London**  
Ruth Jacobs 020 8445 3366

**Oxford**  
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

**Pinner (HA Postal District)**  
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

**Radlett**  
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

**Sheffield**  
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

**South London**  
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

**South West Midlands (Worcester area)**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

**Surrey**  
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

**Temple Fortune**  
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

**Weald of Kent**  
Janet Weston 01959 564 520

**Wembley**  
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

**Wessex (Bournemouth)**  
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

**West Midlands (Birmingham)**  
Fred Austin 01384 252310

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

**AJR LUNCHEON CLUB**

**Wednesday 21 September 2011**

**Mike Blond**

**(Community Security Trust)  
'Safety in the Home'**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT SPEAKERS  
START AT 12 NOON**

Please be aware that members should not automatically assume that they are on the Luncheon Club list. It is now necessary, on receipt of your copy of the *AJR Journal*, to phone the Centre on 020 7328 0208 to book your place.

**KT-AJR**

**Kindertransport special  
interest group**

**Monday 5 September 2011**

**Jake Wallis Simons**

**Author, *The English  
German Girl***

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH  
WILL BE SERVED AT 12.30 PM ON MONDAYS**

**Reservations required  
Please telephone 020 7328 0208**

**Monday, Wednesday & Thursday  
9.30 am – 3.30 pm**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS  
CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

**September Entertainment**

Thur 1	Mike Marandi
Mon 5	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 6	CLOSED
Wed 7	Barry Leigh
Thur 8	Guyathrie Peiris & Bill Patrick
Mon 12	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 13	CLOSED
Wed 14	Jackie Waltz
Thur 15	Simon Gilbert
Mon 19	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue 20	CLOSED
Wed 21	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 22	Michael Heaton & Lynn Radnedge
Mon 26	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 27	CLOSED
Wed 28	William Smith
Thur 29	CLOSED – Rosh Hashanah

**Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3070

**Myrna Glass, London South and Midlands  
Groups Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3077

**Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator**  
0151 291 5734

**Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator**  
020 8385 3070

**Agnes Isaacs, Scotland and Newcastle  
Co-ordinator**  
0755 1968 593

**Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3077

**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

**Child Survivors Association-AJR**  
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Death**

**Holm, Gerald (Hans Gerhard)** Passed away on 27 July 2011 after a short illness, aged 82. Sadly missed by his sister Hanna and all his family and friends.

**CREAM TEA**

at AJR Centre, Cleve Road

**Sunday 11 September**

2.30 – 5.00 pm

Cost £5.00

*To book please contact the Centre on 020 7328 0208*

**TRIP TO ISRAEL**

We are hoping to arrange a trip to Israel from 29 November to 8 December 2011 staying half-board at the King Solomon Hotel in Netanya.

£1,300 pp in twin/double room, £200 supplement for single room

Price includes El Al flights from Heathrow, transfers to and from hotel, sightseeing most days, entrance fees where necessary.

We have been able to book the excellent guide we had on our last trip.

For further details, please contact Carol Rossen or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070.

This will be a fairly full itinerary which will involve some walking.

**ROBERT SCHON**

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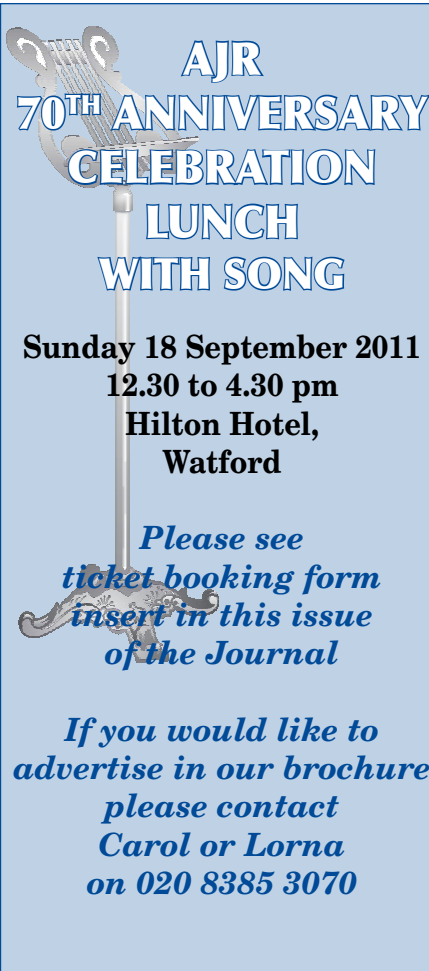
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**AJR  
70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION  
LUNCH  
WITH SONG**

**Sunday 18 September 2011  
12.30 to 4.30 pm  
Hilton Hotel,  
Watford**

*Please see  
ticket booking form  
insert in this issue  
of the Journal*

*If you would like to  
advertise in our brochure  
please contact  
Carol or Lorna  
on 020 8385 3070*

**AJR CENTRE  
AT BELSIZE SQUARE  
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**From January 2012, the  
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Tuesdays and Thursdays  
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at  
**NEW NORTH LONDON  
SYNAGOGUE, FINCHLEY**  
**Thursday 8 September 2011**  
All-day event including  
lunch and transport

Our guest speaker, Jonathan Wittenberg, Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue, was born in Glasgow into a family of German-Jewish origins. Rabbi Wittenberg will talk about his epic walk from Frankfurt to Finchley. On the centenary celebrations of the Westend Synagogue in Frankfurt, where his grandfather was the Rabbi, he lit a torch from the Eternal Light at the synagogue and walked, accompanied by his dog, through Germany and Holland to rekindle the Eternal Light at NNL's new building.

Places limited – be sure to book early!  
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For further details, please  
call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070

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**CONTEMPORARY PAINTING  
AND SCULPTURE**

## OBITUARY

### Alfred Huberman, date of birth not recorded, died 28 May 2011

**B**orn in Pulawy, Poland, the only boy with five sisters, Alfred had the most wonderful family life. At the age of 13, however, he was thrust into the centre of the Holocaust.

Alfred's war was spent in the horrific world of five slave labour and concentration camps. The war started for him when, on 1 September 1939, his family home was destroyed by German bombs. The family was ordered into the ghetto, where he was separated, first from his mother and sisters and then from his father.

His first concentration camp was Skarzysko-Kamienna, where he was put to work in the ammunition section. The Polish staff worked four-hour shifts with meal breaks and, because of the toxicity in the atmosphere, were given milk to drink. Alfred worked twelve-hour shifts, night or day, on ersatz coffee, a so-called soup and one piece of bread. The average life expectancy for prisoners was three months. Alfred survived for 18 months in these conditions, where the TNT powder ate into the skin and internal organs. He put his survival down to a woman who would sometimes secretly pass him the burnt scrapings from the milk pan.

From there he was selected to work in Czestochowianka, where he unloaded railway wagons containing iron ore or quicklime. Conditions were horrific. He



With great-grandniece Elisa

was sent to Buchenwald and then to its subsidiary, Rehmsdorf. Since the barracks were not completed, they were forced to spend the night sleeping on the ground in a snow-covered field. They were then loaded on to a cattle train. During the journey, the US air force bombed the train and the surviving prisoners began a death march. Alfred was among the few prisoners who arrived in Theresienstadt.

Malnourished and suffering from TB, he was liberated and given sanctuary by the British government, who agreed that 1,000 Jewish orphans could come to England. He was one of only 732 who could be found. This group are known as 'The Boys'.

Alfred then began the search for his family, and discovered they had all been murdered. This was his perception until

he was reunited with his oldest sister, Idesa, who had survived Auschwitz. He described this as his personal miracle. Her legacy provided him with two wonderful nieces and their families. He married Shirley, whom he adored. He worked tirelessly and built up a very successful tailoring business. Having arrived in this country as an orphaned refugee, he built a wonderful family, with three children whom he encouraged to achieve so much, along with six grandchildren and a warm extended family.

Alfred was a loving, caring, thoughtful and, above all, extremely sensible man, with a marvellous sense of humour and an intelligence way beyond his meagre schooling. He cycled, played chess, tennis and football and won medals for table tennis in the county league. He had an exceptional talent for languages and the written word. He was also a member of the AJR's Brighton Group, which he very much enjoyed attending.

Despite his early experiences, Alfred was never bitter and made many friends, seeing only the best in people. He overcame many serious illnesses and maintained his zest for life. Loved and admired by everyone who met him, Alfred made an immediate and lasting impression and will be missed by many.

**Caroline Spencer**

### INSIDE THE AJR *continued from page 13*

#### **Edinburgh A very royal year**

In keeping with a very royal year, we visited the Dürer exhibition at the Queen's Gallery at Holyroodhouse Palace. On a glorious day, we enjoyed pleasant chat, tea and cakes in the courtyard café under the parasols.

*Jonathan Kish*

#### **Hendon A filming family**

Howard Lanning's father, his four sons and now the third generation have been working in the UK film industry for 80 years. He showed clips from films he and his family have helped to make, such as *Gandhi*, *Batman*, *Tomb Raider* and *Gulliver's Travels*.

*Shirley Rodwell*

**Next meeting: 26 Sept. Bridget McGing, 'My Father's Roses'**

#### **Cleve Road A book with a twist in the tail**

Pat Fielding led us through two world wars and from the East End to Chelsea and the south coast. We found out much about Winston Churchill and his life as an artist, including his close association with war artist Paul Maze, who both feature in *21 Aldgate*, a book with a twist in the tail.

*Esther Rinkoff*

**Next meeting: 27 Sept 'The CST: Why, When and How?'**

#### **Hull Haunted by memories**

Memories continue to haunt us. We discussed family roots. Some members, having come over with the Kindertransport, knew next to nothing of their

families. As a result, their loss persists. As has been said before, there are so many stories and each one is different.

*Rose Abrahamson*

**Next meeting (provisional): 23 Oct. At home of Olive Rosner**

#### **Sheffield CF Revisiting our place of birth**

About 15 of us, meeting at the home of Steve and Hilary Mendelsson, discussed our feelings when revisiting the place where we had lived before coming to this country. Most of us had had a very happy experience. The afternoon was completed with a delicious tea and lots of friendly chatter!

*Renee Martin*

**Next meeting: 6 Nov. Suzanne Bardgett from the Imperial War Museum, London**



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL



### From grumblers to demonstrators

Israelis are accustomed to grumbling about everything – the government, the cost of living and, above all, the weather. They are not – or at least have not been in the past – accustomed to doing anything much about any of them. This is in contrast to the French, for example, who are habitual *habitués* of demonstrations and turn out onto the streets in large numbers almost at the drop of a hat. The Arabs of the surrounding countries have caught on to the idea and are demonstrating in impressive numbers, in many cases displaying admirable courage in doing so.

Of course, there have been exceptions to the apathy of the average Israeli, and I still remember the lengthy and vociferous demonstrations that followed the Yom Kippur War, when ‘the people’ managed to dislodge the incumbent government and force an election. But that was purely political, and incidentally proved to be the beginning of the end for the Labour Party in Israel, a trend that eventually emerged in many other Western countries.

The demonstrations evident at present in Israel (or perhaps recently by the time this article appears), despite the stifling heat and obvious discomfort of many of the demonstrators, seem to be of a

different cast. Perhaps they are politically motivated, but to all intents and purposes they appear to focus entirely on the issues that affect the average man or woman in the street – the cost of living, the price of housing, the wages of professionals and the level of taxes.

One cannot help but sympathise with the demonstrators, many of whom are young people struggling to make their way in life. But the protests extend to all generations and classes (except the wealthy, of course). And there’s the rub: it’s all about economics and the need to keep the country on an even economic keel.

Netanyahu, as a consummate politician and free-market adherent, is trying to hold the stick at both ends, appeasing the masses while not rocking the financial boat, which is a bit of a tall order (forgive the mixing of metaphors!). He may throw a couple of sops to the general public in the form of concessions here and there, possibly even the reduction of a tax of some kind, but cannot risk incurring the displeasure of the markets. The main solution he seems to be proposing is to set up a commission. Stanley Fischer, the widely-esteemed Governor of the Bank of Israel, has spoken of the justice of some

demands while mentioning the fragility of the national economy more or less in the same breath.

The global financial crisis, which is still fresh in people’s memories and continues to have repercussions in countries and banking systems all over the world, together with the political brinkmanship involved in the recent US vote on the budget, all cast a long shadow over any economic measures taken in Israel. It would seem that the average demonstrator is either unaware of these considerations or declines to take them into account.

The question that remains to be answered is what will cause the demonstrators to go home and the tent-dwellers to strike camp. In Spain, the encampments were disbanded only after new elections were called. In Egypt, at least initially, only Mubarak’s resignation appeased the masses, but other considerations then assumed greater importance. The Tunisian president had the prescience to flee while he still could, and neither Bashar al-Assad nor Muammar Gaddafi has given up yet.

Although the so-called Arab Spring may have helped to inspire the demonstrations to some extent, since Israel is a democracy even the political opposition will be heard if there are enough marchers and their demands resonate. At least there is no likelihood of demonstrators being gunned down indiscriminately. The worst that can happen is that a new election will be held – which might not be such a bad thing, after all.

**Dorothea Shefer-Vanson**

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

HMD is the cause of the steady de-Judaisation of the Holocaust and the day turned into an all-embracing event, where Jews by name hardly feature.

*Rubin Katz, London NW11*

#### THE BOOK WITH ‘INCORRECT QUOTATIONS’

Sir – Although I fully agree with Thea Valman’s excellent review of *The Hare with Amber Eyes* in your June issue, I was surprised to find that in this book almost every quotation or translation from the German is incorrect. Two examples among many: Thomas Mann’s ‘Gedanken im Kriege’ is here rendered as ‘Thanks be for War’;

‘Liebestod’ is translated as ‘Love of Death’.

Though somewhat irritating, these errors do not detract from the overall enjoyment of this memoir.

*Shoshanah Hoffman, London NW4*

#### TOURING IN TRANSYLVANIA

Sir – Two years ago my wife and I attended a talk at the Romanian embassy in London on the restoration of the synagogue in Medias, Transylvania. The talk was given by a young German woman.

Recently, while touring in Transylvania, we decided to look up the synagogue in this picturesque town. We easily found the magnificent building, which was of

course closed. Going next door to find someone to show us the synagogue, we were met by a young woman – the lady who had given the talk in London. In a few days she was leaving for Washington to try to raise the much-needed money to continue the restoration. Part of the ground floor is beautiful and in reasonable condition; upstairs is a sorry sight, with hundreds of prayer books – some from the eighteenth century – piled high. The aim is to turn the building into a cultural centre, while saving much of the original. There’s not a single Jew left in Medias.

*Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath*

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