

AJR Journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

A centenary

Rather to my surprise, I calculate that I have now written the front two pages of this Journal for 100 consecutive issues, since becoming Consultant Editor in January 2006. That is some 150,000 words. My workload has been greatly lightened by the support and co-operation that I have received from our Executive Editor, Dr Howard Spier, who month after month has shouldered the demanding task of putting the entire 16 pages of the Journal together. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking Dr Spier and all the others who have contributed to the *Journal* over the past years, not least those readers whose letters and comments have spurred me on and kept me aware of what the *AJR Journal* means to our members.

In writing my articles, I have taken much of my inspiration from my predecessors, Richard Grunberger, who acted as Editor from 1988 to 2005, and Werner Rosenstock, Editor from January 1946 to December 1982. Many readers will remember Grunberger's articles, lucid and concise in their presentation of material, trenchantly argued, informed by a remarkable breadth of historical and cultural knowledge, and frequently laced with a strong dose of polemic. Rosenstock, on the other hand, an editor who largely kept his own views and personality out of the Journal, is no longer as well remembered as he deserves; his articles were almost all unsigned or at most had the bare initials 'WR' at the end. So, despite my great debt to Grunberger, this article is written in tribute to Rosenstock, the founding father of what started out as *AJR Information*.

Werner Rosenstock was born in Berlin in 1908 and studied law but his career as a lawyer was cut short in 1933. He held positions in the organisations set up under the Nazis to represent the Jews of Germany; in the anguished months between the anti-Jewish pogroms of November 1938 and the outbreak of war, he worked in departments responsible for the transport of unaccompanied Jewish children to Britain and for organising the emigration of Jewish men released from concentration camps who were to be accommodated at Kitchener Camp

in Kent. He arrived in London with his wife Susanne and young son Michael in August 1939, was briefly interned in 1940, and in 1941 joined the newly founded AJR.

Rosenstock acted as General Secretary



Cover page of first issue of *AJR Information*

(from 1976 Director) of the AJR almost uninterruptedly from its foundation in summer 1941 until his retirement at the end of 1982. From January 1946, he combined this with the position of Editor of the Journal, initially sharing it with two men with journalistic experience, Ernst G. Lowenthal, who left for Germany in 1946, and Herbert Freeden (Friedenthal), who left for Israel in 1950. During his 41 years of service, Rosenstock probably contributed more than any other single person to making the AJR what it is. On his 80th birthday, C. T. Marx, AJR Chairman from 1976 to 1994, stated simply: 'He was prominent in AJR affairs from its inception and for so many years that, in many people's

mind, AJR and WR became synonymous.'

More than anyone else, it is to Werner Rosenstock that the Journal owes its house style, its appearance, its choice of contents and indeed much of its essential spirit and character. The Journal's principal concern was to inform its readers about matters that were of the greatest immediate significance to them, in Britain, Germany and Austria, and Palestine/Israel. However, it was the Journal's policy, as the publication of a group of refugees, to remain strictly neutral in matters of British politics not directly relevant to them; as far as party politics or elections were concerned, it limited its coverage to specifically Jewish concerns (for example, it largely restricted its reports on the early post-war general elections to detailing the numbers of Jewish MPs elected to each parliament). In the early years, the process of naturalisation probably occupied more column inches than any other British-based topic.

The Journal's front page was divided into two sections: the left-hand column was taken up by brief, unsigned editorial articles on news items or topics of immediate current interest, while the other two columns were devoted to a longer, more reflective piece, often by a named contributor. Inside, the Journal soon developed regular columns, mostly unsigned. 'Home News' reported on events and developments in Britain generally alongside columns covering more specific areas such as 'In Parliament', 'What the Press Says' or 'Law and Life'. 'News from Germany', and later 'News from Austria', kept readers informed about their countries of origin and the pressing matter of restitution soon gave rise to numerous lengthy and complex articles. After 1948, reports from the newly established Jewish state appeared prominently, often under the heading 'News from Israel'. The column 'Anglo-Judaica' reported on events in Anglo-Jewry. The Journal soon developed an impressive cultural dimension, including book reviews, arts features and a column on the cultural life of the refugees from German-speaking



Mittleuropa by PEM (Paul Marcus).

Over the years of Rosenstock's editorship, *AJR Information* developed its own particular line on certain key topic areas. Probably the most important was that of the German-Jewish past, which inevitably led on to the highly sensitive question of relations between the Jews from Germany and the Germans in the post-Holocaust era. Already at an early stage, the Journal began to mark the anniversaries of milestone dates in the persecution of the Jews of Germany by the Nazis, like the boycott of Jewish businesses on 1 April 1933 and the anti-Jewish pogrom of 9/10 November 1938. The boycott, the first official measure to be taken by the Nazis against the Jews, was seen as the first act of what became a war against the Jews, as the November pogrom marked the first escalation of that war into open, government-sponsored violence, anticipating the Holocaust. The German Jews were thus allocated a special position in the history of the Nazi years. Though they suffered less in numbers than the Jews of Eastern Europe, they experienced Nazi persecution first and over a longer period of time, and at the hands of their own countrymen.

The Nazi years called into question the entire orientation of the German-Jewish community in the period of its acculturation and secularisation, from the late 18th century until 1933, and the legacy of its achievement in the cultural, intellectual and spiritual spheres. For his part, Rosenstock rejected the view that the Jews of Germany, in opting for the path of emancipation and acculturation, had embarked on a dangerously deluded course whose folly was revealed with tragic starkness after 1933; and he denied that the German Jews' adoption of German culture and their aspiration to assimilate into German society was a flawed and misguided enterprise doomed in advance to failure.

Rosenstock confronted these sensitive issues throughout his editorship; he could never forget the crimes committed by the Nazis against the Jews. But he insisted on the importance of commemorating and

AJR Chief Executive
Michael Newman

Directors
Carol Rossen
David Kaye

Head of Department
Sue Kurlander Social Services

AJR Journal

Dr Anthony Grenville Consultant Editor

Dr Howard Spier Executive Editor

Andrea Goodmaker Secretarial/Advertisements

Views expressed in the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

Kindertransport Reunion DVD

We are delighted to announce that a special commemorative DVD with footage of the Kindertransport Reunion at JFS and the reception with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales at St James's Palace is now available for purchase (£5 including packing and postage).

Filed and produced by Alan Reich, the DVD will serve as a poignant memorial to the two historic gatherings of Kinder and their families that took place in June 2013 as part of the events the AJR organised to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport.

To receive your copy, please call
Andrea Goodmaker on 020 8385 3070
or email kt@ajr.org.uk

preserving the heritage of the German-Jewish past. The lasting value of that heritage was a constant theme in the Journal. While admitting that the relationship between the German Jews and their homeland was uniquely problematical, its Editor nevertheless maintained that the cultural achievements of German Jewry constituted one of the highpoints in Jewish history.

AJR Information condemned the crimes committed under the Nazis without reservation and pilloried any manifestation of renewed anti-Semitism or neo-Nazism, but it also acknowledged the healthier developments taking place under the new conditions of democracy in West Germany. Rosenstock himself experienced that spirit when he travelled to Cologne with AJR Chairman Alfred Dresel in March 1964 to attend a mass rally held at the closure of the exhibition 'Monumenta Judaica'. Though, as Rosenstock put it, 'a visit to Germany must by necessity arouse mixed feelings', he was evidently impressed by the goodwill shown by the over 130,000 Germans who visited the exhibition and by the willingness of thousands more to participate in a rally held in support of a Jewish event.

Rosenstock also took a broadly positive view of the experience of the Jewish refugees from Nazism in Britain. His articles did not ignore the mass internment of refugees (including himself) in 1940 or the persistence of anti-Semitic prejudice in British society after 1945. Nevertheless, he regarded the British with affection, even admiration, believing that in the decades since their arrival the refugees had been able to attain a largely satisfactory position in British society. Rosenstock took a notably favourable view of British policy in the period 1938/39, citing the large number of Jewish refugees from the

SPECIAL EVENT

Judith Kerr

Sunday 29 June 2014, 3 pm

at the London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC)

We are delighted that the celebrated author Judith Kerr will be our guest of honour at a special event we are organising with the London Jewish Cultural Centre.

Judith has become part of the fabric of British life and her books have enthralled and inspired children for many decades.

We especially encourage the families of our members – Second and Third (and possibly even Fourth) generations – to come along. We are thrilled that Judith has agreed to read from her books *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and *When the Tiger Came to Tea* to younger members of the audience. She will also reflect on her own experiences and take questions from guests.

Please book early to avoid disappointment and join us for what we are sure will be a memorable gathering by purchasing your tickets through the LJCC website www.ljcc.org.uk or by calling AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070.



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on 020 8385 3070



Third Reich admitted to Britain at the time when Nazi persecution was intensifying and most other countries were limiting their intake of Jews: 'It cannot be stressed often enough that between the pogroms of November 1938 and the outbreak of war, Britain admitted more Nazi victims from Central Europe than any other single country.' This was not a view shared by all AJR members but, coming from Rosenstock, it earned their respect.

Anthony Grenville

1) Heinz Biberfeld (Berrys) and Gerd Lederman at Garnethill Hostel, 1943; 2) group of former refugees, Glasgow, 1953 (Wuga Collection); 3) group including Yutta and Ursula Salomon, Hamburg; 4) Garnethill Boys' Hostel, 1939



A SCOTTISH HOLOCAUST STUDY CENTRE

The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre is rapidly expanding its holdings on the Holocaust era, documenting the experiences of those who came here on the Kindertransport, as refugees from Central Europe during the 1930s, or as survivors after the War.

There is a fascinating story to tell of how many hundreds made a new life in Scotland and of the contribution they made to Scottish society. Hundreds of refugee physicians obtained their British qualifications at the Royal Colleges of Medicine and Surgery in Scotland, while refugee artists and architects such as Hilda Goldwag, Paul Zunterstein and Isi Metzstein enriched the local scene. Scottish Jews and others set up refugee hostels for children and young people, enabling their rehabilitation and integration.

These included the Boys' Hostel at Garnethill, the Quaker-run Women's Hostel in Renfrew Street, Birkenhead (Skelmorlie), Whittingehame Farm School and Polmont House.

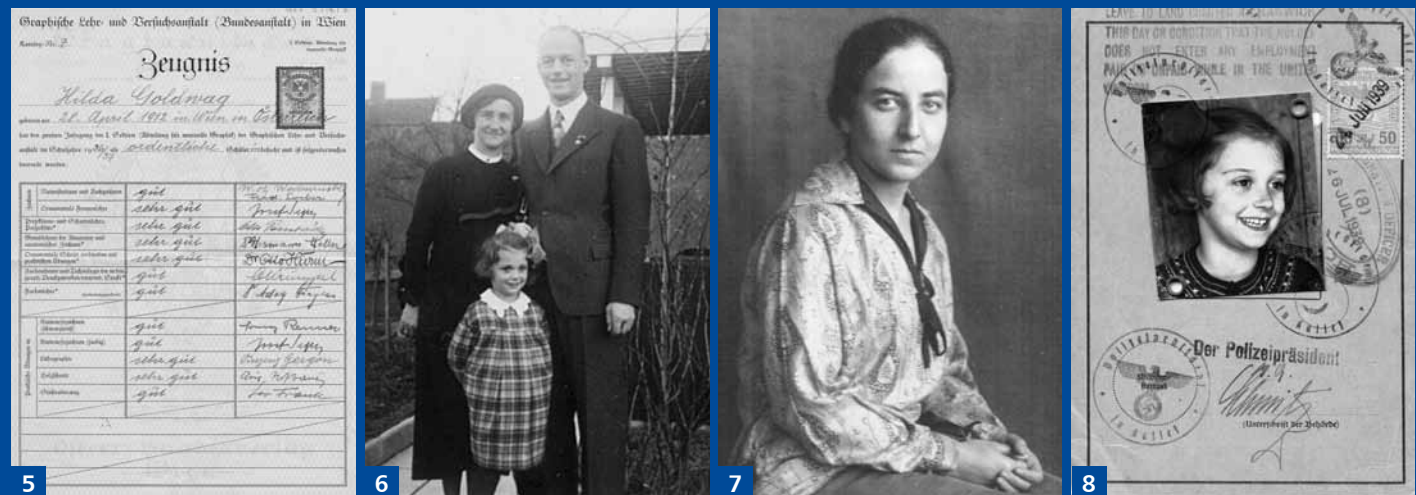
In recent times, some of these former refugees or their families have been passing on their documents, photographs and memorabilia to be preserved at the Archives Centre. The Dorrith M. Sim Collection comprises over 1,500 items. Another important collection consists of the papers of Viennese artist Hilda Goldwag.

There is now a marked increase in interest in this period, with the Archives Centre receiving enquiries from schools, universities and others. Recognising this interest, we met last year the First Minister in the Scottish Parliament and he pledged support for a feasibility study, now under

way, to set up a Scottish Holocaust Study Centre at Garnethill Synagogue, as an adjunct of the Archives Centre. Two consultation meetings have taken place, attracting former Kinder and survivors, members of the Second and Third Generations, teachers and educators, and other stakeholders.

If you wish to be kept informed as this project unfolds, or if you found refuge in Scotland and have for us a story or photographs, documents or memorabilia, please contact Deborah Haase (see below).

Deborah Haase and Harvey Kaplan
Scottish Jewish Archives Centre
Garnethill Synagogue
129 Hill Street, Glasgow G3 6UB
T: 0141 332 4911
E: info@sjac.org.uk
www.sjac.org.uk



5) art school diploma (1937) of Hilda Goldwag, who came to Glasgow from Vienna; 6) Dorrith Sim with her parents Hans and Trude in Kassel, Germany (Dorrith M. Sim Collection); 7) dermatologist Dr Fanny Dorothea Cohn from Breslau; 8) identity card of Dorrith Oppenheim (Sim), who came to Scotland on the Kindertransport in 1939

The story of **Schmuel Gonzwa**

My father, Schmuel Gonzwa, was born in 1897 in Częstochowa. Always uppermost in his mind were the pogroms the Jews suffered each Easter when pilgrims came to worship at the local shrine of the Black Madonna. Due to local anti-Semitism my father was not taught Polish but was brought up entirely on Yiddish.

In 1918 he was in danger of being called up by the Russian army. The military demanded 25 years and, for him as a Jew, it would have been a horrific and probably fatal experience. He decided with much regret to leave his widowed mother and siblings and flee to Frankfurt am Main with the Schneider Yeshiva (Seminary).

Luckily for him, this brought him into contact with the Schwarz family – my grandparents, very orthodox under Aguda auspices. They ran a very successful carpet emporium and were comfortably settled, their family tree going back to the eleventh century in Germany. They considered themselves Germans of the Mosaic persuasion. My grandmother was an enthusiastic *mitzvah jaeger* and never missed an opportunity to give succour to the poor.

In this case, she delighted in inviting an impoverished *yeshiva bochor* (seminary student) for Friday-night dinner at the Schwarz home. However, notwithstanding her zeal for *mitzvot* (good deeds), she demanded a high standard of table manners and, regrettably, some of the poor young boys who came to the house had no idea of what was expected from them in the way of table manners.

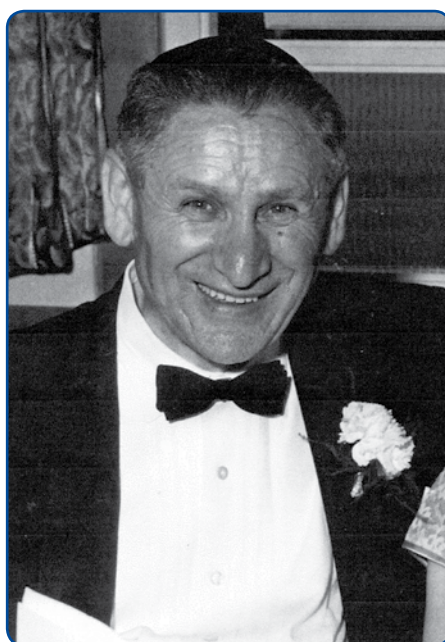
My father always told the story of how the *rosh yeshiva* (seminary head) came to him and said 'Schmuel, you have the reputation of the *yeshiva* in your hands when you go to the home of Mr and Mrs Schwarz!' My father's heart sank when he came to their dinner table with its array of knives and forks he had never encountered. Which one to take up at the appropriate moment? It was an awesome dilemma but my father was astute and decided to diligently follow his host all the way.

When my grandfather took up a certain spoon so did he. At the next course, it was a different knife and fork and he followed suit, and thus all through the meal. Even when my grandfather laid down his spoon, leaving a quantity of soup on his plate, my father did the same, although,

having had a hungry week, he would happily have consumed the three or four extra spoonfuls left.

My grandmother was absolutely delighted: at last she had found the ideal *bochor* and forthwith informed the *rosh yeshiva* that he must always send Schmuel to them and no other.

My grandmother began to take an interest in this young *yeshiva bochor*. She could see a successful future for him. She said to him 'Take off your *kittel* (white garment), remove your *payoth* (sideburns) and become a westerner. I will teach you German so you will be able to communicate with people here.' My father took her



advice and groomed himself in the way of other German Jews. He became proficient in German, although, of course, he never forgot his native Yiddish – his *mama loshen* (mother tongue). He had supreme business acumen and went into business buying and selling filigree tablecloths, very much in vogue at the time.

The years rolled on and he kept in contact with the Schwarz family. So much so that ten years later he married a daughter of the house – my mother – and was even invited to join the family business. However, he much preferred to be his own boss and continued to look after his wife and two children by his own labour. Until the advent of Hitler they lived well and were happy but after 1933 it became apparent that the lives of Jews in Germany could not continue.

Kristallnacht arrived and my father was taken off to Buchenwald, where

he suffered many indignities and saw horrific acts around him. Now my mother stepped into the picture. She didn't lose her cool in this calamity like other women around her. She made enquiries, questioned people, and searched for ways of getting her husband released as soon as possible.

Her arduous zeal brought results and she discovered that the Panamanian consulate was willing, at a price, to offer visas and tickets for one and all. She clutched at this straw and within six weeks had in her possession the necessary papers to get her husband back. This was the time when my grandmother, so long an ardent German who could not fathom the Nazi threat, rebuked her daughter for wanting to send her husband to Panama. 'It's hot there!', she said, to which my mother retorted 'It depends where it's hotter!'

The relevant papers were despatched to the authorities and my mother received a postcard stating 'Schmuel Gonzwa will be released on ... if he is still alive.' Sadly we didn't retain this communication: it would have been of historical interest.

Happily my father did come back. With shaven head, gaunt and full of terrible memories which haunted his dreams thereafter – but at least he was alive and back with his family.

Of course he had no intention of going to Panama – that was just a ploy. Now he had just six weeks to find an alternative escape route before the Nazis came back for him. He recalled a distant cousin had emigrated to England in the 1920s, managed to find his address in London, and wrote to seek his help. At that time, immigration to England was severely limited: one had to find a guarantor who would look after you to ensure you were not going to be a burden on the country, where there was huge unemployment.

The cousin was very reluctant to help but luckily one of his sons realised the huge danger German Jews were facing and persuaded his father to send the necessary affidavit. Thus my father got out of Germany and landed in England. Now he had the task of coaxing his reluctant cousin to offer the same refuge to his wife and two children. It was a hard task but eventually he was reunited with his family.

For a few weeks we all lodged with these cousins but all too soon they

continued opposite ➔

THE STORY OF SCHMUEL GONZWA
continued

moved the four of us into the East End of London in a flat comprising one bedroom – I was the bolster at the bottom of the bed! – a gas stove on the landing, a sink ten stairs down, and the toilet in the yard, two flights down. Our fellow lodgers were bugs and mice and on many occasions my brother couldn't attend school due to too many bug bites.

My father worked at everything that came his way: cleaning windows, serving at tables in cafes. After all, he had a family who were dependent on him. Again, his business acumen didn't desert him and he managed to provide for his family. In 1942, like many other refugees, they had another child – another daughter – which brought them much joy and made them feel young again.

He was always looking out for business deals. He sought out batteries for torches to help people find their way in the dark streets due to the blackout restrictions. He caught numerous buses to all parts of London to locate them just to make a little profit selling to local shops.

By 1947 he had accumulated enough money to put a deposit on a semi-detached house in Clapton and we could move out of our terrible hovel with its menagerie. Now we had a proper kitchen, four bedrooms and even a bathroom and toilet in the house. My sister, then aged five, queried the two taps over the bath – she'd never seen hot water come out of a tap. Our baths had been a *Wanne* (bath tub) in front of the hearth with its open coal fire.

My father's life continued to be hectic but he always had good ideas. Pretty shopping bags became popular after years of utility versions, so he found a machinist, provided the material, and got a little business going selling these shoppers.

For the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, he bought a 14-inch television set and we entertained the neighbours with tea and sandwiches the entire day. My father had become very patriotic.

With all this hard work, stress and pressure to provide for his family, it came as no surprise when, at the age of 60, he began to suffer from angina and had to take life a little easier. Luckily, prior to this setback, he had decided, very reluctantly, to accept a pension from Germany, much against his will at first – after all, who wanted money from those murderers!

Second Generation Network in Association with JW3

**Second and Third
Generation
Discussion Group**

**Sunday 27 April
11:30 am-1:15 pm
at JW3**

Facilitator:

Gaby Glassman

Tickets £5.00 (spaces limited)

A discussion group for children and grandchildren of refugees from, and survivors of, Nazi persecution.

Gaby Glassman is a psychologist and psycho-therapist who has facilitated intergenerational and Second Generation groups in the UK and abroad since the 1980s.

The session will offer participants an opportunity for dialogue in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

**Introduction to Writing
Family History for the
Second Generation**

**Monday 28 April
2-5 pm
at JW3**

Workshop led by Nick Barlay

Tickets £18.00 (spaces limited)

An exploration of Second-Generation approaches to writing family history, and how First and Second Generation experiences can make a family history compelling to read. The workshop will have a mixture of examples, discussion and practical exercises to inspire a form of writing most appropriate to unique and individual stories.

Nick Barlay is the author of the recently published family history *Scattered Ghosts: One Family's Survival through War, Holocaust and Revolution* – see www.nickbarlay.com

**Please book tickets through JW3 on 020 7433 8988
or at www.jw3.org.uk**

BOOKS BOUGHT

MODERN AND OLD

Eric Levene

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ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk**

I also purchase ephemera

But he was pragmatic and knew that Germany owed him compensation.

My mother now became his devoted nurse and carer and he in turn helped out with domestic chores. I can recall him peeling potatoes and scraping carrots. He even admitted on one occasion that housework was 'really hard work'! This had never occurred to him before – somehow the meals just appeared on the table.

My father's last few years were spent quietly, watching TV, the highlight always news broadcasts. Sadly his heart condition deteriorated and, at the age of 70 and a few months after my parents' 40th wedding anniversary, he passed away. He was greatly mourned: a wonderful husband and a great father. Fate or chance had tossed him around the world, through many countries. He had endured terrible experiences but had eventually arrived in a safe haven with his family intact. Just in time, a baby grandson made his life complete.

Meta Roseneil

AJR TRIP TO ISRAEL

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Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

Obstacle Course

Sir – As usual, Anthony Grenville's front-page article about the Kindertransport parents (January) is most informative and it is necessary – as he did – to remind younger readers, who have not themselves experienced the 'obstacle course' imposed by the Nazi authorities before Jews were permitted to emigrate, how burdensome these bureaucratic procedures were.

However, in my experience (and I still have all the relevant documents), his list is incomplete. Certainly in Berlin, from where I left in April 1939, we had to obtain two *Unbedenklichkeitsbescheinigungen* – one from the *Finanzamt* (tax authority) and one from the relevant *Bezirksamt* (local district authority), both confirming that no taxes or penalties were due. Furthermore – certainly in Berlin – it was also necessary for the Jewish community to certify that no money was owed to them. All these documents had to be produced at an office situated in the *Bruedervereinshaus* (formerly the headquarters of a lodge) in the *Kurfuerstenstrasse*, which was manned by Nazi and Jewish officials, sitting side by side. I am sorry to relate that the latter were just as officious and unfriendly as their Nazi colleagues.

In my particular case, as I was 19 at the time and the age of majority was still 21, both my father and I considered it prudent to have me officially declared *volljährig*, i.e. having reached the age of majority. We both had to attend an interview by a judge to obtain the relevant document. As in all cases of a change of address, the police had to be informed with an *Abmeldung*.

But most importantly, a list had to be drawn up setting out every single article the would-be emigrant wanted to take with him, down to the last tube of toothpaste. This list had to differentiate between items acquired before and after 1 January 1933, in the latter case stating the date of acquisition and the price paid. The list had to be presented to an 'expert' (*Sachverständiger*), who came to the emigrant's residence and examined all the articles mentioned before they were packed. If he agreed with the values quoted for post-1933 acquisitions, a tax (*Ausfuhrfoerderungsabgabe*) had to be

paid before emigration was permitted. When everything had been packed under the 'expert's' supervision, he put a seal on each suitcase and trunk, which had to be left untouched until all the luggage had crossed the border and was out of the Germans' jurisdiction. How strictly the examination was enforced depended entirely on the personality of the 'expert'. In my case, he told us when he went for lunch that we should continue packing while he was out and he would seal the luggage when he came back – a clear case of somebody in an official capacity being 'on the side of' the emigrant.

Fritz Lustig, London N10

FACTS AND VIEWS

Sir – Peter Simpson (February, Letters) only weakens his criticism of the British government by distorting Anthony Grenville's wholly factual article in the January journal. His statement that 'Churchill knew [there would be a war]' is irrelevant. Mr Churchill was not a member of the government before 1940. But perhaps Peter Simpson doesn't like facts that don't support his views.

By comparison, the other Peter in the same issue, Peter Phillips, is obviously an expert on bias, when he attacks Professor Brent's description of the *Guardian* as not being based on evidence. Has Mr Phillips any evidence to support his accusation? Has he any evidence for stating that the *Daily Telegraph* does not lean as far to the right as the *Guardian* leans to the left? The *Telegraph* is known as an arch-Tory paper. The *Guardian* is known as being pro-liberal. I don't believe there is today a British daily that is as far to the left as the *Telegraph* is to the right. Of course, that depends on the definition of right and left – which is much easier when referring to arms and hands.

Peter Phillips's bias seems to be a political one, when he attempts to defend Mr Gove's ravaging of our education system. Personally, I agree that Mr Gove is not inept just because the *Guardian* said so. The description is much too mild: 'destructive', 'ignorant' and 'reactionary' are much more suitable adjectives to describe the Education

Secretary's disgusting policies.

Eric Sanders, London W12

'IT TAKES ALL SORTS!'

Sir – John Farago (March, Letters) says he is 'Openly proud to have been born a Jew in Vienna'. Proud, that is, to have been born in a city whose citizens made his fellow Jews scrub the pavements with brushes while at the same time abusing them.

As they say, 'It takes all sorts!'

Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx

HEARING STORIES AT FIRST HAND

Sir – Honoured and proud to be chosen to represent Akiva School at such a prestigious event (Kindertransport Lunch: guest speaker Natasha Kaplinsky), we entered Alyth Gardens Synagogue nervous but excited to hear the extraordinary stories of the Kindertransport refugees.

During our lunch we had the opportunity to hear first-hand stories of what it was like to leave your parents at such a young age. Most of them were our age – or even younger – and it made us feel in awe of how they had to cope during this time – which we still find hard to comprehend!

On returning to school, we were buzzing to share our experiences and other stories that we have now inherited from the 'Kinder' themselves.

We are really grateful to have had this opportunity to enhance our knowledge of, and empathy with, the lives of those people who lived through a cruel, yet vital, lesson in history.

*Natalie and Zohar,
Year 6, Akiva School, London*

TREATED WITH COURTESY BY VIENNA SCHOOL

Sir – George Vulcan's offhand treatment by the notoriously snotty Schottengymnasium (March, Letters) was most regrettable – so unlike my old school, the Gymnasium Wien XIII (Hietzing), where we were treated with courtesy until the day we left.

Recently a plaque was mounted in the school showing the names of all pupils excluded in 1938. I was unfortunately unable to attend the ceremony but am aware that every known survivor was invited, with help for expenses offered. The Archbishop, the Bürgermaster and other notables were to participate in the unveiling.

(Dr) Hans L. Eirew, Manchester

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM IN SEARCH OF VISUAL MATERIAL

Sir – We would like to develop our presentation of the history of the Kindertransport. Could readers get in touch if they have any visual material that we could include in a school's presentation or on our webpage? Hearing the voices of child survivors or seeing images from their war is particularly important for students. I'm hopeful that more visual records are being

produced now with digital film.

The Museum would like to present children's art from Terezin in April and May. We are completing the loan agreement just now with Terezin Museum and I'm looking for venues for this important exhibition. Please let me know if you can think of anyone who may be interested in presenting the children's art and history.

Thank you again to everyone who has contacted the Museum with letters, poems, memoirs and phone calls.

Brian Devlin,

*Children's War Museum, 4 Manse Lane,
Galashiels, Scottish Borders, TD1 1NB
tel 01896 756402
email eildon@hotmail.co.uk*

COPIES OF NEWSLETTER SOUGHT

Sir – At the Wiener Library we have a great collection of newsletters published by refugee and exile groups. Today this kind of material is incredibly hard to find as the paper quality was often poor and publication numbers low.

To complete our holdings, we are looking for issues of *Frau in Arbeit: periodical of the working refugee woman*. Currently we have only one issue: number 17, 1941. This newsletter was published in London by the Gemeinschaft Werktätiger Frauen and it would be fascinating material for our readers. We would be very grateful if you would consider donating any copies you may have to the Library. Please contact Marek Jaros on 020 7636 7247 or at mjaros@wienerlibrary.co.uk

Kat Hubschmann,

Senior Librarian, Wiener Library, London

MILIBAND CONTROVERSY

Sir – Dr Anthony Grenville's article 'The Miliband Controversy in Historical Perspective' (December, 2013) is very much appreciated and has proven to be an interesting read in the office.

A. Williams

*Office of the Leader of the Opposition,
House of Commons, London*

'THE ENGLISH WAY'

Sir – I happened to be leafing through a past number of the *Journal* and spotted the little photo entitled 'Squares for Blankets'. It reminded me that as a refugee arriving here in 1939 (on the 'Winton Train'), my little sister and I lived with a lovely English couple and I attended a local council school in Ashton-under-Lyne (near Manchester).

In my class of ten-year-olds we were all given wool and needles to knit squares for blankets. I could knit so I got on with it. After a while the whole class became silent watching me. As you may be aware, Continentals hold their knitting needles differently. The teacher asked me what I was doing. 'Knitting,' I said.

Unfortunately, in her eyes I was not knitting and, until I learned to knit 'the

English way', I wasn't allowed to knit squares.

Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines, Preston

TO PALESTINE VIA THE DANUBE

Sir – I recently read another 'batch' of *AJR Journals* during a visit to my mother. As usual, there were many fascinating sagas and life stories.

With regard to the query about boats of young Zionists attempting to reach Palestine via the Danube: in 2012 there took place in Vienna a commemoration of the so-called 'Kladovo Transport'. This photographic exhibition, together with a commemorative book, was dedicated to some 800 young Austrians whose boat was unfortunately held up by ice on the river as it reached the village of Kladovo in Romania at the end of 1939. They were held there until September 1940, when they were taken across the River Sava to Sabac in Serbia, which was occupied by the Germans in 1941. The men were shot and the women and children forced to march to Belgrade, where they in turn were executed. One can barely imagine what it was like for them during these months. In 2002 the Kultusgemeinde in Vienna erected a memorial in the Jewish cemetery in Belgrade.

I confess that until I was specifically invited, I had never heard of this particular tragic incident. Like the 'death train to Iasi' of 1941, there are so many stories remaining to be properly revealed. Those wishing for further details can contact the initiator of the commemoration at zeljko.dragic@kosmo.at

Also, as I serve as the (part-time) Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish community 'Or Chadasch' in Vienna, may I remind any readers planning to visit Vienna, or planning to lay commemorative plaques, that we would love to welcome them to our services – see our website for details – or they can contact me at Rothschild-Berlin@t-online.de

Rabbi Dr Walter Rothschild, Berlin

Sir – My sister Eva was one of those who left Austria on a ship sailing east on the Danube. According to her, these ships were organised by the right-wing Zionist organisation Betar.

Eva was single and 18 years old. She left in early 1939. They sailed for Romania, whence they were accommodated on Turkish coastal vessels. They landed close to Netanya, where they were hidden in a cinema. One vessel was boarded by the British navy and the refugees were interned.

Robert Acker-Holt, London NW3

SAVED BY AN SS MAN

Sir – My parents' lives were saved by an SS man. In the thirties we lived in what was then Danzig, at Dominikswall 9. My father had a small business, Polish Asiatic Company, which imported tea from the UK. One morning in 1932 a young man, a German, came to the office and asked my father for a job. He said he was unemployed, had a wife and two children and was

starving. He said he was an accounts clerk. My father gave him a job. Some 18 months later he left with thanks for some other career.

In June 1939, my parents were getting ready to leave Danzig for Poland when the doorbell rang. Our housekeeper opened the door. Standing there was an SS man. He put his finger to his lips and said 'Tell your master to leave immediately. He will be arrested this afternoon. I was the poor clerk to whom your master gave a job when I needed it badly. I am repaying his kindness.' He then left.

My parents immediately packed a case and left for Warsaw. I was already in London.

In 1940 they made their way from the bombed Warsaw through Romania and Bulgaria to Istanbul, where they boarded the Polish ship *Warszawa* for Haifa. On board the ship they had another experience. While walking on deck, my father caught a glimpse of a German businessman he had known in Danzig as a Nazi sympathiser. My father immediately informed the captain, who said he should leave things in his hands.

From Haifa, my parents were taken to Tel Aviv. While sitting in a roadside café, they saw the German from Danzig and from the ship walking along the road. He saw my parents, smiled, walked towards their table and greeted them. He was dressed in the uniform of a captain in the British Army. You can draw your own conclusions

Alex Lawrence, Marlow

RETURN TO HILDESHEIM

Sir – I read with great interest Janet Howley's account of her family's history from Hildesheim, Germany, in your January edition. My family too originates from Hildesheim. I was born Heinz Manfred in January 1937; my sister Eva Johanna was born in 1927. The family managed to get out of Germany with 'J' passports in July 1939.

Our family background in Hildesheim is extraordinarily similar to that of the David Meier family which Janet relates. My father, Leopold Cohn, also fought in the First World War. He was also later interned in Buchenwald but my mother, Else Cohn (née Feige), managed to obtain his release – pleading with the Gestapo was quite a feat in itself!

My grandparents, Julius and Ida Feige, who owned a successful real estate agency in Hildesheim, could also be classed as 'a reasonably wealthy German-Jewish family'. Their longstanding address was an apartment in Bernwardstr. 23, a property owned by the Jewish banking family Hess, but they were forced by circumstances (Hess sold up to emigrate) to move to another apartment, in Altes Dorf, and again later to one in Wallstrasse.

Of course, at the age of 18 months, I knew nothing of life in Hildesheim but in May 1988 my sister and her husband,

continued on page 16 ➔

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

Artists rarely paint the same scene twice but **Vincent van Gogh** painted seven *Sunflowers* in 1888-89 during his time in Provence. For the first time in 65 years, two of these paintings hang side by side at the **National Gallery** in Room 46 (to 27 April 2014, admission free) in a reciprocal arrangement with Amsterdam's newly renovated Van Gogh Museum, which held its own show last May, featuring both London and Amsterdam paintings.

It is one thing to paint the same thing from different perspectives but what is unusual about these two van Gogh paintings



After (1998) Photograph: Carl Court/AFP/Getty Images

is that they are near-identical – almost to the number of blooms in the vase and their size. In a letter to artist Emile Bernard in August 1888, van Gogh described his theme: 'the raw and broken chrome yellow will blaze forth on various backgrounds, blues ... emerald green and royal blue, framed with thin strips painted in mine orange [red lead pigment].' He was experimenting at this time with subsidiary colours like emerald and viridian.

It was all inspired by the famous Yellow House in Arles which Van Gogh rented in 1888. He invited his friend Paul Gauguin to join him that summer so they could paint together in the sunny southern French idyll. As he waited for Gauguin to join him, van Gogh painted this series of sunflower pictures to decorate his friend's bedroom: they signalled friendship but also a kind of homage to Gauguin, whom he saw as his mentor. Influenced by the deceptive simplicity of Japanese art, van Gogh tried to capture the flat yellow of the flowers, working from sunrise onwards that August as the flowers faded so

quickly.

So it seems the artist took his sunflowers very seriously. The other paintings are in Tokyo, Munich and Philadelphia. Apart from minor differences in tone and depth in these two works, the welcoming yellow and the presence of dying flowers, as well as those in full bloom, suggest vibrancy and sheer presence. Sadly, the relationship between the two artists failed to flourish as significantly as the flowers. They worked together through the autumn of 1888 but at the end of the year they quarrelled – Gauguin stormed off and van Gogh had a nervous breakdown, mutilated his ear, and entered an asylum.

Yet despite the breakdown of their friendship and the opposing direction of their art, Gauguin recognised that van Gogh had reached the peak of his gifts with the *Sunflowers* and asked him to send him one as a gift. The National Gallery bought its painting directly from the family in 1924.

The most significant of **Richard Deacon's** sculptures in his new exhibition at **Tate Britain** (to 27 April 2014) is the massive, serpentine piece *After*, which appears to resemble basket-

weave but is actually a construct from multiple smaller components involving wooden tubes which section each curve and a woven, stainless steel strap drawing the ends together. The whole writhing form is serpentine and reflects the quality of form and empty space which is the main feature of Deacon's work.

Yet there is no sameness in his sculptures, which use many different materials, from steel, foam, rubber, chrome, leather and marble. *Tall Tree in the Ear*, on loan from London's Lisson Gallery, is a tall, tubular structure which does suggest the outer ear, if not a stunted tree form, and others are convoluted shapes inviting you to look from all angles. Deacon moves from the major to the minor key: the attractive *Tropic*, in blue and green glazed ceramic, suggests the movement of waves and *Out of Order* is a complex jumbled mass of steel. But the overall effect, expressed particularly in *Untitled*, made of laminated wood, is movement, change and even musical notation.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

An ambitious study

THE FORGOTTEN KINDERTRANSPORTEES: THE SCOTTISH EXPERIENCE

by Frances Williams

London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014 (www.bloomsbury.com), hardback 312 pp., illustrations, £65.00 (online £58.50), ISBN 9781 780 938 035

Any book dealing with the Scottish experience of Kindertransportees should be welcomed, especially by Scottish AJR members, who may sometimes feel they are far from the centre of events in London. In her preface to this book, a former PhD thesis from the University of Edinburgh, Frances Williams, who was provided by the AJR with a grant to undertake her studies, emphasises her desire to highlight the story of Scotland's 'forgotten' Kindertransportees. She stresses the impossibility of providing simplistic generalisations regarding characteristics of the *Kinder* and their treatment in wartime Scotland. Indeed, this is Williams's central argument, as she makes clear in the introduction to the book, where she refutes the arguments of Judith Tydor Baumel and Claudio Curio, both of whom, she emphasises, exemplify the 'tendency to treat the minors across Britain as one collective group'. In the words of the author, 'The Kindertransportees represented a kaleidoscope of different types of people' and 'their experience lacked uniformity or predictability as a group'.

Of particular interest is her research into the lives of *Kinder* who were placed in residential care. Williams was able to draw on private collections 'located around the world'. These include the recently discovered Challis family's private collection of over 400 negatives and the private papers of the late William Fanton Drew, a teacher at Whittingehame Farm School in East Lothian.

Williams gives an enlightening picture of the reception of the young people she calls 'trans-migrants' – described thus as they were not expected to remain in Britain. Relying on both her own research and that of eminent historians such as Tony Kushner and David Cesarani, she has been able to expose the limitations of the rose-coloured picture of British philanthropy, 'publicly celebrated as an example of the nation's humanitarian spirit'. Her own response is a well-balanced one, pointing out that 'Neither the celebratory nor the critical narrative offers a representative evaluation of the event and experience.'

Williams shows diagrammatically

continued opposite ➔

the complex philanthropic welfare network existing in the late 1930s on national, regional and local levels. This, as she makes clear, meant a confusion of messages and the lack of an obvious chain of command. The dominance of the London-based Central Council for German Jewry and the Refugee Children's Movement created particular problems for Scotland. Williams notes that the Glasgow Jewish community could have 'provided handsomely for the reception of the Kindertransportees in Glasgow had it [their pledge of £25,000 for the children] not been siphoned off to London.' She does her best to provide a nuanced picture of the problems facing the host community especially when wartime made resources scarce and the need to care for British citizens was more pressing than sympathy with the 'trans-migrants'.

Williams frequently cites the survey undertaken by the AJR/ Kindertransport Association (KT), 'Making New Lives in Britain', which is based on replies to a questionnaire sent out to former Kindertransportees. The database includes 87 surviving Kindertransportees who spent some time in Scotland. Referring to this, she illustrates a number of aspects of the Scottish experience, ranging from the age when *Kinder* were first employed to their current religious affiliation.

She also makes interesting use of oral testimony, though making clear in her preface that the 'fluidity of memory is particularly relevant as Kindertransportees become older'. Many of her examples are drawn from the interviews in her private collection. In Appendix 3 of the book she provides a selection of biographies of these interviewees, whom, as she points out in a footnote in her preface, she chose to provide with pseudonyms. Having interviewed a number of Scottish survivors for the educational project 'Gatheringthevoices' (www.gatheringthevoices.com), I was able to identify some of these people from the biographies and found that Williams's practice was not entirely consistent, as she sometimes referred to them by their real names.

My one significant concern with Williams's work, however, is its factual inaccuracies. Williams includes an impressive array of footnotes but these are occasionally unreliable. One example is her reference on page 7 to *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*, edited by Kenneth Collins, where she misleadingly refers to Collins's research when in fact the author of the comment on 'an ongoing level of tension between the Ostjuden and Westjuden communities' was Rynor Kölmel. She later states that the Talmud Torah in Glasgow used Yiddish for instruction in the 1930s – though in fact Collins does mention that this ceased before the First World War. Spelling errors abound: Mary Hills instead of Maryhill, Dr Crossgrove rather than

Cosgrove, Jew's College rather than Jews' College. Williams also seems unsure of key Hebrew words, using Bnei Keive instead of Bnei Akiva, Evrit for Ivrit, Yishvo for Yishuv.

Ms Williams, nevertheless, deserves to be commended for an ambitious book, which provides challenging responses to a number of thought-provoking issues regarding Scottish Kindertransportees, ranging from 'Scottish Care for the Jewish Minor' to the 'Limitations of a Zionist Endeavour'.

Claire Singerman

A timely publication

'IT'S NOT THE FATHERLAND'S FAULT: SAVE THE LETTERS FOR LATER'

by Otto Meyer

<http://blur.by/1g48X2J> 147 pp.,

translated from German into English

by Ruth Morris

The approaching centenary of the First World War is receiving much publicity and the publication of this book is timed to coincide with it. It has not been published yet in actual book format but can be read on the internet without charge by clicking on an overview via the link <http://blur.by/1g48X2J> The title is taken from letters dated 02/04/15 and 03/03/15 in Appendix II.

The book deals with the military service of Dr Otto Meyer in the First World War and is written by his youngest son, Andreas. It relates his early life and war service and contains five appendices: a chronological overview of the latter, including a history of Jews in military service; selected letters written to his wife and extracts from his diaries; photographs (mostly taken by him); illustrated letters to his sons (who were children at the time); and an epilogue. Apart from being an enthusiastic photographer, Otto Meyer was also an accomplished artist and his illustrations in the letters to his children are well executed, interesting and amusing.

Meyer was born in 1886 and, after a varied school career, studied law at Berlin University, adding a doctorate after his finals. Shortly afterwards he married a non-Jewish woman, who curiously had the same surname as he. His father shared ownership of a leather factory with his brother, Otto's uncle, but quarrelled with him and withdrew his money. Eventually, after Otto had left school, the family settled in Rheda in Westphalia.

He was called up for war service in 1915 and joined an artillery regiment as a 'gunner'. He was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class in 1917, was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in May 1918, and left the army in December 1918. He had served only on the western front and miraculously suffered no injuries during his service. Like all ex-soldiers who had served at the front, including

Jews, he was awarded the *Ehrenkreuz* by Hitler in 1935.

In 1937 Meyer emigrated to what was then Palestine and settled in the agricultural village of Nahariya, where he died in 1954 aged 68.

His letters show that initially he was an enthusiastic soldier – in his letter of 02/03/15 he writes: 'I am cheerful, energetic and healthy ... in addition I'm so pleased that finally I can do something for the Fatherland.' However, in later years he becomes disillusioned and longs for the war to stop and to get out of the army. He describes in detail the type of guns the army uses, which is of limited interest to non-experts, other than that the first gun his battery receives is so old-fashioned that the barrel doesn't recoil after a shot and the gun has to be re-positioned each time it's fired.

The anti-Semitism Meyer encounters is usually directed at Jews in general and not at him personally. He seems to accept it as inevitable and just gets on with life. Interestingly, he notices that an Alsatian comrade of his suffers some discrimination on account of his background.

As might be expected, in his letters to his wife he assures her constantly of his undying love, how he longs to be with her, etc. To this reader at least, these passages tend to get slightly boring and could easily have been omitted.

The text of the book is liberally sprinkled with photographs – not only of people and scenery but also of documents. Some of the quoted statistics are interesting: there were approximately 100,000 Jews in the German army in the First World War, of whom some 30,000 were decorated with the Iron Cross, and about 2,000 were promoted to the rank of officer (between 1880 and 1914 there were none). The so-called 'Jewish Census' in 1916, when the number of Jews in all regiments had to be reported to higher authority, greatly upset Meyer, although the total established was kept a secret.

Before it is eventually published in hard format, the book could be improved if a complete outsider – i.e. somebody not emotionally connected with Otto Meyer like his son – were to edit it. In that way repetitions might be avoided: extracts from letters are quoted in the text, reappearing when the complete letter is shown in Appendix II, and several photos appear in the text as well as in Appendix III. Furthermore, quite a few letters, which repeat sentiments and opinions already expressed, as well as photos which are not clear enough to convey very much to the reader, might well be omitted. Equally Appendix I as a whole is probably not very interesting for an outsider.

To sum up, the book contains much interesting information but could be further improved. It should also be borne in mind that probably most AJR

continued on page 10 ➔

REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

members of my generation had fathers who were German soldiers in the First World War – the irony of many of us having been British soldiers in the Second World War is not lost!

Fritz Lustig

Portrait of an extraordinary life

BREAKFAST WITH LUCIAN: A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

by **Geordie Greig**

Jonathan Cape, 2013, hardcover
272 pp., £25, ISBN 9780224096850

The character of the German refugee who became the greatest British painter of his era is unmasked in a fascinating biography by journalist Geordie Greig.

For decades *Mail on Sunday* editor Greig badgered Lucian Freud until he succeeded in meeting him regularly for early morning meals, gaining his confidence and trust. The result, *Breakfast with Lucian*, provides a fascinating insight into this complex and unusual but hugely talented artist.

Freud was born in Berlin in 1922, son of modernist architect Ernst Freud and grandson of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. He was named after his mother Lucie (née Brasch), the daughter of a prosperous grain merchant, but had a

troubled relationship with her.

The family escaped to England in 1933, when a close relative was killed by Nazi thugs. Despite living here for the rest of his life, Freud never lost his German accent - 'straight from pre-war Berlin, educated, sophisticated, a slight burr without any harshness'.

Known for his volatility, he quarrelled bitterly with people, falling out with his brothers Stephen and broadcaster and politician Clement, with whom he was never reconciled.

After a fragmented and unconventional education, Freud, who loved horses, decided to become an artist rather than a jockey – his 'other idea for a career'.

At home with both high society and low life, he gambled away millions, associating with gangsters, including the Krays, and painted and painted. Among those he painted were the Queen, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, Brigadier Parker Bowles, Kate Moss, Francis Bacon and David Hockney.

At the same time, his personal life was bizarre and colourful. He married and divorced twice and had innumerable lovers as well as 14 acknowledged children, including three daughters by different mothers all born in 1961. Controversially he painted several of his children naked.

He dated Garbo and his greatest friend was the renowned Frank Auerbach, another Jewish refugee artist from Berlin.

Later his style changed and featured massive, sprawling nudes, which sold for vast sums. When he died he left a staggering £96 million.

Greig saw Freud with his assistant David Dawson at Clarke's restaurant for breakfast near his Kensington Church Street home over ten years. They last met when Freud was on his deathbed in July 2011 aged 88. Conversation ranged from trivial to the profound and eventually Freud let Greig record it, the recorded text lending an edge and authenticity.

Greig speaks to lovers, children and celebrities, detailing feuds and fights during a long life lived fully, giving a sympathetic portrait of an often very flawed man. He is stronger on personalities than paintings and the index is meticulously compiled. His great strength is undoubtedly successfully pulling together such a wealth and chequer-board of material to reveal an incredibly vivid and intimate portrait of this unique subject and extraordinary life.

Janet Weston

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KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

9 April 2014

Please join us for our next lunch,
which will be held at
North West Reform Synagogue,
Alyth Gardens, Finchley Road, London NW11 7EN

Daniel Cainer

will be entertaining us on keyboard

To book your place
please phone Andrea Goodmaker
on 020 8385 3070

ARTS AND EVENTS APRIL DIARY

Tue 8 My Story: Eric E. Murangwa To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, Eric Murangwa discusses his experiences as a survivor of the genocide. At Wiener Library, 9.30 am – 1.00 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247 (admission free but booking essential)

Fri 11 From Data to Knowledge: How the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Links and Opens Holocaust Collections to All Workshop at the Wiener Library, 9.30 am – 1.00 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247 (admission free but booking essential)

To Thurs 17 Displaced: Book Art Exhibition 2014. At Wiener Library. Admission free

AJR ANNUAL LONDON TRIP

Tuesday 6 May – Thursday 8 May 2014

This year's trip will include a visit to Kenwood House; dinner at the London Jewish Cultural Centre with guest speaker Ian Austin MP; a guided tour of the National Theatre and a matinee performance of their latest production *A Taste of Honey*; a relaxing evening and dinner at an award-winning kosher Chinese restaurant; a visit to Camden Arts Centre; and a boat trip down The Thames with lunch. Plus, as always, the opportunity to meet friends old and new.

Accommodation will be at a London hotel for members based outside London. Members living in London can participate in the daily events.

For further details, please contact Susan Harrod at Head Office on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

AJR OUTING



Thursday 15 May 2014
at 11.00 am

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir,
Neasden, London
Europe's first traditional Hindu Temple

Join us for a visit to see this masterpiece of Indian design and workmanship in the heart of London and marvel at the intricate marble and wooden carvings.

Our visit will last approximately 2 hours and will consist of a short welcome and introductory address, a video presentation, and a guided tour of the Mandir. We will then have lunch at a nearby vegetarian restaurant.

For further details, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

Holocaust Commission Call for evidence

In January 2014 the Prime Minister launched a Commission on the Holocaust. I was honoured to be asked to chair it, leading a talented team with representation from across society, including actress Helena Bonham Carter, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, cross-party representation from MPs Ed Balls, Michael Gove and Simon Hughes, broadcaster Natasha Kaplinsky, educator Dame Helen Hyde, the Arts Council's Sir Peter Bazalgette and, from the world of business, Leo Noé and Ruby McGregor-Smith.

We have an important task ahead of

us. Over the next year we will investigate what more needs to be done to ensure Britain has a permanent and fitting memorial to the Holocaust, as well as the educational resources we need.

This work is crucial for future generations. Survivors have played a vital role in helping our society remember and learn lessons but we will not always have such remarkable individuals with us. There is a danger that, as the events of the Holocaust become ever more distant, they will feel increasingly remote to our children and our children's children.

But the Commission also has an

enormous responsibility to you, the survivors. We want you to know that Britain will keep the memory of the Holocaust alive and that we are deeply committed to securing your legacy.

We are running a nationwide call for evidence until the end of May this year and we want to hear from as many people as possible. So please tell us your views and let us make sure we commemorate these dreadful events so that, here in Britain, no one ever forgets.

To respond to the call for evidence visit www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-holocaust-commission-keeping-the-memory-alive or write to The Holocaust Commission, PO Box 72270, London SW1P 9WU.

Mick Davis

Mick Davis is Chair of the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission and Chair of the Jewish Leadership Council.

Newsreader Natasha Kaplinsky is guest speaker at KT Lunch

We were delighted to welcome Natasha Kaplinsky, the newsreader and former winner of *Strictly Come Dancing*, as the guest speaker at the Kinder Lunch at the New North London Synagogue on Monday 3 March.

Natasha, who has recently been appointed to the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission (see above), spoke movingly about her appearance on the TV genealogy programme *Who Do You Think You Are?*, for which she

was taken to South Africa and Belarus to trace her family's history. She was joined at the Lunch by representatives from the Prime Minister's office, who collected the opinions of Kinder on what should form the focus of the Holocaust Commission's work.

As well as finding time to chat to individual Kinder, Natasha spoke to some Year 6 pupils from Akiva School, who had the chance to meet Kinder and hear their experiences.

Michael Newman

Chatting with Kinder



Clearing the hurdle

Vaulting from a springboard on to a 'horse' in the gym and clearing it in one go is what we were required to do in my second year at the *realna gimnazija* (grammar school) in Maribor, Slovenia.

I just couldn't get myself to do that and made myself land on my knees, then get up and jump. But all in one go? Never!

Well, at the end of the school year, Miss Engelman, the gym teacher, standing next to the horse, watched everyone intently, small notebook in one hand, writing down each girl's mark for the annual school report, the other hand poised to help anyone across should the need arise. Well, it didn't – everything went smoothly. Then came my turn. She stretched out her arm, held out her hand – I didn't take it and – for the first time in my life – vaulted and cleared that horse in one go! This had the desired effect, which showed up in my report.

I find this sort of thing mirrored in all sorts of situations in my life.

I was brought up in a typically assimilated milieu in Germany and later in Slovenia. In Maribor there wasn't even a synagogue or a *minyán*, not even on the High Holidays. In Germany our Christmas

tree, beautifully adorned, reached almost to the ceiling with gifts exchanged under it and carols sung on Christmas Eve. Eggs were hidden at Easter for me to find. Our synagogue, to which I loved going from time to time, had an organ and mixed choir and a lot was sung in German.

It wasn't until I got to England that I gradually experienced more *yiddishkeit* at school and elsewhere. I felt so much happier here. After landing a very well paid job with the Yugoslav government-in-exile and eventually at the embassy, my existence became blissful – or almost so as I had to go to work every other Shabbat. But something inside me felt unfulfilled.

To become fully observant was a protracted effort but it worked out in the end. It was a hard struggle at times, one which miraculously led me to my life-long partner, my dear husband (now deceased). But that's another story and to describe how it all came about would fill a few more pages.

Where there's a will there's a way! That is exactly what happened to me regarding my desire to keep the *mitzvot* fully. Try your utmost and the A-mighty will do the rest and help you 'clear the hurdle'!

Margarete Stern

'Escape from Auschwitz' Holocaust Remembrance Evening at Pinner Synagogue

On Sunday 27 April 2014 at Pinner Synagogue, starting at 8.00 pm, the 25th Holocaust Remembrance Evening in Pinner will recall the bravery of Rudolph Vrba, who, with his friend Alfred ('Freddie') Wetzler, escaped from Auschwitz and travelled through Poland to Zilina in their native Slovakia to alert the Allies of the horrors taking place in the extermination camp.

Key-note guest speaker Gerta Vrbova, who was married to Rudolph, will talk about his incredible journey, the challenge in getting the report to the authorities, the authorities' reaction, and Rudi's subsequent life in the Slovak partisan army. Rudi's grandchildren will also be attending and sharing their thoughts with us.

It has been reported that on reading the Vrba-Wetzler report, Winston Churchill said: 'There is no doubt that this persecution of Jews in Hungary and their expulsion from enemy territory is probably the greatest and most horrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world.'

As a result, the deportations in Hungary were stopped and the lives of 200,000 Hungarian Jews were saved.

His Excellency The Hungarian Ambassador to the UK, one of many dignitaries attending, will give an address.

Entrance is free and seating will be limited so everyone is advised to come early. We encourage teenagers to attend too – we need to pass these stories on while we still have the privilege of hearing directly from survivors.

Brian Eisenberg



Sheffield CF A Moving and Worthwhile Experience

I attended my first AJR meeting, that of the Sheffield group to which my grandmother, Renee Martin, belongs. The meeting was centred around music, with members playing their favourite songs and explaining why they were special to them. I found the experience both moving and thoroughly worthwhile and would encourage other Second and Third Generation refugees to take this opportunity to learn from the First Generation while we still can.

Katie Borwick

Bromley CF Lively Members

Meeting for lunch in Liane's flat, a lively group of members, including three of the Second Generation, debated various topics, including the works of historian Dr Helen Fry. Those who had seen the recent stage production of *Kindertransport* gave their impressions of it. Reminiscences were shared by all, in particular Gerda and Lore.

Dorothea Lipton

Leeds CF Bradford's Jewish Heritage

Members enjoyed Nigel Grizzard's enthralling talk 'Making Their Mark – Bradford's Jewish Heritage, 1830-2014', accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. There was plenty of time for questions.

Wendy Bott

Ealing Personalities of Germans and Jews

Psychotherapist Andrea Hann discussed her research into the personalities of Germans and Jews in relation to the generations before and after the Second World War as well as providing insight into the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany. There followed a very interesting interactive session. A very stimulating afternoon.

Leslie Sommer

Café Imperial May the Sun Keep on Shining!

We did the memory of Willy Field proud. We are grateful to Esther, Hazel and Susan for devising such a plethora of outings over the coming months. May the sun keep on shining!

Vera Myer

Iford Legal Tour of the City of London

Lawyer and part-time city guide Colin Davey took us on an armchair tour of the City of London, highlighting the many law companies active in that area. He spiced his talk with humorous anecdotes, giving us all a very cheerful and interesting morning.

Meta Roseneil

Pinner Sensitive Approach

Counsellor and probation officer Rosemary Green gave us remarkable insight into her difficult work, particularly among young offenders with distressing histories inside prison. Her sensitive approach earned her the trust of the most hardened inmates.

Walter Weg

HGS The Search for Nazi-Looted Art

David Glasser from the Ben Uri Gallery spoke to us about 'Nazi-Looted Art': an enormous amount of work is being done internationally to determine where missing works of art are and how they can be restored to their original owners or heirs. A most interesting afternoon.

Hortense Gordon

Glasgow CF A Great Treat

The outing to the Jack Vettriano exhibition at Kelvingrove Art Gallery was a great treat. The Fife-born artist is a firm favourite and his work is enjoyed by all.

Agnes Isaacs

Essex (Westcliff) Inside Jewish Care

Jewish Care's Teresa Clark told us about her work - helping the elderly with filling in forms, getting the right benefits and obtaining the appropriate services. Among the many things she told us was that the Borough of Southend and neighbouring districts have approximately 5,000 Jewish inhabitants and that Jewish Care has 3,000 volunteers!

Larry Lisner

Bradford CF History of the Jews of Bradford

Members thoroughly enjoyed Nigel Grizzard's talk on the history of the Jews of Bradford - and told Nigel some things he didn't know!

Wendy Bott

Kingston CF Enlightening and Moving Talk

Hazel showed us a video of a talk she had given about looking after her granddaughter, who has the neurological condition Rett Syndrome. We found the talk enlightening and extremely moving.

Jackie Cronheim

St John's Wood Lives of the Richlers

A very good meeting with Martha Richler, daughter of the famous Canadian author, the late Mordecai Richler, reading from his book of essays and telling us about his life. Her life as a cartoonist and writer was also most interesting.

Avram Schaufeld

Cambridge Archaeology: Fact and Fiction

A delightful talk, enjoyed also by a number of new Second Generation members, was given by Dr Pia Spry-Marques from Cambridge University on fact and fiction as depicted in books and films dealing with archaeology.

Keith Lawson

Edinburgh CF Sharing Food

Meeting at the home of Francoise Robertson, we all agreed that sharing food makes an occasion. We sampled *kaposztas teszta* from Hungary and wafers from Vienna brought by a member whose family used to print the wrappers before the War.

Agnes Isaacs

Brighton-Sarid (Sussex) A Great Meeting

With our speaker unable to attend due to the rail strike, we discussed the WJR (CBF) and how Holocaust victims were brought to the UK. Leon related his and his family's experiences on their arrival here. In addition we discussed the importance of voting, Judaism and the East End. A great meeting!

Shirley Huberman

Newcastle Trip to the Home of the Paper Clips Project

Brenda and Martin Levinson shared with a well attended meeting their trip to perhaps the most unusual Holocaust memorial in the world: Whitwell, Tennessee, home of the Paper Clips Project.

Agnes Isaacs

Edgware A Wonderful Lady

Dr Susan Cohen spoke in a most interesting and fluent way about Eleanor Rathbone, a biography of whom she has published. Due in large part to Eleanor Rathbone's charitable work, many people found a new home in this country and many of us can be very grateful to this wonderful lady.

Felix Winkler

Kindertransport: A Thoroughly Thought-provoking Evening

A sizeable number of the Westcliff group saw *Kindertransport* at the Palace Theatre, Southend. It was a powerful and well acted piece but it aroused different emotions in us. Some of us thought it carried complete conviction; others felt the author hadn't really explained how the passionate young child Eva evolved into the cold older woman Evelyn. Nor was everyone convinced that the real context of late-1930s Nazi Hamburg emerged from the relationship between the young Eva and her mother. Nonetheless, it was a thoroughly thought-provoking evening with a very enjoyable debate following the next morning.

David Barnett

Manchester 'Surviving the First Generation?'

We were joined by a good number of the Second Generation for a most interesting talk by child psychologist Leah Burman, 'Surviving the First Generation? The Impact of the Holocaust on the Second Generation and Beyond'. Leah dedicated her talk to the memory of her late sister Carla Ornstein, who had been an active AJR member. Thanks are due again to Susanne Green for her help and guidance for our meeting.

Werner Lachs

Kent Jewish Boxing Legend

David Barnett recounted the amazing tale of Jewish prize-fighter Daniel Mendoza, who in Regency England earned the equivalent of millions of pounds in today's money - although he died penniless.

Esther Rinkoff

Liverpool Exhibition on Polish Help for Jews during War

Over 20 members, First and Second Generation alike, attended a meeting at the home of Naomi Brown. Kinga Pacak gave an interesting talk on an exhibition

APRIL GROUP EVENTS

Ealing	1 April	World Jewish Relief – Their Work around the World
Liverpool	1 April	At Reform Synagogue Hall
Ilford	2 April	Lucy Daniels, former Chair, British Dietetic Association: 'Nutrition, Health and Enjoyment: Trying to Get it Right'
Bradford CF	3 April	Social Get-together
Pinner	3 April	Rabbi Pete Tobias: 'Who Killed the Rabbi?'
Sheffield CF	6 April	Nigel Grizzard: 'The Jews of Bradford'
Leeds CF	7 April	Louis Harris: 'My Activities in Machal, 1948-49'
Essex (Westcliff)	8 April	John Biggs: 'The Porters'
Kingston	8 April	David Barnett: 'Daniel Mendoza – Champion of All-England'
Oxford	8 April	Prof Michael Spiro: 'The Story of Tea and Coffee'
St John's Wood	9 April	David Barnett: 'Shops and Shopping in Regency London'
Midlands West (Birmingham)	10 April	Film: 'Nicky's Children'
Book Club	23 April	Social and Discussion
Edinburgh CF	23 April	Social
Wembley	23 April	Kathryn Prevezer: 'Interesting Buildings of the City of London'
Glasgow CF	24 April	Outing to 'Allo Allo!' at Eastwood Theatre
Kent	24 April	Outing to Leeds Castle
North London	24 April	Kathryn Prevezer: 'Interesting Buildings of the City of London'
Welwyn GC	24 April	Camilla Goddard: 'Bee Keeping and Helping Bees'
Glasgow (Yom Hashoah)	27 April	David Glasser, Ben Uri Gallery
Manchester	27 April	Yom Hashoah Commemoration
Newcastle	27 April	An Afternoon with Joanna Millan, AJR Trustee
Liverpool	28 April	Yom Hashoah Commemoration (Speaker Dr Peter Kurer)
North West London	29 April	Andrew Leigh: 'Hammerson House: Care Considerations' (at Alyth Gardens; lunch must be booked in advance)

at the Warsaw-based Institute of National Remembrance on Polish help for the Jewish population in south-eastern Poland during the War.
Susanne Green

Norfolk Goodies and Poetry

We had a grand time eating our way through lots of goodies as well as the great pleasure of listening to a reading by Kieron Pim of a poem by 13th-century poet Meir of Norwich.
Frank Bright

Dundee Exploring Roots

A small group of enthusiastic members gathered at the second meeting of the group. We explored our roots as well as present-day problems in Europe. It was also an opportunity to hear about AJR social work services from Myrna and Jim.
Agnes Isaacs

Radlett Watermarks Screening

We were treated to a screening of *Watermarks*, about the women swimmers of the inter-war Vienna Hakoah club and the reunion of some of them several years ago. One member of our group had actually been a member of Hakoah.
Fritz Starer

North West London Developing Creative Talents

Martha Richler, daughter of Mordecai

Inside the AJR continued overleaf ➔

CONTACTS

Hazel Beiny
Southern Groups Co-ordinator
07966 887 434 hazel@ajr.org.uk

Wendy Bott
Yorkshire Groups Co-ordinator
07908 156 365 wendy@ajr.org.uk

Susanne Green
North West Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734 susanne@ajr.org.uk

Susan Harrod
Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

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

Kathryn Prevezer
London South and Midlands
Groups Co-ordinator
07966 969 951 kathryn@ajr.org.uk

Esther Rinkoff
Southern Region Co-ordinator
07966 631 778 esther@ajr.org.uk

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker
020 8385 3070 andrea@ajr.org.uk

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld
020 8954 5298 H.obstfeld@talk21.com

AJR OUTINGS PLANNED FOR 2014



Tuesday 6 May to Thursday 8 May
Annual London Trip – 3 days
of events open to all

Thursday 15 May
Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Temple
in Neasden – morning visit
followed by lunch

Sunday 15 June
Gilbert & Sullivan Opera and cream tea
at Grimm's Dyke Hotel, Stanmore

Sunday 29 June
Judith Kerr OBE, a German-born British
writer and illustrator, will be speaking
exclusively to AJR at LJCC. Families
welcome: children, grandchildren,
great-grandchildren

Thursday 10 July
Frogmore Paper Mill – lunch,
guided tour and making
your own paper

Thursday 17 July
Montifiore Synagogue in Ramsgate –
with lunch beforehand by the seaside

Tuesday 22 July
Viennese tea at The Delaunay
in Central London

Make a note in your diary not to miss these exciting events!

~ ~ DINNER ~ ~ TUESDAY 6 MAY 2014

at 7.00 pm
at London Jewish Cultural Centre
with Ian Austin MP
& Karen Pollock MBE
of Holocaust Education Trust

As part of the AJR's annual three-day trip to London we will be holding a dinner at LJCC with guest speakers Ian Austin and Karen Pollock.

Ian Austin has been MP for Dudley North since 2005. In 1999 he was appointed a political advisor to Chancellor of the Exchequer (later Prime Minister) Gordon Brown and was well known as one of Gordon Brown's closest advisors.

Karen Pollock is Chief Executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) and a member of the Jewish Human Rights Coalition UK. She will talk about the work of HET in educating future generations.

A kosher supervised meal with drinks will be served.

Cost £25.00 per person. All places must be booked in advance.

For further details, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susanharrod@ajr.org.uk

INSIDE THE AJR continued from page 13

Richler, read us an essay from his book *Barney's Version*. She then told us about growing up with her siblings in Canada and not being allowed to make any noise between 7.30 am and 4 pm while her father was writing, though this enabled them to develop their creative talents. *David Lang*

Welwyn GC Local Quaker Support for Kinder

We had a good turnout for an excellent talk by Peter Colman, a local resident who has been researching the Kindertransport and Second-Generation Jews in the Welwyn area. Much of his research related to Quaker support. *Lee Becket*

Wembley An Amazing Family

A fascinating talk illustrated with slides and film excerpts by Howard Lanning, whose amazing family all were, and still are, connected to the film industry. We enjoyed the afternoon and learned a lot about the movie industry. *Avram Schaufeld*

North London AJR Intern Jumps into the Breach

Following a cancellation by our scheduled speaker, AJR intern Dora Köhler most ably jumped into the breach and we had an interesting and fruitful talk and discussion. Thank you, Dora! *Herbert Haberberg*

**OPERATIC
AFTERNOON
AND CREAM TEA
SUNDAY 15 JUNE 2014**



**The Grims Dyke Hotel, Mansion House,
Old Redding, Harrow, Middx HA3 6SH**

This is truly an English treat, in keeping with the house and its heritage!

We begin with a guided tour of the house and grounds, followed by a Full English Cream Tea, with sandwiches, homemade scones and tea fancies. Principal opera singers perform excerpts from their favourite operas.

Time 2.30 arrival, 3 pm start

Place Guests to meet in the Lobby and Library Bar. Tours of the house and grounds will begin at 3 pm. Opera begins at 4:45 pm.

Dress Code Smart

Price £29.00 per person - Includes Opera Performance and Full Cream Tea, preceded by tour of house and grounds

**Transport will be available
at an additional cost**

**For further details, please contact
Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070
or at susan@ajr.org.uk**

SPECIAL EVENT

*The Last Train
to Tomorrow*

**Sunday 9 November 2014, 3 pm
at The Roundhouse, London NW1**

The world-famous composer and conductor Carl Davis will perform the London premiere of his tribute to the Kindertransport, *The Last Train to Tomorrow*, on Sunday 9 November at The Roundhouse, London NW1.

As the date marks the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the proceedings will include a commemoration of the Reichspogrom of 9-10 November 1938.

The event will also feature *The Marriage of Figaro Overture* by Mozart and Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* performed by the City of London Sinfonia and the Finchley Children's Music Group, together with an outstanding young violin soloist from the Yehudi Menuhin School.

As the event will take place on a Sunday afternoon, we particularly encourage members to bring along their children and grandchildren.

**Details of how to purchase tickets will
be announced in due course, but to
register your interest in attending please
email enquiries@ajr.org.uk**

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**OUTING
TO LEEDS
CASTLE, KENT**



WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL 2014

Leeds Castle has been a Norman stronghold, the private property of six of England's medieval queens, a palace used by Henry VIII and his first wife Catherine of Aragon, a Jacobean country house, a Georgian mansion, an elegant early-20th-century retreat for the influential and famous, and, in the 21st century, it has become one of the most visited historic buildings in Britain.

We will arrive by 9.45 am for a private tour of the Castle and grounds before it is open to the public. This will be followed by an early lunch. We intend to finish by 1 pm.

Transport will be available from Kent and Brighton, or members from London can take the train to Bearsted Station, from which the Castle is a short taxi-ride away.

The cost, including entrance, private tour and transport, will be **£17.50 per person**. The cost of lunch will be payable on the day.

**For further details, please contact
Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or
at susan@ajr.org.uk**

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Jonathan Fishburn

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**Contact Jonathan on
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'Walter's World'

Former Kind Walter Bingham travels all over Israel and the international Jewish world to bring you in-depth reports in his exciting magazine-style programme. Topics range from cultural and entertainment events and social problems to major political interviews and statements recorded live.

'Walter's World' broadcasts every Sunday from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm Israel time on Israel National Radio.

The programme can also be heard by going to www.israelnationalradio.com and looking for 'Walter's World' or by googling 'Walter Bingham Israel'.

OBITUARIES

Anne Loebel, born Prague 20 December 1931, died London 4 October 2013

My mother, Anne Loebel of Belsize Park, London, died on 4 October 2013 at the age of 81, four months after she had been diagnosed with an advanced incurable cancer.

Starting life as Annalise Wertheimer, she was born in Prague on 20 December 1931. Her parents were Jan, a lawyer, and Helena. She had an older brother, Frankichek.

Her first seven years were happy ones. She had memories of her parents, who made her feel loved and valued. This gave her strength throughout her life. However, in July 1939, after bribing Czech officials, Anne's parents put her on the last of the Kindertransport trains to leave Prague for England. The little girl saw it as an 'adventure', not realising that she would never see her parents and brother again. They were murdered in the Holocaust, being transported to Terezin in December 1942 and to Auschwitz in September 1943.

Anne was sent to Jewish foster parents in Newcastle upon Tyne, but it was not a happy experience. All her life, Anne deeply missed her real parents.

In 1950, aged 19, Anne married Herbert Loebel, a German-Jewish refugee whose family had made their home in Newcastle. While she was in love with Herbert, her



Anne with her brother Frankichek shortly before she left, alone, on the last Kindertransport from Prague

marriage also enabled her to leave her foster parents in an honourable way. However, she had to turn down a scholarship to study English literature at Royal Holloway College, London, because she had to stay in Newcastle on getting married. Instead, she graduated from Newcastle University in English Literature. Books were to remain a fierce passion throughout her life.

Family was the most important thing to Anne. Both she and Herbert felt that bringing up Jewish children was even more

important in the age after Hitler so as not to allow him 'victory'. When her three children were young, Anne set up a kindergarten as the area they lived in lacked one. Later, she undertook postgraduate studies in Drama in Education under the legendary Dorothy Heathcote. She also worked as a part-time lecturer in English at Newcastle College of Education.

Later in life, painful though it was, as a member of the Survivors Group based at the London Jewish Cultural Centre she gave lectures in schools about her personal experience as one of the Kinder. When Nicholas Winton, the British organiser of Kindertransports from Prague, was finally honoured, Anne, and others like her, got to meet this inspirational man on a TV programme which brought them all together.

Anne is survived by her three children, Naomi, Robert and Miriam, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, whom she loved unconditionally. She made few, if any, demands but in return was truly loved and her wisdom appreciated. Anne is sorely missed by her family and friends in England, Israel and the USA. May her memory be a blessing.

Robert Loyal

Zuza Jackson (née Vrbova), born Prague 3 May 1954, died Cambridge 17 September 2013

Zuza was born in Prague in May 1954. Her mother Gerta and father Rudi both survived the Holocaust: Rudi escaped from Auschwitz and Gerta somehow escaped capture. Zuza was their second daughter.

Zuza and her sister Helena spent their early years in Prague. Their parents separated. Gerta met a British scientist, Sidney Hilton, and they decided to get married. Gerta and her children had to leave Czechoslovakia; they escaped over the border into Poland. Zuza was only four years old when she bravely walked across the border to start a new life. They flew to Denmark, where they were given political asylum. In September 1959 they moved to England and Gerta married Sidney Hilton. They had two more children, Caroline and Peter.

The family moved to Birmingham, where Zuza completed her A-Levels and secured a place at Leicester University to study Geology with Astronomy. She found the course inspirational and thoroughly enjoyed university life.

After leaving Leicester Zuza began her career in publishing. She met Michael Janulewicz and on 2 December 1981 their daughter Hannah was born. The family moved into an idyllic cottage in Bishop Stortford, away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

In May 1982 the family was struck by



tragedy when Helena, Zuza's older sister and best friend, died. Zuza felt as though a part of her very life force had been taken but she tried to be positive. On 20 November 1983 her son Jan was born. Unfortunately, the relationship with Michael did not last and in 1994 Zuza took a job at Ladybird Books in Loughborough, where her interest in writing books for young children developed.

Zuza met Andrew Jackson in 1996 and they were soon married. They began a new life together in Cambridge, where Zuza was truly happy. She set up the company Zuza Books and designed books for young children. She was never short of ideas for inspiring children to develop a passion for literature.

Zuza always saw the positive side of everyone. Her children's friends would often come to her with their problems for help, support and advice.

She was a wonderful and attentive

daughter. She looked after her mother when needed, spending time with her whenever she could and taking her on holiday.

Despite the separation, Zuza loved her father Rudi Vrba, who lived in Vancouver. When he remarried, Zuza developed a close relationship with his new wife Robin. Robin recalls how Zuza resembled Rudi in being an amazing storyteller and always loved chatting with her about her many experiences and reflections.

Zuza was a wonderful daughter to her father and she was like a sister to Robin. During the last few months of Rudi's life, Zuza came to Vancouver and devoted three months to sitting by his side. They discussed everything that was on their minds, especially issues of life and death. Shortly before Rudi died, he thought about these conversations and, referring to Zuza, said 'It's a miracle - we are connected on a cellular level.'

Zuza was an exceptionally loving person who touched everyone with her warmth and charm. She believed that life was about making connections with others. She was never jealous and was always generous and would share whatever she had with her friends and family. We will all miss her terribly but we will never be far from her love, warmth and passion for life.

**Gerta Vrbova, Caroline Hilton,
Peter Hilton**



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

The status of women in Israel

The subject is tricky because, on the one hand, Israel aspires to be a modern, democratic society, treating men and women equally in the public sphere. On the other hand, the laws regarding marriage and divorce are subject to the restrictions, regulations and constraints of its ancient, patriarchal religion.

The reasons for this are complex. Jewish religious law regarding marriage and divorce was adopted when the State of Israel was established as part of the price the 'founding fathers' paid in order to bring the religious parties into the coalition government. Back then, however, the religious parties were very different in their mien and outlook from the ultra-orthodox version that now prevails.

Thus, the laws set out in the Bible regarding the role of women in marriage are upheld to this day. If a woman's husband dies without there having been any children - sons, that is - his brothers must either marry or release her. Yes, in Israel today! There is no such thing as civil marriage. Members of each religious group - Jews, Muslims, Christians - may marry only in accordance with their religion, continuing the arrangement of the over 400 years of Ottoman rule throughout the Middle East.

If a Jewish woman wishes to get divorced she can do so only if her husband agrees to this. This harks back to the time when the wife

was regarded as the property of her husband and this approach continues to cast its long shadow over the situation of women in Israel today. It has given rise to many injustices towards women over the centuries and it is not unknown for a man to deny his wife a divorce unless she gives him some material benefit or grants him custody of their children or whatever takes his fancy. The rabbinical courts which judge these cases consist entirely of men so that the tendency is to favour men. Divorce isn't pleasant at the best of times but the lot of a woman in Israel is particularly hard. The process involved is a long-drawn-out, demeaning and painful *Via Dolorosa* and can even end in failure.

Recently I attended a talk by Susan Weiss entitled 'How a Good Jewish Girl Became a Radical Feminist'. Susan is an American-born attorney now living in Israel. When she immigrated to Israel some 30 years ago, she was an orthodox Jewish woman with a husband and three small children. Unable to work in her profession, she volunteered for various women's organisations, where she encountered the problem of women denied a divorce by their husband (*Agunot*). Using her legal training, Susan was able to help in some of these cases but also found herself moving away from her strict adherence to orthodox Judaism. Fortunately, her husband has been

very understanding about this process.

There are many other archaic aspects of Jewish law that restrict women's rights but they are too numerous and arcane to mention here, to the extent that a person born into the modern world will find it difficult to believe that in Israel this is still the law and is enforced by the agencies of the state.

In 2004 Susan founded the Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ), an organisation devoted to protecting the right of women in Israel to equality, dignity and justice in Jewish Law. It has achieved much in upholding women's rights in the rabbinical courts and has even instituted proceedings in the civil court for damages against recalcitrant husbands. These cases have been upheld, resulting in positive outcomes and setting an important legal precedent.

Written together with journalist Netty Gross-Horowitz, Susan's book, *Marriage and Divorce in the Jewish State: Israel's Civil War*, has been published by the Brandeis Series on Gender, Culture, Religion, and Law. It describes cases dealt with by the CWJ in which women were denied a divorce by their husbands or on whom various restrictions were imposed by the rabbinical court. Incidentally, even a woman who has been married abroad in a civil ceremony (which is recognised in Israel) must seek a divorce in the rabbinical court.

The ultimate solution to the situation, Susan claims, is the separation of religion and state in Israel, bringing the country into line with the tenets of a modern democracy, enabling couples to wed according to their own inclinations, and releasing the stranglehold of the rabbinical courts on legal procedures in Israel. Roll on the day!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *cont. from p.7*

my wife and I, and a few other former Hildesheim residents were invited by the Stadt Hildesheim to visit our birthplace, which proved a most interesting and rewarding experience. At that time, a certain Hans-Jurgen Hahn of the Robert-Bosch Gesamtschule (a UNESCO Model school) was leading a team in the preservation and restoration of the chapel in the Jewish cemetery, where we were shown the grave of our grandmother, Ida Feige.

In the ensuing years, my parents passed away here in London. I have also 'lost' my sister and two uncles so, from my heritage, I don't have a living blood relative. However, my wife and I can celebrate 50 years of marriage this year. We have a great son and two wonderful grandchildren - hopefully the beginning

of a new family dynasty!

Henry Carlton, London N14

JEWISH 'PSEUDO-SPIES'

Sir - In his interesting article about Hans Oster (February), Dr Grenville mentioned Jews in the guise of Abwehr agents being helped to escape to Switzerland. Were these 'pseudo-spies' perhaps the 'Jews in the Abwehr' that *Wikipedia* reports?

Does any reader know if some Jews really spied for Hitler (under pressures that must soften harsh judgements about them)? If so, where were they active and what became of them?

J. G. Landers, Chania, Crete

PETITION AGAINST FRENCH RAILWAYS

Sir - We have been working with members of the US Congress for a law that would

facilitate our fight against the SNCF. Working with change.org, we have created a petition to obtain grass-roots support.

We need your help - and the help of your family and friends. Please go to www.change.org/petitions/sncf-pay-reparations-to-victims-of-the-holocaust Sign the petition online and ask everyone in your family to sign it separately. After you sign it, send it to everyone on your email list and ask them to sign it and send it to their family and friends. Share it with your synagogue, members of any clubs or associations you belong to and with your neighbours.

We want 76,000 names on the petition to represent the 76,000 Jews who were deported. With your help, it will happen. Thank you.

Harriet Tamen,
Attorney-at-Law, New York

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Telephone 020 8385 3070 Fax 020 8385 3080 e-mail editorial@ajr.org.uk

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