

# AJR journal

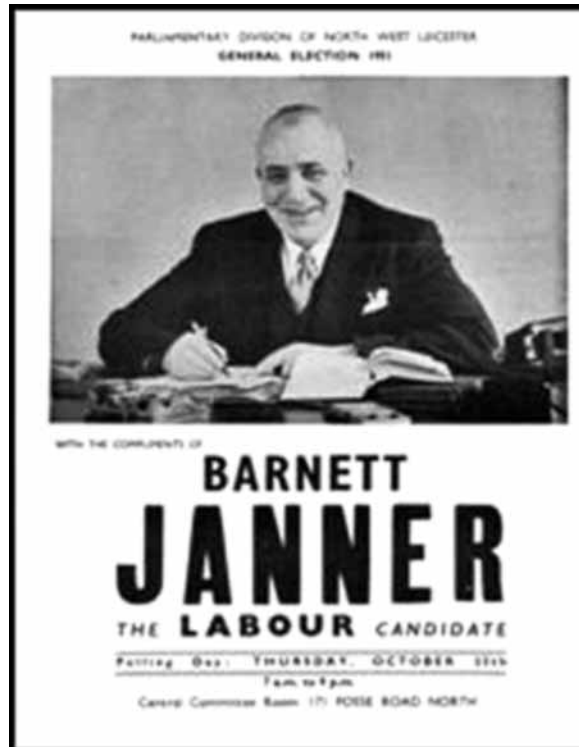
The Association of Jewish Refugees

## General elections past

With a general election looming, this is perhaps an appropriate moment to look back on our journal's reporting of general elections of an earlier era. *AJR Information* commenced publication in January 1946, which meant – unfortunately from a historian's point of view – that nothing is recorded of the response of the Jewish refugees from Hitler to the landmark election of 5 July 1945: then the Conservative government, with wartime leader Winston Churchill at its head, had been turned out of office and a Labour government under Clement Attlee returned, having made a net gain of no less than 293 seats.

The first general elections covered in *AJR Information* were those of 23 February 1950 and 25 October 1951. This pair of closely fought elections resembled the two elections of 1974; but with the difference that in the earlier elections, the governing party, Labour, was returned at the first with a very slender majority, only to be ousted at the second, despite gaining almost a quarter of a million more votes than the winning Conservatives, while on 28 February 1974 the opposition Labour Party emerged as the largest party, albeit without an overall majority in parliament, and replaced the governing Tories. Labour then secured a tiny overall majority in the elections of 10 October 1974, after which it hung on precariously in government until Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives swept to power in May 1979, in the second great landmark general election of the post-war era.

The journal's leading article in February 1950 set the tone for much of its coverage of subsequent general elections. The journal was studiously neutral as between the British political parties, expressing a view only on issues directly affecting the refugees from Nazism or Jews more generally. In February 1950, it took evident pleasure in informing its readers that in Britain, unlike in pre-Hitler Germany and Austria, Jews could vote for candidates of any of the political parties without fear that they were lending their support to organisations with anti-Semitic tendencies: 'Whilst in Germany some parties [e.g. the German Nationalists, the Deutschnationalen, the Weimar Republic's approximate equivalent to the Conservative Party] were out of bounds for Jews because of their more or less anti-Semitic policy, the Jews in Great Britain have the same choice



Barnett Janner MP, 1892-1982

between the major political parties as their non-Jewish fellow-citizens.'

The journal went on to state that in Britain Jews were to be found standing for parliament as candidates for all the main political parties, reflecting the fact that Jews were to be found among the supporters of all parties. Unlike in the United States, where a clearly defined Jewish vote exists, in Britain there is no 'Jewish vote'; likewise, there is no 'Jewish issue' on which the community sides with one political party over another. British Jewry is in any case too small, and its numbers in all but a handful of parliamentary seats too low, to weigh heavily in the electoral balance. Over the decades, it would appear that Jews have tended to vote in increasingly large numbers for the Conservative Party and in correspondingly smaller numbers for the Labour Party, but that reflects the change in the community's economic and social profile rather than a switch to a more pro- or anti-Jewish policy on the part of either party.

The refugees from Hitler were in 1950 still deeply impressed by the effective functioning of British democracy, which contrasted sharply with the experience of almost all Continental countries in the 1930s and 1940s: 'Political maturity is

one of the outstanding features of British public life. Party controversies are not as fierce as they are on the Continent, and sound compromise is often preferred to doctrinarianism.' The journal also drew its readers' attention to unfamiliar features of the British political system, in particular its use of a first-past-the-post system of voting, under which the candidate who received the greatest number of votes in each seat was elected for that seat. This differed from Continental systems of proportional representation not only in that it produced an entirely different overall electoral result: as electors voted for an individual candidate, not for a list, they were also selecting an MP who represented his or her electorate as a whole. The editorial concluded by urging on its readers, who had been unable to exercise their democratic right to vote since 1933, the importance of casting their votes on 23 February 1950.

Had *AJR Information* covered the election of July 1945, the issue that most concerned it would almost certainly have been naturalisation, for it was only on 15 November 1945

that the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, made a statement setting out the arrangements under which the refugees from Hitler could apply for naturalisation. Until then, they had remained stateless, having been deprived of their German nationality by the Nazis, and it had been by no means certain that they would be allowed to acquire British citizenship. It is a measure of the degree to which the refugees had acquired confidence and security as British subjects and as settled British residents that the journal could look back on this issue in January 1950 as successfully closed: 'In this country it is no longer necessary to discuss the legal niceties of the problem, after every refugee who applied for it and had not made himself personally objectionable to the authorities has become a British subject' (p. 4).

*AJR Information* carried detailed information about the number of Jewish MPs elected in all the post-war elections. Since there was always a substantial block of Jewish MPs, considerably in excess of the proportion of Jews in the population as a whole, this can be interpreted as an attempt to allay readers' fears that anti-Semitism might have influenced the parties' choice

## AJR GREETs GOVERNMENT DECISION ON ENEMY PROPERTY SCHEME

The AJR is delighted to learn that the British Government has removed the option to close a Holocaust-era restitution programme from a consultation document on the future of the Enemy Property Scheme.

The scheme was launched in 1999 to return assets – mostly bank balances – sequestered by British banks in accordance with the 1939 Trading with the Enemy Act, introduced by Neville Chamberlain's government to prevent money held by German nationals (or those from what became known as belligerent countries) being used to fund the German war effort. The Act failed to distinguish between the assets of Nazi victims and their perpetrators and the bank accounts of some 25,000 people, including some Jewish customers, were frozen. Post-war the assets of some victims were returned but those who

were then living in Communist countries had no recourse to recover their possessions.

Following the introduction of a restitution scheme, the Enemy Property Claims Assessment Panel has considered over 1,300 applications for compensation for almost 1,500 assets with over 500 claims having been assessed as qualifying for payment. Through the scheme, a total of £23.7 million has been paid with the average pay-out around £46,000.

In response to the original version of the consultation, which included the option to close the scheme, the AJR issued this statement:

'It would be greatly remiss of the Government to prematurely close what has been a successful scheme. While the number of applicants has slowed in recent years, the evidence from similar Holocaust-era restitution schemes in other countries is that there may well be

descendants of Holocaust victims who belatedly become aware of the possibility of recovering family assets. To deny them their rightful inheritance would be a travesty of justice and an unnecessary stain on the British Government's otherwise leading reputation in the field of post-Holocaust issues and weaken our demand for countries that have not introduced legislation to rapidly address their moral failure.

In light of the establishment of the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission and as the UK concludes its year as Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the AJR's strong recommendation would be to leave the scheme running, if necessary in a dormant state, and to launch a further international awareness campaign, perhaps through embassies.'

 General elections past *continued*

of parliamentary candidates. However, of the 28 MPs sitting in the parliament that was dissolved in February 1950, all but two represented the Labour Party, and not a single one was a Conservative. Labour's Jewish MPs contained some notable figures, a number of them, like Ian Mikardo, Maurice Orbach, Sidney Silverman, George Jeger and Lena Jeger (she was the widow of his brother, Santo Jeger, and on her husband's death in 1953 she was elected for his seat, Holborn and St Pancras South), on the party's restive and fractious left wing. Among those who were deeply concerned with specifically Jewish issues was Barnett Janner, who sat for Leicester North West until his retirement at the general election of 1970, after which it was held by his son Greville (now Lord Janner).

The parliament that reassembled after the election contained 22 Jewish MPs, all of them Labour, again without a single Conservative. Among the Jewish MPs who lost their seats was Phil Piratin, who had been elected as a Communist for Mile End in 1945 but failed to win the new seat of Stepney in 1950. Piratin had been one of the principal organisers of the successful resistance against the planned march of Oswald Mosley's Fascists through the East End in October 1936; he had also organised the group of 70 men, women and children who had invaded a luxury air raid shelter at

the Savoy Hotel in 1940 as a protest against the shocking contrast between conditions in the shelters of the impoverished East End and those enjoyed by the rich. Yet Piratin fell victim to the anti-Communist mood of the early Cold War years, as did the other Communist MP, the Glasgow firebrand Willie Gallacher.

After Leslie Hore-Belisha lost his seat in 1945, there were no Jewish Conservative MPs until 1955, when Sir Henry d'Avigdor Goldsmid, an impeccable member of the Jewish aristocracy, won the seat of Walsall South. But this is to ignore the flamboyant figure of Gerald Nabarro, famous for his handlebar moustache and his personalised number plate NAB 1. Nabarro had been born into a Sephardi Jewish family but had converted to Christianity. He was elected for Kidderminster in 1950 and proceeded to entertain the public with his outspoken comments about people of colour – which political correctness prevents me from repeating – and his claim, when charged with a motoring offence in 1971, that his secretary had been driving. (Seen weeping among his entourage when he was found guilty was a young woman called Christine Holman, later to acquire celebrity as Christine Hamilton when her husband Neil was named in 1997 by Mohamed Al-Fayed as one of the MPs to whom he had paid money in the 'cash-for-questions' affair, a charge that Hamilton has consistently denied.)

Although the number of Conservative MPs increased markedly with the party's victories in the general elections of 26 May 1955 and 8 October 1959, the number of Tory Jewish MPs rose only very slowly. The second Jewish Tory to be elected was Sir Keith Joseph, who won the seat of Leeds North East at a by-election in February 1956. Joseph was to become a very significant figure on the right wing of the party, as the man often credited with formulating the free-market, small-government Conservatism that inspired Margaret Thatcher.

Anthony Grenville

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THE DATE TO REMEMBER



REMEMBER TOGETHER  
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1945 SEVENTY 2015 YEARS

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Doors open 7.15pm for prompt start  
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## NEWLY AVAILABLE REPORTS CAST LIGHT ON LIFE IN KINDERTRANSPORT CAMPS

**T**hey come through Holland, are only allowed to bring one mark out of Germany, and come into England in batches of varying numbers' – *Women's Voluntary Services report on a visit to Dovercourt Refugee Camp, 12 January 1939*

When the children of the Kindertransport began to arrive in England in 1938 not all were lucky enough to be housed with the hundreds of British families who volunteered to take in those fleeing persecution in Europe. For many young refugees, their first place of residence in England was a re-appropriated holiday camp like Butlin's at Dovercourt in Essex.

Thanks to the National Archives and the family history website [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk) – which has recently added Kindertransport records to its collections – over 40 volumes of official reports on Dovercourt are now available to view online. These reports come from the Foreign Office, War Cabinet, Home Office, Education Ministry and the Ministry of Health and are mainly government correspondence detailing observations of the camp, the daily lives of the children and young people living there, and the journeys they had made.

*'The camp is on the seashore at Dovercourt and consists of a large number of wooden cabins, a little larger than bathing machines, each containing two bunks, one above and one below, and in some cases a third single bunk as well as a basin with running water. Except in a very few huts there is no heating' – description of camp from official military report*

The accommodation at Dovercourt was sparse without being uncomfortable. Sanitation is repeatedly mentioned in the reports as being well taken care of, with 'each lavatory hut divided into two halves, marked "Lads" and "Lasses". In each half were three bathrooms and several latrines. A tap outside these huts provided constant hot water for filling bottles, etc. Charwomen clean the lavatory huts.'

Typically, winter presented its own difficulties in the camp. As the huts were

almost entirely unheated temperatures frequently became unbearably low. According to one report, 'the Commandant said that they provided each child with a hot water bottle and five blankets, and stressed the fact that their huts were for sleeping rather than sitting rooms. Stoves are installed in the main building.'

The reports tell of people, both local to

Spencer's staff have given their services gratis to attend in the camp.'

*'In the afternoons, the elder boys play football. The other children go for walks, play indoor games and sew or write letters. They rehearse plays and songs and give a weekly evening entertainment. On other evenings they are entertained by local talent and various voluntary helpers.'*

Daily life for those at Dovercourt was designed to be as positive and normal as possible, with the stated intention of camp leaders to help the children forget the tragedies they had escaped. A normal day would involve making beds and cleaning huts, with the older children helping the younger ones. Mornings would be occupied by lessons taken by local volunteers, some working with group leaders and others going to the local village school to learn English. Afternoons would be as described in the quote above with the children engaged in sports and entertainment.

The happiness and positive attitude of the children are mentioned often in the reports: 'The children looked very healthy, and said they were happy with real enthusiasm,' writes one witness. Another says 'they seemed wonderfully happy, considering all they had been through.'

The positive outlook of the children can possibly be partly attributed to their hearty – if perhaps slightly repetitive – diet. Children waited on themselves at meal times and, as seen by the menu above, it seems unlikely that hunger would have been a common complaint at Dovercourt.

These reports offer a truly unique insight into a period of great tragedy and great warmth. If you want to find out more about the Dovercourt reports, or the records of those who travelled on the Kindertransport, they can be viewed on the [findmypast](http://findmypast.co.uk) website, along with guides on how to research your Jewish family history, at <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/jewish-family-history>

**Jim Shaughnessy**  
Content Lead at family history website [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk)

Catering				
The catering seemed very good, the diet sheet is as follows:-				
	Bread/Fast.	Dinner	Tea	Supper
Friday	Cocoa. Porridge. Bread & Butter Eggs.	Fish Boiled Potatoes Parsley sauce. Boiled Rice.	Tea Bread & Butter. Fresh Fruit.	Cocoa. Buns.
Saturday.	Cocoa. Porridge. Sausage. Bread.	Boiled Mutton. Mixed Vegetables Potatoes. Currant Roll. Custard.	Tea Bread & Butter. Jam. Fresh Fruit.	Soup. Bread.
Sunday	Cocoa. Porridge. Bread & Butter. Eggs.	Roast Beef. Beans or Cabbage Potatoes. Baked Rice Pudding	Tea. Bread & Butter. Cake. Fresh Fruit.	Cheese. Bread & Butter.
Monday	Cocoa Porridge. Bread & Butter Fresh Fruit.	Boiled Beef. Carrots. Potatoes. Jam Roll.	Tea. Prunes & Custard. Bread & Butter.	Bread Soup.
Tuesday	Cocoa. Porridge. Bread. Bacon.	Shepherd's Pie. Peas. Potatoes. Boiled rice & Currants.	Tea. Bread & Butter. Fresh Fruit.	Cocoa. Buns.
Wednesday.	Cocoa Porridge. Bread & Butter Eggs.	Irish Stew. Mixed Vegetables. Potatoes. Boiled fruit roll.	Tea. Bread & Butter. Cake.	Soup. Bread.
Thursday	Cocoa. Porridge. Bread & Butter. Jam. Fresh Fruit.	Meat roll Peas or Beans. Potatoes. Jam. Syrup pudding.	Tea. Bread & Butter. Stewed Fruit Custard.	Cocoa. Bread & Butter. Cheese.

N.B. Bread provided with each dinner.

the camps and refugees themselves, eager to help the Kindertransport children. One witness describes the camp leaders as 'very keen, full of human kindness, vitality and emanating a cheerful atmosphere. Great efforts are made to stress the future hopes of the children and so help them to forget their past.' All the helpers in the camps were volunteers and they included local public schoolboys, hairdressers, a 'celebrated Arlberg ski champion', and 'the son of a well-known German motor manufacturer'.

This desire to provide assistance was not limited to the individuals directly involved with Dovercourt. 'Messrs. Marks and Spencer,' one report states, 'have fitted out these children where required from "top to toe", including gum-boots, and two members of Messrs. Marks and

### Refugee Family Papers: An Interactive Map

Howard Falksohn, Archivist, Wiener Library

**E**arlier this year the Wiener Library launched an addition to its website – Refugee Family Papers: An Interactive Map <http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/interactivemap> About 60 people attended the event, many of them contributors to the project and donors of material to the Library. The evening consisted of presentations by Wiener Library staff on the history and nature of the project and how it fits into their overall strategy of providing digital access to their collections.

So what exactly is this Interactive Map? On one level, it is simply a finding aid to the Library's collection of family papers of former

refugees from the Nazis. Instead of a merely textual description of the content of our holdings, which the Library has already made accessible via its website, this new product displays digital facsimile sample photographs and documents from the collections often along with audio content (extracts of interviews with protagonists). Each family is represented on a map of Europe using the co-ordinates to their last permanent address. The collections can be searched by the map itself, by one of eight main cities for which we hold a number of collections, and by personal/family name or keyword.

The Library holds approximately 500 family

collections, which can vary greatly in size. Since many of the facsimile documents used are not in English (usually German), parallel translations are provided and people are encouraged to offer their own translations of documents. In addition, where precise map co-ordinates haven't been obtained due to lack of address details, people are invited to provide proof of last permanent address. These last two features in particular will render the project truly interactive.

A significant portion of the content used (150 collections) stems from the *AJR's Refugee Voices* project created by Dr Anthony Grenville

*continued on page 15* ➔

## A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE

*I owe many thanks to my dear father and mother for all the hard times and distress they endured over many years and consider myself lucky that I was too young to appreciate how they suffered yet always remained calm and loving despite their adversities. A wonderful example to take on board.*

**M**utti, however did you manage in those early years in England, aged 39 and with no knowledge of English, with two young children, thrust into a bugs-and-mice-infested hovel in the East End of London? Sadly, aged eight, I never posed this question to my dear mother but, over the years, I did wonder with awe how she had coped with this dire situation.

Of course we had got away from the Nazi terror, but she had had to leave her beloved parents behind and that was a bane in her life too. In the event, they never made it: war was declared before she could get them a guarantor, so that must have been a constant torment as well.

Luckily my dear father was a fighter. Aged 43, and after a six-week stay in Buchenwald, he wasn't the man he had been but he knew he had responsibilities and he went out cleaning windows and serving meals in cafes to make sure he had the wherewithal to put food on the table for the four of us.

Our guarantors brought us to England and six weeks later disposed of us in two rooms in Stepney. One bedroom, one living room, no kitchen – just a gas stove on the landing – some eight stairs down a sink, and the toilet was in the yard three flights down. It baffles me how my mother coped, coming from a middle-class home in Frankfurt am Main with central heating, bathroom and toilet and a proper kitchen.

Gradually our situation improved. We took over another two rooms a flight below and almost began to feel quite normal again. Money was tight of course and I remember my mother asking for a new dress for Rosh Hashanah and my father being unable to fulfil this wish at that time.

My brother and I escaped the worst of those times as we were evacuated and got to know another life altogether. To visit us by coach my mother had to skimp and save to get the money for the fare but what a pleasure it was for us both to look up in our foster home

and suddenly see our dear mother come along. It was a wonderful reunion for her too, although the journey was by no means straightforward. All signposts had been removed and the coach driver had to find his way with very vague directions.

To get to the yard for the toilet we had to bypass a buttonhole manufacturer on the ground floor and my mother had on occasion to put up with crude and suggestive remarks emanating from this man. This must have been a terrible torment for her.

The elderly couple who lived in the basement were pleasant but couldn't get their tongue around our surname of Gonzwa so my mother became Mrs Samuel, my father's forename.

At first, there was an Anderson shelter in the yard and we all sat in there during the Blitz, sometimes most of the day when the siren didn't give the 'all clear' for hours at a time. Eventually, we took blankets and pillows and spent the whole night in a local warehouse, where everybody slept on the floor. The night was noisy with ack-ack fire and the sound of bombs dropping, but at least it was a haven. At 6.30 we had to leave for the first-shift workers to come in. We trudged home, wondering as we turned into our street whether our home would still be standing there.

In 1942, as with many other refugees, another child was added to our family. A rumour had circulated (quite wrongly) that an English-born child would ensure we could stay permanently. My sister brought us great pleasure but how did my mother manage with this extra development?

Now, when the sirens went in the middle of the night we just got dressed and walked across the road to the Grand

Palais, which had a large basement. I can only remember how jolly the local people were, singing and dancing as though they hadn't a care in the world. They certainly cheered everyone up.

Due to the 'phoney war' my brother and I had been brought back home but, when the situation worsened, we were evacuated once more. This time my mother came with us and, surrounded by only English speakers, she very soon became fluent in her new language.

By 1947 my parents had somehow scraped a deposit together for a house in Upper Clapton and we thankfully moved into a semi-detached house with all mod cons. No more visits to the local bath establishment to hear people calling out 'More hot water, No. 3!' Now we had our very own facilities.

I owe many thanks to my dear father and mother for all the hard times and distress they endured over many years and consider myself lucky that I was too young to appreciate how they suffered yet always remained calm and loving despite their adversities. A wonderful example to take on board.

Meta Roseneil

**HOLIDAY IN ISRAEL  
MAY 2015**

Due to lack of interest,  
this trip is not going  
ahead.

### Purim 2015 at Sobell



(from left) Jenny Gersten, Gina Neugarten, Ros Collin, Fred Roxon, Marie Ryba

## HERBERT MORRISON AND THE PLIGHT OF EUROPEAN JEWS, 1942-45

Herbert Morrison was a prominent Labour Party politician who served as Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Home Security during the Second World War. This article will focus on his attitude to European Jews – those stranded in Nazi-occupied Europe and those who found refuge in Britain.

The British Government's policy was to admit only refugees from German-controlled territory who were likely to prove useful to the war effort. However, as Home Secretary, Morrison was in a position to make recommendations to the Cabinet to admit refugees on humanitarian grounds, although he rarely did so. As information about the Nazis' systematic extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe became public, Jewish and non-Jewish campaigners demanded that Britain adopt a less restrictive immigration policy on both Britain and Palestine. Morrison's view, expressed in brutally inappropriate terms to a Cabinet Committee on Refugees at the end of December 1942, was that 'it was essential to kill the idea that mass immigration to this country and the British Colonies was possible'. He was evidently convinced that any increase in the Jewish population of Britain would be a 'recipe for outbursts of antisemitism' and was not inclined to balance this against the humanitarian need.

Morrison raised his worries about the risks of domestic anti-Semitism on numerous occasions from 1942 to late 1945, when he was Lord President of the Council in the Labour Government. In the summer of 1942, a Cabinet Committee met to discuss an American request that Britain accept approximately 1,800 Jewish children living in deplorable conditions in France. Morrison, who chaired the meeting, asserted 'that he understood the mind-set of the average Briton better than anyone, and the arrival of 1,800 Jewish children at this time would lead to a considerable increase in antisemitism, of which he said there was a fair amount (just below the surface), and this could be bad for the country and bad for the Jewish community.'

In September 1942, Morrison presented a memorandum to Cabinet asking it to admit approximately 350 orphans and elderly people from Vichy France who were at imminent risk of deportation to Poland. He emphasised that he did not intend to make any further concessions because 'we already have a very large body of refugees here

and not all sections of public opinion are enthusiastic about their presence ... and if we get beyond a point in the admission of foreign refugees we may stir up an unpleasant degree of antisemitism (of which there is a fair amount just below the surface) and that would be bad for the country and the Jewish community.'

A month later Morrison made a similar comment to a deputation that requested visas for 2,000 children and elderly people from Vichy France. He referred to the risk of 'an anti-Semitic outburst that we would be incapable of controlling'.

On 17 December 1942, Anthony Eden informed the House of Commons of the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews. The House was sufficiently moved to stand in silence for a minute. Yet the following day, Morrison refused to issue visas to 2,000 Jewish refugees stranded in the Iberian Peninsula. And in January 1943 he told William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, that it was not possible to provide refuge in territories within the British Empire for the Jews because he feared it would stimulate anti-Semitism, which, he stated, was 'always under the pavement'. At his last Cabinet meeting as Home Secretary on 16 May 1945 and following the liberation of the concentration camps, Morrison declared that he was 'seriously alarmed regarding the possibility of anti-Semitism in this country'.

Morrison believed that admitting more Jews was impossible because, as he told the deputation in October 1942, of 'the difficulty of absorption'. In July 1943, he reminded a Cabinet meeting that 'when the percentage of Jews in any one European state goes above a certain level, there's bound to be anti-Semitism'. On 4 August 1944, he advised the Cabinet Committee on Refugees that the feasibility of absorbing Hungarian immigrants 'into the British Isles was practically nil'.

Morrison was so keen to ensure that the refugees who were living in Britain either returned to their homes or re-emigrated at the war's end that he initiated discussions on the issue as early as August 1941. On 31 December 1942, he warned the Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish Refugees that 'if these refugees did not leave this country after the war, we should be in for serious trouble'. Answering a question in the Commons on 21 January 1943, he stated that 'it has always been assumed ... that the refugees ... were here for a temporary period'. Morrison was hard-hearted

in the face of efforts by Home Office officials to stress humanitarian reasons for allowing Jewish refugees to remain, claiming repeatedly that allowing the refugees to remain would lead to 'outbursts of anti-semitism and public disorder'.

Thus, until the end of the war, Morrison, as he told the Cabinet Committee on Refugees on 16 May 1945, 'was clear that we ought to act on the assumption that those who had come here had done so temporarily, and that they should eventually go back whence they came'. They should not, he continued, be influenced by the view that the 'Jewish refugees in this country were terrified of returning to Germany'. His rationale was that 'it was possible that post-war Germany would abandon anti-Semitism altogether. If the Jews were allowed to remain here they might be an explosive element in this country, especially if the economic situation deteriorated'. At the end of 1945, Morrison was 'one of the foremost advocates' of a proposal to settle Jewish refugees in Cyrenaica (now part of Libya).

The short and complimentary obituary of Morrison in *AJR Information* in April 1965 referred to his having been, among other things, a 'lifelong friend of the Zionist cause'. Most striking about this obituary was the omission of his response to the plight of European Jews during the war.

Lesley Urbach

*This article is extracted from 'Herbert Morrison's Changing Attitude to the Plight of the Jews, 1930-1945', a dissertation for a Masters in Research in Jewish History and Culture at Southampton University. Sources include Louise London, 'Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust'; Bernard Wasserstein, 'Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945'; 'Hansard'; 'AJR Information'; 'The Jewish Chronicle'.*



Herbert Morrison,  
1888-1965

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# Letters to the Editor

*The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication*

## 'THE JOYS OF ADS'

Sir – It is always a pleasure to receive and read the *AJR Journal* at the beginning of each month. Imagine my surprise and excitement, therefore, to see from your March front-page article 'The joys of advertisements' that the previous tenant of 92 Eton Place, Eton College Road, NW3 – where Alan, my husband of nearly 63 years, and I spent our wedding night and which remained our home for over 17 years – was a fellow German-Jewish refugee: Ernst Rosenthal, who offered a photocopying service to north-west London. To add to the coincidence, my husband and I have a photocopier in our present home and make use of it daily for private and business purposes.

May the AJR and our journal go from strength to strength.

*Betty Bloom, London NW3*

Sir – An omission in Anthony Grenville's evocative piece about refugee-founded businesses: he writes that Corset Silhouette was owned by the Lobbenberg family. In fact, it was owned jointly by the Lobbenberg and Blumenau families. In Germany the firm had had branches in Cologne and Berlin.

Emigrating from Cologne in 1936, Hans Blumenau set up the office and the factory in London and was the firm's Chairman and Managing Director. Hans Lobbenberg emigrated from Berlin to England in 1938, was of course a partner, became Joint Managing Director, and was in charge of the factory when it was relocated to Shrewsbury during the war. We the undersigned are their sons.

*Ralph Blumenau, London W11,  
Peter Lobbenberg, London N2*

Sir – The leading article in your March issue is an impressive piece of research and has revived memories which are almost nostalgic. In it there are mentions of professional services involving retail premises such as opticians. One such – important at the time but not mentioned here – was the orthopaedic supplier Michaelis, who practised in the large block of flats at the corner of Finchley Road and Adelaide Road. Dr Michaelis,

who had been a medical practitioner in Germany (an orthopaedic specialist?), was unable, I believe, to work as a doctor in this country so he supplied insoles and similar products in a shop which faced south, with the entrance in Adelaide Road.

*Francis Steiner, Deddington, Oxon*

Sir – I would like to add to the otherwise well researched and interesting article of Anthony Grenville.

Cornelia James from Vienna rose from being a refugee to a royal warrant holder manufacturing gloves, employing 500 people in her Brighton factory. Our personal connection with her came about as we stocked her silk scarves in our shops. My wife, who travelled down to Brighton to buy from her, was very warmly received and given several presents. Somehow a firm impression was that she was born Jewish. To the best of my knowledge, this was revealed to her children only when she was dying.

A footnote about her children: Peter is an extremely successful crime writer, and her daughter is carrying on with the company her mother established.

Not so important is the omission of the leather goods shop on West End Lane owned by a Mr Fuchs, whom we supplied for years. Another shop we supplied was a luggage shop owned by a Mr Fairfield at Chalk Farm. Both owners were refugees.

*Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath*

Sir – Reading Anthony Grenville's article reminded me of another shop in the Swiss Cottage area which I don't think has been mentioned so far. In Belsize Road there was a delicatessen called Kallir's which was popular with the refugee community. I remember that my mother was very upset when she heard that one of the shop assistants there had been killed in an air raid.

Incidentally, we lived near Swiss Cottage during the Blitz in a boarding house at 3 Adamson Road and this was also almost completely occupied by Austrian and German refugees.

*George Vulkan, Kenton, Middx*

## PROBLEM SOLVED

Sir – Some time ago, I was in contact with a gentleman called Peter – I didn't remember his surname and he lived in Manchester. We had made contact through the AJR because he was researching *Kinder* who came to this country with the help of Quakers, as did my brother and I. We talked about my brother, who died in 1945 at what was then the Victoria Memorial (Jewish) Hospital in Manchester. Peter knew it well.

At the time of my brother's death, I had to make all the decisions in respect of his funeral arrangements. I decided that cremation was the best option.

Just several weeks ago, I learned that following a cremation the ashes have to be claimed by the next of kin. Now that 70 years had passed, I felt I needed to take the necessary action.

A few days ago, I wrote to the AJR asking for help. By lunchtime two days later, I had a telephone call from Peter Kurer! After several telephone conversations, and only 24 hours later, problem solved!!

Once again, I have reason to be more than grateful for the wonderful work of the AJR.

*Lisl Bohea (Taussig), Gosport, Hants*

## FUTURE OF THE FREE WORLD

Sir – As a Holocaust survivor whose family were murdered in Auschwitz, I should welcome the Prime Minister's pledge to 'commit £50 million to the creation of a new National Memorial, a world-class Learning Centre and an Endowment Fund to secure the long-term future of Holocaust education in this country', as reported in your March issue.

However, the world now finds itself in an even more dangerous situation than in the 1930s. Had we been able to stop Hitler before he had gone too far, millions of lives would have been saved. This time, we face a menace which will be even more difficult to overcome.

Over the years we have been cutting down spending on defence. The £50 million would ensure a far better future for the free world if the money were to be spent on defence and security to enable us to defend ourselves against those who wish to destroy it.

*Bronia Snow, Esher*

## A QUESTION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Sir – Your February issue contains two contributions from Leslie Brent: a review of a book by Shlomo Sand and a letter complaining about the 'gross injustices' inflicted on the Palestinians.

The book is *How I Stopped Being a Jew* and Mr Brent seems largely sympathetic, although confirming that he himself remains a Jew for sentimental reasons. We must all be very thankful and perhaps a round of applause is called for!

Mr Brent makes some surprising statements. He talks about 'Jewishness' –

whatever that is. He states that, according to Jewish law, one cannot discard one's 'Jewishness' except by converting to another faith. I have never heard of such a law and, if it does indeed exist, who is going to enforce it?

He agrees with Mr Sand that there is no Jewish tribe or race. But of course there is a Jewish people – otherwise, why are the non-religious Jews still regarded as Jews? Both gentlemen seem unaware that the term Jew – *Yehudi* in Hebrew – means being a member of the tribe of Judah, one of the 12 tribes of the people of Israel.

I wonder if I am the only one who finds this introspection, and this torment about one's identity, tiresome in the extreme. If Mr Sand wants to give up his Jewish identity by all means let him do so, but why do we all have to know about it? Perhaps he is on a mission to try to make us all give up our Jewish identity.

According to Mr Brent, Mr Sand seems to suggest that a Jew who regards himself as belonging to a race is a racist. Absolute nonsense! On this basis, a person who says he is Irish or Russian or Chinese should also be regarded as a racist.

As for the letter deploring Israel's action in Gaza, I am sure most Israelis would have wanted the action not to have been necessary and that the destruction and the killings had not occurred. But under the circumstances, what was Israel supposed to do? None of this would have happened had Hamas not fired thousands of rockets or dug tunnels for the purpose of carrying out terrorist attacks.

Mr Brent states that most of the victims were civilians. How does he know, and can he tell us how many of the victims were a result of Hamas preventing people from evacuating areas which Israel had warned would be bombed?

The Palestinians have had ample opportunities to make peace with Israel had they wanted to. But Hamas does not want peace. It does not want Israel to exist or the Jewish people to survive.

And why such a fixation with Israel at a time when there is so much trouble in Syria and Iraq with the so-called Islamic State, in Yemen with Al-Qaeda, in Libya, in Somalia, in Nigeria with Boko Haram, and in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the Taliban?

I have no doubt that some Palestinian Arabs have good cause to complain. The Jews are no angels. But however bad they may be, the others are a thousand times worse – and that is probably a gross understatement!

*Mendel Storz, London N16*

#### 'BLEEDING HEARTS'

Sir – Those who denigrate 'bleeding hearts' and are concerned for the safety of Israeli citizens (your March correspondent Marcel Ladenheim) cannot get it into their heads that Israeli citizens will never be safe unless there is some sort of live-and-let-live agreement.

Regrettably, Mr Netanyahu, ignoring

his own secret service's advice on Iran, is at the time of writing in the USA, preaching the exact opposite. He hopes this will help him get re-elected in the impending general election, where there are eight parties entitled to send representatives to the Knesset and therefore anything other than a coalition government cannot happen. This is where strict proportional representation takes you.

*Marc Schatzberger, York*

Sir – It is late 1938. I am ten years old and in Prague, which was full of refugees from Germany and Austria, just as we were. We children, young in years but old in experience of persecution, joined Zionist groups. We knew full well that only a *Judenstaat* would have rescued us: nobody else lifted a finger. Kindertransports were a small drop in a large bucket. Palestine, the Jewish home as pronounced by Balfour, had, despite these promises, been closed to us as a direct result of the Arab Revolt, which demanded an end to Jewish immigration. That was granted to appease the Arabs as Britain was also to appease Hitler at Munich with equally disastrous results.

The Mufti of Jerusalem exhorted his followers to kill Jews, which they did and have continued to do so ever since. *Mein Kampf* has been a best-seller in the Arab world and the Palestinians have adopted the Nazi ideology, which aims to exterminate Jews. Hamas has that in its charter and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank glorifies mass murderers to their children and Israel is missing from their maps. No permutation of Israeli politicians will change that.

The Arabs were killing us too. All those prevented from entering Palestine by the Arabs were left to be murdered by the Germans, as were all my friends in the Jewish Boy Scouts, e.g. Kurt Diamant from Vienna, shot dead at Zamosc aged 13, and Kurt Herschmann from Munich, shot dead at Ujazdow aged 14. The Arabs denied both of them, and tens of thousands of others, the chance to turn the desert into a green and pleasant land.

Most of the 2,000 dead Gazans were Hamas operatives. No rockets, no dead Gazans. The same with crossings. No infiltrators, no car bombs, no suicide terrorists, no need for crossings and fences. Simple. Even grandmothers might understand that if they put their minds to it.

*Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

Sir – Today's *AJR Journal* reaches a wide audience. I would like to read many more non-emotional (!), in-depth, factual articles on the ever-worsening Israel-Palestine conflict.

Perhaps Dr Grenville might address these issues in his editorials? I'm sure many readers would welcome some heated debate!

*Ada C. Board, London W11*

#### JEWISH REFUGEES IN COUNTY DURHAM

Sir – I would like to invite your readers to recount their experiences of the Kindertransport specifically in County Durham. We are researching the lives of civilians from this area and wondered if your readers had any information on either Jewish refugees who came to live in County Durham or people from Durham who raised money for Jewish refugees.

Specifically, we are looking for a story of an individual we could use in an educational workshop at the Museum. Ideally we would also like a photo and any primary sources to support the story. Thank you for your help.

*Carolyn Waterworth, Learning Support Officer, Durham Light Infantry Museum and Art Gallery, tel 03000 266668, Carolyn.waterworth@durham.gov.uk*

#### WAR RUMOUR

Sir – Due to a rumour circulating early in the war to the effect that an English-born child would ensure refugees could become permanent residents of the United Kingdom, my parents had another child in 1942. A cousin also added to her family, as did quite a number of East End refugee neighbours. Just recently, I met someone else whose family had also had another child.

I am wondering how widespread this rumour was: considering the conditions prevailing in 1942-43, with bombs falling day and night and with poverty rife as official employment was denied to refugees, it must have been a desperate measure to add another mouth to feed.

Perhaps some members could shed light on whether this rumour was known to other people. I would be interested to learn how many other children were born as a result of it.

*(Mrs) Meta Roseneil, Buckhurst Hill, Essex*

#### VISA TO BRITAIN, 1939

Sir – My father, Lothar Auerbach, was fortunate to obtain a visa from the British Passport Control Office in Berlin in February 1939. This visa was signed by Cecil Insall, the deputy of Frank Foley, who, by his extraordinary efforts and those of his staff, saved the lives of many Jews who were at that time desperate to emigrate to Britain or Palestine.

I am anxious to contact anybody who may have documents or other material relating to this matter. Does anybody have a German passport with the visa stamps of Foley or Insall? Any information that goes beyond that contained in Michael Smith's book would be most welcome and assist me in my research.

*Ruth Schwiening (née Auerbach), Market Bosworth*

# ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

The connection between the subject of a painting and the painter who carries its weight is a theme that Tate Modern evokes in its latest exhibition **Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden**. Dumas, possibly inspired by her namesake Alexandre Dumas of *La Dame aux Camélias* fame, has taken the idea of burden from many aspects. There is the burden of



Marlene Dumas: *The Widow* (2013) Photo: Peter Cox

condemned love, as in the fate of Dumas's heroine, the burden of colour, of mixed marriage, of politics and of war.

There is a suggestion of something primeval in Dumas's style. It often has a garish look-at-me quality, although, working in light oil or watercolour, she achieves a soft focus, sometimes evoking Picasso – notably in a deceptively simple line drawing entitled *Imitations of the Moon* – or Munch in her voiceless scream. Her faces in the section *Evil is Banal* include a girl with a shock of red hair, babies and pubescent figures, some evoked by snapshots of her daughter Helena, whom she chooses to present with a large, serious head and coloured hands.

But these waif-like figures are a bitter contrast with her brazen pornographic forms. One very moving painting, *The Widow*, painted at the time of the disintegration of apartheid in South Africa, features Patrice Lumumba's widow Pauline walking bare-breasted, in a brave and public act of mourning, down Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) following the assassination of her

husband, the first democratically elected prime minister of the Congo. Dumas deliberately paints the accompanying figures white – one like a clown – but we can't be sure they're white men: it is almost a *trompe-l'oeil* device which explores the relationship between colonialism and black aspirations. Grief is further explored in images which relate to her mother's death in 2007, which clearly affected her deeply. This series, based on Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which takes its title from a poem by 17th-century metaphysical poet John Donne, is very cinematic, particularly the close-up of the tearful face of Ingrid Bergman.

For all the physicality of her drawings, this artist is very concerned with the philosophy of living and dying. But although the exhibition explores her work from the early 1970s to the present day, little development is evident in over 100 paintings and drawings.

Born in South Africa in 1953, Dumas moved to Holland in 1976 and naturally explores issues of apartheid. But she is equally interested in sexual politics: her images of women present both a sense of the goddess and the 'fallen woman'. Her examples are rather literal: Mary Magdalene, Amy Winehouse, Princess Diana, Naomi Campbell.

The series *Against the Wall* includes a sketchy view of Orthodox Jews at prayer, but her real interest is the wall as a concept. Between 1994 and 2014 she created the multi-part work *Rejects* – ink and graphite portrait heads pinned to the wall inspired by South African reject stores which sold clothes with imperfections. Her parody of imperfection is a comment on how society judges, accepts and excludes.

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CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

## REVIEWS

### Transparent honesty THE UNWANTED JEW: A STRUGGLE FOR ACCEPTANCE

by Rosa M. Sacharin  
Diadem Books 2014, 212 pp., Amazon  
£8.99, ISBN 978-1-291-93930-9

Rosa Sacharin's remarkable autobiography follows her journey from a difficult and fragmented childhood under the Nazi regime to a distinguished nursing career and family life in Scotland.

As things became increasingly difficult for Jews in Germany, Rosa's parents experienced marital problems and separated. Rosa and her elder sister Betty were sent to a series of children's homes.

The Reichenheimsche Orphanage where she stayed escaped unscathed during Kristallnacht but at school the next morning there was pandemonium. Fathers of other girls had been arrested and some killed, Jewish shops attacked, homes destroyed and synagogues burned down.

Her own father had already been imprisoned and expelled to Poland, where her brother Abraham (known as Brummel) was also exiled. She never saw them again.

At 13 Rosa escaped the worst of the Holocaust, leaving Berlin on the first Kindertransport on 1 December 1938.

The children arrived in Harwich and went to nearby Dovercourt, which they found extremely cold. It was difficult to find homes for everyone but Rosa was finally sent to Edinburgh to finish her schooling, which proved rather more rudimentary than had been the case in Germany. Her new beginning involved much drudgery, with her ending up working as a domestic until she was nearly 16.

As an 'enemy alien', she joined her sister Betty in Glasgow but was allowed to resume her education, in which she shone, winning prizes in several subjects. Accommodation proved a perpetual headache.

Eventually she was persuaded to become a children's nurse, followed by general nursing, seeing the National Health Service's inauguration in 1948.

Amazingly Rosa's mother survived the war after several miraculous

escapes and suffering great hardship in Germany, joining her daughters in Scotland in 1947. Her struggle could form a book in itself.

Meanwhile Rosa qualified as a midwife and set off for Israel and fresh challenges. Following family problems she returned to Britain to become a nurse teacher. In 1959 she married Joe, whose family originated in the Ukraine, and two daughters, Carole and Marion, were born.

Rosa obtained further qualifications and produced a number of textbooks, being honoured to receive a Scottish Nurse of the Year award for 'outstanding service', reflecting her contribution to the society she had entered.

But she still searched for answers and returned to Germany several times from the 1960s onwards, including visiting childhood haunts in Berlin.

Her travels took her to Poland and Czechoslovakia, where she desperately tried to discover the fate of her father and brother and visited various concentration camp sites. This is a very moving part of the story and, despite her anguish and horror, she writes with clarity and compassion.

There is a little occasional repetition but throughout the book Rosa's honesty is transparent. She never shies away from describing family conflict or dwells on anything for too long, and shows her profound contribution to the lives of others.

Janet Weston

## Second class soldiers

### LOYAL SONS: JEWS IN THE GERMAN ARMY IN THE GREAT WAR

by Peter C. Appelbaum

Vallentine Mitchell, 2014, hardcover  
347 pp., £50, ISBN 9780853039488

Readers of this journal were reminded in August 2014 by Anthony Grenville that approximately 100,000 Jews served in the German forces during the First World War. Even more remarkable was the fervour with which they fought for their Fatherland: 'We Jews all leave for war of our own wish, joyful to throng around our country's flag,' wrote a lawyer named Emmanuel Saul in a poem addressed to his children, translated and cited by Peter Appelbaum as a motto for this book. To document the extraordinary range of Jewish war

experiences he examines a wealth of diaries and memoirs, starting with the contrast between *Kriegstagebuch eines Juden* (War Diary of a Jew) by Julius Marx (published 1939 in Zurich) and *Zwei lebende Mauern: 50 Monate Westfront* by Herbert Sulzbach (Berlin 1935; translated under the title *With the German Guns*, London 1973).

These diarists share an intense German patriotism but their attitudes to their Jewish heritage could hardly be more different. Coming from a patrician family in Frankfurt am Main, Sulzbach served in the artillery and his narrative offers a distanced view of combat combined with sensitivity to the wider political conflict. Particularly impressive are his descriptions of the new 'tank monsters' that turned the tide on the Western front (cited page 87). But the most remarkable feature of his memoirs, according to Appelbaum, is that there is 'no mention of the fact that he is Jewish' (page 59).

Julius Marx, who came from a textile-manufacturing family in Württemberg, served for four years in the infantry, rising (like Sulzbach) to the rank of lieutenant. But Marx writes with a gritty realism that reveals not only the sufferings of the trenches but also the pressures to which Jews were exposed in an increasingly anti-Semitic climate. Jews, according to a striking passage about the Battle of the Somme, are 'fighting on two Fronts – one for Germany's victory, the other for our equality in Germany' (page 78). Even more humiliating was the Jewish Census of November 1916, instigated by the authorities in response to rumours about Jews shirking front-line service: 'Do they wish to degrade us to second-class soldiers and make us a laughing stock?' Marx asks (page 265).

The analysis of that so-called *Judenählung* is the most powerful section of Appelbaum's book. Drawing on a compelling range of sources, he refutes the attempts by revisionist historians to downplay this example of state-sanctioned racial discrimination. In human terms, his documentation is even more poignant, culminating in a poem published in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, where a Jewish mother writes that 'her son has been wounded by his own people more than by an enemy bullet' (page 265).

The other Jewish voices brought

to life by this moving book range from pilots like Jakob Wolf and Willy Rosenstein to a medical dog handler named Adolph Lehmann. As in the case of Appelbaum's earlier book on Jewish chaplains in the German army, *Loyalty Betrayed*, there is an impressive range of historical photographs of Jews in military uniforms. Their loyalty was indeed betrayed. After Germany's defeat, Jews were targeted as scapegoats – even though 12,000 had died in the service of their country. Emmanuel Saul was one of those killed on the Russian front. Those who survived had to cope with a climate poisoned by anti-Semites who published data claiming to prove that the German army had been 'stabbed in the back'. By 1938 German-Jewish military veterans were being imprisoned and murdered by their own government.

Julius Marx was fortunate to find sanctuary in Switzerland, while Herbert Sulzbach escaped to England, was briefly interned, and joined the Pioneer Corps. As a footnote to Appelbaum's fine book, it is worth highlighting Sulzbach's career in the British army. He rose to the rank of captain and in 1944-48 masterminded an inspirational re-education programme for German officers at the Featherstone Park prisoner-of-war camp in Northamptonshire. For his services to Anglo-German relations he was honoured by both the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic. According to the obituary published in *AJR Information* in August 1985, he enhanced the work of reconciliation 'by stressing his Jewish origin'.

Edward Timms

**'THE BOY FROM BAMBERG: A PERSONAL TESTIMONY AND BIOGRAPHY OF GÜNTER LÖBL FROM BAMBERG WHO BECAME GEORGE FREDERICK LOBLE MBE JP AS TOLD TO GERALD STERN'**

Reviewed in March 2015 issue of Journal.  
May be downloaded free of charge at  
[www.TheBoyFromBamberg.com](http://www.TheBoyFromBamberg.com)



continued on page 10 ➔

## Unique story of a 'Winton child'

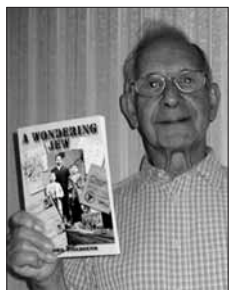
### A WONDERING JEW

by John Fieldsend

Radec Press, 2014, 190 pp. paperback, £8.99, available delivery-free from Radec Press, 58 Cedar Crescent, Thame, Oxon OX9 2AU, ISBN 978-0-9929094-0-6

The preface to this book begins with two quotes: 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good' (Genesis 1.31) and 'The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled' (Genesis 6.6).

The author says these scriptures demonstrate something of the tension that exists in the heart of God and that, in a very small way, he has known something of that tension in his own life.



John Fieldsend

John Fieldsend, born Heini Feige, and his brother Arthur were two of the 669 children

rescued by Sir Nicholas Winton from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. He recalls that they were some five weeks from disaster when their train left. The remaining 331 children, Nicholas Winton's largest transport, were actually already on a train in Prague on 3 September 1939 when a station announcement that Britain had joined the war sealed their fate: the Nazis took the children off the train and none of them was ever seen again.

Their parents did not survive but the brothers were fortunate in their foster parents, Les and Vera Cumpsty, who with their son John provided the boys with a loving and supportive home.

John Fieldsend's book chronicles his physical and spiritual journeys from his early days of a middle-class life in Dresden to the realisation that he was both a Jewish Christian and a Messianic Jew whose aim was to bring the Jews back to Jesus. This in itself was a journey through his various identities – Jewish, Czech, German. He was for many years an Anglican minister but he has never denied his Jewish roots.

John describes how in 1967 he and his wife Elizabeth attended their first meeting with the Hebrew Christian Alliance of

Great Britain in north-west London. On their arrival in their ancient camper van, they were met by an irate group asking 'What kind of people are you to come here driving a Volkswagen!' This was perhaps the beginning of his 'owning', as he puts it, his Jewishness and, despite the Volkswagen incident, he 'soon found new joy in being with my own kith and kin, spiritually speaking, and the strong reaction that the camper van generated was never repeated.'

Having chosen to leave his past behind him, John was stunned to learn that his photograph of himself as a little boy had been shown on Esther Rantzen's television programme *That's Life* in 1988 in an episode featuring Nicholas Winton. A follow-up programme soon afterwards enabled him to meet the man who had saved so many lives and he and his wife have subsequently enjoyed a warm relationship with Sir Nicholas.

Following his retirement from a very varied career in the Church, John speaks regularly at the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre in Laxton, Nottinghamshire, and to many other organisations.

Laraine Feldman

## A glorious old bookshop

### LOOSE CONNECTIONS: FROM NARVA MAANTEE TO GREAT RUSSELL STREET

by Esther Menell

Westhill Books, 2014, 320 pp. paperback, available from Amazon, ISBN 9780993008702

This autobiographical work was published in its final form when Esther Menell was in her 81st year and seems to have undergone as many trials as the author herself.

In the preface, Esther Menell, who had the huge good fortune to work with Diana Athill and other editors, describes showing her manuscript of this book to them – which they read 'with varying degrees of pleasure. For some, it seemed a big muddle: they would have preferred a graspable chronology ....' One can't help thinking they were right. It is very much a book of two discrete parts – the first her Estonian family history, the second an account of her professional life, mostly with André Deutsch.

The family history is both fascinating and hard to follow: perhaps a family tree would have helped situate the very many aunts, uncles and cousins. Their family was complicated not only by the vagaries of diaspora, as with many Jewish families, but also by second marriages: both the author's parents had been married before,

so adding half-siblings to the mix.

But she recounts the history of Estonia as intertwined with that of her family and it certainly adds to the understanding of that complex and turbulent period. She quotes one of her uncles's school friends summarising Fima's life: 'Poor jefim. On the wrong side of the twentieth century at every turn: despised by the Nazis for being a Jew, by the Russians for being Estonian, by the Communists for being bourgeois, by the Estonian nationalists for having fought in the Red Army ....'

Luckily for the author, her Estonian, German-speaking Jewish father had been persuaded to go to Britain the very moment war broke out in 1939, taking his wife and five-year-old daughter with him. The colourful and complicated family history makes for enjoyable reading. Less interesting are the passages about the author's second husband's American life: they seem like an afterthought in what is already a book of so many parts.

Esther Menell's adult life as an editor, mainly for André Deutsch, is the Great Russell Street half of the subtitle. This is brought to life wonderfully: the cramped spaces beneath the stairs that editors worked under uncomplainingly; the terrible, unfair treatment at the hands of despotic publishers; the poor pay. But this is compensated for by the creative part of her work. There is the serendipity of finding good authors in the most unlikely ways – apart from the constant 'slush pile' of unread, unsolicited manuscripts which sometimes bear fruit, there was a number of books which came about through random encounters in shops and hospitals and through relatives and friends. Those were the days, when books were published in the full knowledge that they wouldn't sell in any volume but simply because they told a tale worth telling! Fascinating too are the searches for the right titles, the process of editing, and the colourful characters, including the great Diana Athill, who worked in publishing after the war and seemed to have come from central casting.

The account finishes with the author's battle to save her pension, which risked being slashed by her employers and threatened to leave her impoverished after years of dedication to them. Although it was obviously a crucial part of her own story, trips to lawyers and the correspondence make for less than sparkling copy. One is tempted to say 'Editor, edit thyself!'

This book brings to mind a glorious old bookshop – full of stories, places and characters, and well worth a visit.

Anna Nyburg

## I BEG TO DIFFER

*With Emeritus Professor Leslie Brent*

Professor Brent has accused the *AJR Journal* of not addressing the problems of 'Israel/Palestine'. I wrote as recently as October an article entitled 'Israel: We Need to Talk'. He should have read it, and learned from it. Hamas wants to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. They sent rockets from Gaza into Israel daily, tunnelled from Gaza into Israel, and used Palestinians as human shields when Israel counter-attacked. Does Israel not have the right to defend itself? The actions of the Israeli government are in no way 'brutal', as the Professor suggests. They are retaliatory. Anyway, what country is 'Israel/Palestine'?

*With Janos Fisher*

I was not 'rude and condescending' to Clare Parker. I was factual. Judea does not exist. The area has been called the West Bank since the state of Israel was born.

*With Eric Sanders*

'First-past-the-post' may not be the best way to decide elections but it's preferable to proportional representation. Do you want the House of Commons to be in the same mess as the Knesset? (There are 11 parties vying for representation in the Knesset at the next election, all being assured seats.) Do you want almost yearly elections in the UK, with small parties holding just three or four seats given the decisive power? Would you like the Greens or UKIP to have the casting vote? Ugh!

One thing that must be done, however, is to make each constituency roughly the same size. Sadly, the Liberal Democrats stopped the Tories from making boundary changes. Also, perhaps, there should be compulsory voting as in Australia and the age for voting lowered to 16.

*With Fritz Lustig*

I agree that the House of Lords needs reforming but why pick on the bishops? Yes, they are unelected but so is the whole of the House of Lords. The fact that churches these days are poorly attended is quite irrelevant. This is a Christian country. State and Church are often referred to together. Leave the bishops alone!

As for his plea for proportional representation, I refer him to my answer to Eric Sanders. It would prove a disaster, particularly at the moment. Just imagine it! The chances are that the Scottish nationalists will be the third largest party in the next parliament and part of a coalition with Labour. Would you like them to have power over the whole of the UK?

*With Maureen Lipman*

I read that there were 1,000 anti-Semitic incidents in the UK last year, which is 1,000 too many. However, I believe that the amount of publicity there has been in the media about anti-Semitism is actually harming us. 'Look what's happening in London,' one anti-Semite is saying to another, 'Let's do the same in Manchester.'

If anti-Semitism becomes the norm, then we are in trouble. I have not experienced any for 30 years but, suddenly, I suspect everyone. Panic and fear are spreading. It's the 'reds-under-the beds' syndrome. Anti-Semitism has always been prevalent in the UK but it has been latent for a long time now. We no longer have school quotas for Jewish pupils and no golf clubs are refusing Jews admission.

What has happened recently can, I believe, be explained. First, non-Jews cannot differentiate between Jews and Israelis. Therefore the war in Gaza is blamed on Jews and Israelis indiscriminately. The reporting on Gaza, particularly by the left-wing press like the *Guardian* and the *Independent* and the left-leaning BBC, was biased. The Israelis

came out strongly as the villains. Second, the current bout of anti-Semitism may well be caused by what the mealy-mouthed do not always want to mouth – Muslim extremists.

Some are stirring it up in areas where they are now in the majority. The police have to act. They cannot put political correctness first, as they did in Rotherham. Of course, there are some white, far-right thugs around but their influence is minimal. (I forecast that the anti-Israel Greens will get as many seats at the next election as the anti-Europe UKIP.)

The solution? Let the Community Security Trust continue its good work and ignore alarmists like Maureen Lipman. I sincerely hope that we refugees all agree that we live in the best country in the world.

*With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu*

It's good to know that we have a second home in Israel but stop spreading alarm! Most of us feel safe in the United Kingdom, where our first home is. Also, by telling us to 'come home' you are implying to our fellow Brits that Great Britain is not our true home. It is. Don't give them ammunition to think otherwise. This causes anti-Semitism. We are British, not Israeli.

Peter Phillips

## 'THE WORLD MUST NEVER FORGET!', HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR FREDDIE KNOLLER TELLS AJR

It was his optimism that kept him going through those dreadful years, 93-year-old Freddie Knoller told an AJR staff lunchtime session – an opportunity for staff members to familiarise themselves more closely with the organisation's support for Holocaust educational and research projects. 'The world must never forget!', he insisted.

Freddie was born in 1921 in Vienna, where he lived with his parents and his two brothers. Following the Anschluss, he moved to Antwerp. When in May 1940 the Nazis invaded Belgium, he settled in France, moving as soon as possible to Paris, where he had long dreamed of living. But, betrayed by



a French former girlfriend, he ended up spending 15 months in Auschwitz. From there he took part in a death march to Gleiwitz, eventually arriving at Bergen-Belsen, the 'worst' camp he experienced. Following liberation by the British army, Freddie returned to France and, after having rejoined his brothers in New York, he came to Britain, where he pursued a career in business.

For 35 years Freddie didn't talk about those years: he wanted to forget about them. Only when his two daughters persuaded him to talk about that period in his life – 'What are we going to tell our children about their grandfather?' – did he do so.

## ARTS AND EVENTS APRIL DIARY

**Wed 15 'Belsen 70 Years On'** Afternoon event and tea at Imperial War Museum with guest speakers including Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. Transport will be arranged. B'nai B'rith Leo Baeck (London) Lodge, tel 020 7431 3181

**Wed 15 YOM HASHOAH EVENT Songs from the Ghetto:** Norwegian Jewish artist Bente Kahan will interpret songs and poetry written in Nazi Germany and the ghettos of Vilnius, Cracow, Warsaw and Terezin. At JW3, 7.30 pm. Tel 020 7433 8988; info@jw3.org.uk

**Thur 16 YOM HASHOAH EVENT Unsung Heroines: The Stories of Eleanor Rathbone and Greta Burkill** Dr Susan Cohen (Parkes Institute, Southampton University) and Mike Levy (Keystone Arts and Heritage) will discuss these women's contributions to the lives of many refugees and Kindertransportees, and a group of young actors from Cambridge will present *We Must Save the Children*, a dramatisation of their legacies. At JW3 in partnership with AJR, 3.00 pm. Tel 020 7433 8988; info@jw3.org.uk

**Wed 22 Yom Ha'atzmaut.** Film and talk on Israeli charity Reuth's Medical and Rehabilitation Centre. 8.00 pm at B'nai B'rith Leo Baeck (London) Lodge, Leo Baeck Hall, 11 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London NW3 5JY, tel 020 7431 3181

**Wed 29 Dr Yossi Beilin 'The Place of the Holocaust in the Life of the Post-war Generation in Israel'** Dr Beilin is a former member of the Knesset who held ministerial positions in the governments of Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak. At Wiener Library, 6.30-8 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247. Admission free but booking essential



### LIVERPOOL Remembering a 'Son' of Liverpool

On what would have been his 87th birthday, we celebrated the life of Frankie Vaughan. Frankie was a 'son' of Liverpool and many delightful anecdotes were recounted by his relatives and friends. A special treat was meeting his sister Myra, who had travelled over from Leeds to join us. Then we watched a film depicting Frankie's great talent and devotion to his family and the wider community. Thank you Wendy Bott, our organiser – also Frankie's niece! – for a great afternoon.

*Wendy and Eric Cohen*

### EALING Families Reunited

Having given a report on the main Holocaust Memorial Day event at Central Hall, Esther related how a chance email had led to the discovery of relations in Israel, describing how the two families had subsequently become very close.

*Leslie Sommer*

### CAFÉ IMPERIAL 'For the Good of the Führer'

A member brought along an original copy of a German newspaper from 1941 headlined 'The Victorious Battle of Kiev'. Perhaps the most interesting part of the paper were the obituaries, in which mothers and wives spoke proudly of the soldiers who had 'fallen for the good of the Führer and the cause' – bringing home the similarity of their martyrdom to that of today's terrorists.

*Hazel Beiny*

### GLASGOW Life of a Kosher Caterer

Thirty-six people turned out for Doreen Cohen's trip Down Memory Lane. Doreen, formerly of Simcha Catering, enlightened us with stories of life as a kosher caterer to the Glasgow Jewish community. Her tales of catering a function at which President Bill Clinton was guest of honour as well as walking out of a council function when they insisted on using council dishes went down well.

*Agnes Isaacs*

### ILFORD A Morning of Nostalgia

Fred Rosner gave us a morning of nostalgia, sharing with us his favourite operatic areas. Fred recalled many famous voices and it was a pleasure to hear these singers from the past.

*Meta Roseneil*

### PINNER Burma: The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful

Water engineer and photographer Stephen Myers showed us not only the tourist highlights of this beautiful, richly endowed Buddhist country but also some of its more intriguing aspects, such as a Jewish family and a synagogue. The teak and oil trade benefited only the junta, Stephen said, not the people, who were among the poorest in the world.

*Walter Weg*

### HGS A History of Paintings and Trains

Blue Badge Guide Mark King gave us a most informative account of Kenwood's paintings and their history. However, we veered off the subject and got a history of the train stations in Hampstead and Highgate and learned how Hampstead Garden Suburb came to be built!

*Hazel Beiny*

### ESSEX (WESTCLIFF) History of Southend Synagogue

Derek Silverstone, formerly Vice-President of Southend and Westcliff Hebrew Congregation, gave us a talk on our synagogue's history. It came into existence in 1906 in a tin hut near Westcliff Railway Station with just a few members. Today, we have 650 family memberships and former Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks came down to celebrate our centenary!

*Larry Lisner*

### ST JOHN'S WOOD Concorde: A Brilliant Pioneering Achievement

My younger son Paul from British Aviation Tours gave us a most interesting talk on the history, development and legacy of Concorde. This was a brilliant pioneering achievement but completely uneconomical and it went out of service in 2003.

*David Lang*

### A Towering Performance

*Taken at Midnight* portrayed the terrible plight of Hans Litten, a young Jewish lawyer who dared put Hitler on trial in 1931, following his arrest after the Reichstag fire. He has no better advocate than his mother Irmgard, played by the indefatigable Penelope Wilton, who campaigns vociferously for his release from concentration camps, fearlessly negotiating with the Gestapo.

The disturbing nature of events was set against Wilton's (alias *Downton Abbey's* Isobel Crawley) towering performance of maternal love. She was supported by a strong cast in Mark Hayhurst's play at the Theatre Royal Haymarket. Our AJR group was privileged to have tea with the cast afterwards and actors were keen to hear of members' own pre-war experiences. A truly memorable day.

*Janet Weston*

### HULL Heart-warming Thank-You Stories

As usual, a delicious afternoon tea followed a wonderful discussion entitled 'Someone You Would like to Thank', inspired by Radio 4's Saturday Live programme's heart-warming thank-you stories. We agreed that tiny acts of kindness mean as much as the huge ones and all recounted our own anecdotes.

*Wendy Bott*

### BRIGHTON How the Railways Changed Our Lives

Godfrey Gould explained to us how trains opened up the country, providing everyone with the opportunity to travel. Goods and cattle were transported around the country and abroad, giving rise to the industrial revolution.

*Ceska Abrahams*

### LEEDS CF Refugees' Contributions to UK Cultural Life

Meeting at the home of Barbara and Phil Cammerman, we discussed at length the many contributions made in the fields of science, medicine and the arts by refugees from Germany. As usual, this was followed by Barbara's wonderful tea, to which we always look forward. We also celebrated Hans Skyte's 95th birthday.

*Berta Klipstein*

### EDGWARE Medical Services in WWI

Dr Susan Cohen spoke on medical services in the First World War, giving precise statistics about injured soldiers. Many soldiers were so badly injured that they suffered all their lives.

*Felix Winkler*

### KENT A High-End Lox and Herring Emporium

We loved the film *The Sturgeon Queens*, which tells the story of four generations of a Jewish immigrant family who create and run the New York-based Russ and Daughters, a high-end lox and herring emporium still very much thriving.

*Janet Weston*

### EDGWARE Visit to Bentley Priory Museum

About 40 of us gathered in the café, where Dick Calderbrook gave an interesting introduction to the history of this beautiful country house, leading to its becoming the



Penelope Wilton, centre, has tea with AJR group

headquarters of RAF Fighter Command. This was followed by a short film on how Air Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding organised and ran the Battle of Britain. Also, we were taken round various areas of the museum, ending with a mock-up of the plotting room. All was rounded off with a delicious cream tea.

*Edgar H. Ring*

### SHEFFIELD Someone You'd Like to Thank

We focused on individuals who had never been properly thanked, including two teachers chosen for their gentle and kind introductions to Englishness and Shakespeare. We thanked those who had reconnected families and provided new ones, with the AJR also featuring high on the list of those making us all feel included.

*Carmel Page*

### BOOK CLUB A Good Holiday Read

There were mixed reactions to Jessie Burton's *The Miniaturist* though on the whole it was considered a good 'holiday' read. Our next choice, for 25 March, is *Forever a Stranger* by Linda Ferrer.

*Irene Goodman*

### RADLETT Bank of England Update

The Bank of England's Tim Pike believes that the most favourable development would result from limiting the involvement of the private sector and encouraging the growth of private enterprise. But, as on previous occasions when he spoke to us, there was a good deal of scepticism among us, which led to a lively discussion.

*Fritz Starer*

### CAMBRIDGE 'Suitcase' Sisters

Jane Merkin gave a moving talk about 'Suitcase', produced by her and written and directed by her sister Ros. The play was devised to reflect the experiences of Kindertransport children when they arrived in this country. One of these children was Jane and Ros's mother Jo Hacker, who arrived from Vienna with her sisters, Paula and Melanie, in December 1938.

*Sara Kirby*

### NORTH WEST LONDON A 45-Year Career with Jewish Care

Judith Hassan told us about her 45-year career with Jewish Care, which she joined when it was the Jewish Welfare Board. For many years Judith developed specialist services for Holocaust survivors and refugees and in 1990 founded Shalvata, followed by the Holocaust Survivors' Centre in 1993.

*David Lang*

### WELWYN GC 'Holocaust Fatigue'?

AJR CEO Michael Newman was our 'guest of honour'. After the numerous HMD events, it was asked whether too many such events might induce 'Holocaust fatigue'. The conversation then turned to the tension that developed between the established Jewish community and new immigrants – a deplorable development – and the great debt of gratitude the immigrants owe to the Quaker community, a debt which even now has perhaps not been adequately acknowledged.

*Fritz Starer*

### MANCHESTER MAIN Experiences of a Young Refugee

Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines, who came to England on the last 'Winton train' from Czechoslovakia, spoke to us about her experiences as a young refugee and her meeting with the great man years later. Sir Nicholas didn't seek the limelight but now is being celebrated. The meeting was well attended and we welcomed members of the local Second Generation Group.

*Werner Lachs*

### WEMBLEY 'In Search of Jewish Ancestry'

To our envy, Dr Anthony Joseph could trace his ancestry back to the late 19th century. We learned a lot and look forward to a follow-up talk. It was good to see all our friends again.

*Avram Schaufeld*

## Books Bought

### MODERN AND OLD



**Eric Levene**

020 8364 3554 / 07855387574  
ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk

**I also purchase ephemera**

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**Child Survivors Association-AJR**

Henri Obstfeld

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## APRIL GROUP EVENTS

<b>Ilford</b>	1 April	Anthony Joseph: 'In Search of Jewish Ancestry'
<b>Harrogate/York</b>	13 April	Social
<b>HGS</b>	13 April	Hugh Smith: 'The British Library'
<b>Essex (Westcliff)</b>	14 April	Karen Van Coevorden, from Holocaust Education Trust
<b>Radlett</b>	15 April	Martha Richler, Cartoon Class
<b>Bristol</b>	16 April	Lunchtime Social
<b>Brighton</b>	20 April	Tba
<b>Marlow</b>	20 April	Social Get-together
<b>Edgware</b>	21 April	Stewart Olesker: 'Jews of Portsmouth (and Other Stuff)'
<b>Kent</b>	21 April	Richard Stanton, Music and Comedy
<b>Liverpool</b>	21 April	Kath Schackleton from Fettle Animation and her BAFTA-animated film 'Children of the Holocaust'
<b>Welwyn GC</b>	23 April	Lunchtime meeting. Speaker Geoff Roberts: 'Life in New Zealand'
<b>Manchester</b>	26 April	Ian Stern: 'Jewish Comedians'
<b>Cardiff</b>	27 April	Tba
<b>Leeds CF</b>	28 April	Tba
<b>North West London</b>	28 April	Sarah Walford, Nutritionist and Cookery Demonstration
<b>Wembley</b>	29 April	David Barnett: 'Joseph Nathan'
<b>Cambridge</b>	30 April	Jonathan King: 'The Wild West Show Before Buffalo Bill'
<b>North London</b>	30 April	David Vroobel: 'The Story of Fabergé', with free jewellery valuations

## KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

Wednesday 15 April 2015  
at 12.30 pm

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

### MICHELE GOLD

'A Tribute to the Children of the Kindertransport'

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

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## 'SUITCASE 1938'

A recording of a performance of 'Suitcase 1938' is available online free of charge at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwFd1nzFyUc>

'Suitcase 1938' was performed at train stations across the country in the lead-up to the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the first Kindertransport at Liverpool Street station on 2 December 1938.

Details of the show, which was produced and directed by Jane and Ros Merkin, can be found at [www.suitcase1938.org](http://www.suitcase1938.org)

## WHY NOT TRY AJR'S MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE?

The AJR offers a kosher Meals on Wheels service delivered to your door once a week.

The meals are freshly cooked every week by Kasher to Go. They are then frozen prior to delivery.

The cost is £7.00 for a three-course meal (soup, main course, desert) plus a £1 delivery fee.

Our aim is to bring good food to your door without the worry of shopping or cooking.

For further details, please call AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070.

## In Memoriam

3-4 March 1943

Reichenbach, Martin and Lotte and the other 281 Dresden Jews deported from Hellerberg camp and murdered in Auschwitz that very night

## 'FORCED WALKS' 15 April 2015



'Forced Walks' is a participatory walking art project led by artists Lorna Brunstein and Richard White.

On 15 April 2015, the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, Lorna and Richard will make a walk based on the testimony of a survivor of the Nazi Death Marches. Using the original route as a guide, the walk will take place in the UK through a familiar landscape in an area close to their home.

Lorna and Richard are inviting others to join them on foot or online or to make their own walk in their area.

Documentation of the project and creative responses to the experience will form the basis of an exhibition later in the year.

For further information, please see <http://forcedwalks.wordpress.com/>

If interested, please contact Lorna and Richard on [forcedwalks@gmail.com](mailto:forcedwalks@gmail.com)

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## Six Point Foundation



**Are you, or is someone you know, a Jewish Holocaust survivor in financial difficulty?**

Six Point Foundation gives grants to help with all kinds of one-off expenses such as home adaptations, medical bills, travel costs and temporary care.

We help UK-resident Jewish Holocaust survivors/refugees with less than £10k p.a. in income (excluding pensions/social security) and less than £32k in assets (excluding primary residence/car).

For information please contact The Association of Jewish Refugees on 020 8385 3070.

[info@sixpointfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@sixpointfoundation.org.uk)  
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Joseph Pereira (ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years) is now available for DIY repairs and general maintenance.

No job too small, very reasonable rates. Please telephone 07966 887 485.

## OBITUARIES

### Sir Martin Gilbert CBE, born London 25 October 1936, died London 3 February 2015

All four of Martin Gilbert's grandparents immigrated to the UK from Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century to escape anti-Semitism. His father, Peter, began working as a newspaper seller and ended up as a jeweller in Hatton Garden. Several months after the outbreak of the Second World War, the four-year-old Martin was evacuated to Canada as part of the British efforts to safeguard children.

Martin went to Highgate School, where an inspirational teacher persuaded him to pursue history rather than geography. Following two years of National Service in the Intelligence Corps, he read modern history at Magdalen College, Oxford, graduating in 1960 with a first-class degree. One of his tutors at Oxford was the celebrated historian A. J. P. Taylor.

Following graduation, he travelled widely before beginning postgraduate research at St Antony's College, Oxford.

In 1962 he was made a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford. Also in that year, his work brought him into contact with Lady Diana Cooper. She introduced him to her friend Randolph Churchill, who was embarking on the task of writing his father's official biography. Randolph Churchill employed



him as a senior researcher until he died in 1968 with only two volumes completed. Gilbert took over, completing the remaining six main volumes of the biography. He had reckoned it would take a further ten years to complete it; in the event, it took twice as long. The biography currently runs to 24 volumes, with another seven document volumes still planned.

It was painstaking, intensive work. He was relentless in his pursuit of facts. He employed researchers but read every document. He tracked down and interviewed every surviving person who had signed the visitor's book at Chartwell, Churchill's country home. He found every surviving secretary, driver or gardener who had worked for the great man.

Gilbert's other consuming interest was the fate of his fellow Jews in the 20th century.

He produced several books on the subject of the Holocaust, including the definitive *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*.

Sir Martin published in all over 80 books. In addition to his monumental biography of Churchill, Sir Martin wrote, *inter alia*, standard works on the history of the 20th century and the two World Wars. He also published numerous books, including many atlases, on the Holocaust, the history of the Jews of the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In *The Boys: Triumph Over Adversity*, he told

the story of 732 child survivors – boys and girls – of the Holocaust who reached Britain immediately after the war, first settling in the Lake District.

In later life, Gilbert's activities diversified. He travelled, lectured abroad and on cruise ships, and took students on harrowing tours of the battlefields of northern Europe and the concentration camps. He taught at universities in Israel, the US and Canada.

He became an unofficial adviser to prime ministers and travelled with John Major to the Middle East and Washington. It was Gordon Brown who persuaded him to join the Chilcot Inquiry into Britain's involvement in the Iraq War.

Sir Martin married three times: to Helen Constance Robinson (one daughter: Natalie); Susie Sacher, a great-granddaughter of Lord Marks, who founded Marks and Spencer (two sons: David and Joshua); and Esther Goldberg, a Holocaust historian.

In 1990 he was appointed CBE and in 1995 he was knighted 'for services to British history and international relations'. In 1999, although he had never studied for a PhD, he was awarded a doctorate by Oxford University 'for the totality of his published work'.

### Refugee Family Papers: An Interactive Map *continued from page 3*

and Dr Bea Lewkowicz, whose voices can be heard on the interview clips. The Wiener Library has been making these recorded interviews and transcripts available to readers for many years already at dedicated work stations in the Reading Room. Now, for the first time, samples from all these interviews will be made accessible via this interactive map. Approximately two-minute extracts from these interviews have been used along with narratives and digital images from the families. As subjects of the snippets have been chosen for their variety as much as their interest value, you have descriptions of Viennese café culture, a picture of halcyon summer days by the Danube, accounts of violin lessons, and life in the Young Austria movement to mention but a few.

The common denominator of these hundreds of narratives is the suffering caused by the Nazis. Much of the content reflects this. However, it is the intention behind this project to show not just how Jews were persecuted but also how they thrived in Europe in the pre-Nazi era. So users of the website will be able to see and hear numerous examples documenting much happier days. The Wiener Library's Interactive Map can therefore also be regarded as a memorial to those communities which have long since ceased to exist.

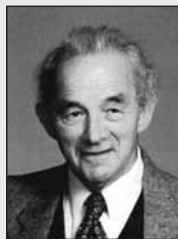
### Geoffrey Dickson (formerly Max Dobriner),

born Deutsch Krone 16 March 1926, died Taunton 26 October 2014

Max arrived in England on 5 July 1939 on one of the last Kindertransport trains. He spent the next five years in various refugee camps and hostels, eventually settling for a while in Sheffield. Enjoying his membership of the Pioneer Corps, he saw an advertisement for the Commandos.

He applied and, along with 48 others, began the intensive training down in Eastbourne, becoming one of two candidates accepted from the group to join No. 3 Troop 10 Commando, the special bilingual unit sent behind enemy lines. His memories of this time form part of the excellent book *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens* by Dr Helen Fry.

Whilst training in Eastbourne, Max vowed to return there if he ever survived. When the war ended, his unit worked with BAOR preparing evidence for the Nuremberg Trials. All through this harrowing time, he saw the horrors of Bergen-Belsen and sought traces of his family. The Red Cross



finally found his one surviving brother, Herbert, convalescing in Sweden. They were reunited and Herbert's attitude of forgiveness and reconciliation had a profound effect on Max for the rest of his life.

In 1948 Max returned to Eastbourne and met and married Nancy, the mother of his five children. Eventually he became a well-known and much-loved 'Therapist and Reflexologist', always inspirational with his great charisma and insight into human nature. His boundless energy allowed him to work well into his 80s.

When Nancy died he married Jane, a musician living in Tunbridge Wells. Together they founded the Weald of Kent branch of the AJR. Max's little red cardboard box containing childhood mementos and photos, his most treasured possession, together with all the archive, is in the Washington Holocaust Museum.

Jane Dickson



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

### By the Rivers of Babylon

The Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, which houses archaeological artefacts from all the nations mentioned in the Bible, plus Rome, has recently inaugurated a new exhibition entitled 'By the Rivers of Babylon'. The core of the exhibition consists of several dozen clay tablets bearing cuneiform inscriptions which were found at a site in modern-day Iraq. The site, known as Al Yahudu, meaning the city of Judah, was apparently one of several places where Jews exiled from Jerusalem and Judea by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar II in 587 BCE, settled and made their homes.

From the relevant passages in the Bible (Ezekiel 17:15; Jeremiah 37: 5-11, 52;12; 2 Kings 25:8), we learn that as a result of the rebellion by the Judean king Jehoiachin against the Babylonians who controlled the region, Nebuchadnezzar exiled Jehoiachin to Babylon and appointed his uncle, Zedekiah, in his stead. However, Zedekiah also rebelled a few years later, bringing upon himself Nebuchadnezzar's terrible personal vengeance as well as the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple and the exile of the Jews to Babylon. Babylonian texts chronicling the annals of the kingdom confirm these facts.

After the long trek on foot to Babylon, during which many people died, the Jews were allowed to settle there in areas of their own, which were often named after the people living there, and presumably that's how Al Yahudu got its name. The Jews remained in Babylon for approximately 70 years until that country's conquest by the Persian king Cyrus, who allowed the Jews to return to their own country. Not all the Jews took advantage of this and many remained in Babylon, where the Jewish community continued to grow and flourish for many centuries. It was only with the rise of nationalism and fascism and of Nazi sympathisers in the Arab countries in the twentieth century, as well as the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, that Jews were forced to flee those countries, including modern-day Babylon, i.e. Iraq.

Among the hundreds of clay tablets found at excavation sites are several listing the names and genealogies of Jewish families, recognisable by their Hebraic names. Many others provide information about their daily lives, documenting marriages and births, lists of merchandise, sales accounts and similar records, written mainly in the Akkadian language but also in ancient Hebrew script.

The exhibition also displays artefacts contemporary to the tablets found at the site, such as clay amphora, cooking and eating vessels, oil lamps and decanters, further illustrating the daily life of the Jews. It was in Babylon, deprived of the Temple that had previously been the centre of Jewish religious life, that the Jewish tradition of prayer and learning evolved and became established, giving rise to, *inter alia*, the renowned text of the Babylonian Talmud, as well as producing many eminent rabbis and teachers.

In addition to displaying the clay tablets, the exhibition features short animated films illustrating aspects of life in ancient Babylon, as well as illustrations from mediaeval and modern sources. At the final point in the exhibition, the visitor is shown images of modern Jerusalem, while in the background we are treated to a modern rendition of Psalm 137, 'By the Rivers of Babylon', in the hit song composed in 1970 by the Jamaican reggae group The Melodians.

One could argue that the ability of the Jews to adapt to changing circumstances while adhering to certain aspects of their faith has enabled them to endure as a people and a religion while other, more powerful nations have not survived. What is certain is that the Jews who came to Babylon did not spend too much time moping for their lost land but got on with the task in hand of rebuilding their lives in a strange land, thus setting the standard for the countless instances of dispossession and exile that followed.

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

#### WHO PLEDGED A GUARANTEE FOR ME?

Sir – I came to England in March 1939 and was put into a B'nai B'rith hostel at 254 Finchley Road. I was on my mother's passport (she went into domestic service) and not on the Kindertransport list.

I would like to know who pledged a guarantee for me and who paid for my keep there. Are there lists which show who made these contributions for individual children?

*Frank Beck, London NW3*

*Unfortunately no such lists exist (Ed.).*

#### SEND ME A PARCEL ...

Sir – Having enjoyed Carry Gorney's recent articles in the Journal, I read her book *Send Me a Parcel with a Hundred Lovely Things*.

I must point out an error, which rather surprised me, near the beginning of the book: the author's father is described as listening to the Amadeus Quartet on the Isle of Man. This could not have occurred

as the Amadeus Quartet was not founded until well after the three young Austrians – Norbert Brainin, Peter Schidlof and Siegmund Nissel - had been released from internment. It was not until 1948 that the three erstwhile exiles, having been joined by the English Martin Lovett, came together as the Amadeus Quartet.

The group initially called themselves the Brainin Quartet and their first performance was in my parents' sitting room in Hampstead Garden Suburb. In July 1947 they performed under that name at Dartington Hall before their debut in January 1948 as the Amadeus Quartet at the Wigmore Hall in London.

*Mary Brainin Huttner, London N3*

#### DISTILLING IN PRUSSIA

Sir – I wonder whether any AJR Journal reader knows how the liquor trade was organised (or can recommend relevant reading) in what was once Schlesien or 'Provinz Posen'. I have come across three or

four people with Jewish ancestors from this region all of whom were in the liquor trade. Was it largely in Jewish hands?

Family documents describe my great-grandfather as a *Brennereiinspektor*, i.e. inspector of distilleries, in Thost, Upper Silesia. The town's spelling was later changed to Tost and, since the area now belongs to Poland, it is Toszek.

I have visited this *shtetl* and it seems unlikely that it once had several distilleries that required inspection. I wonder whether they once had a system similar to the French one, which was only phased out within living memory. Individuals were given permits to operate stills but only authorised to produce limited quantities mainly for domestic consumption.

To regulate such a system would have required an inspector of distilling rather than of distilleries. The German language doesn't make such a distinction.

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