

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Memorable memoirs (II)

Unlike Elisabeth Castonier, the subject of my article in December 2014, who was an established writer by the time she came to Britain, Ingrid Jacoby (née Pollak) was only 12 when she came to Britain in 1939 on a Kindertransport from Vienna, together with her older sister Lieselotte ('Putz'); they were taken in by a family in Falmouth, Cornwall. Though her father escaped to Britain, her mother remained in Vienna and fell victim to the Nazi genocide. After this rupture in her young life, the quest for a relationship of loving, supportive security became a dominant theme in Jacoby's depiction of her inner world.

Since her childhood, Ingrid Jacoby has been a passionate diarist; I found *My Darling Diary*, the three published volumes of her diaries, a delightful and utterly absorbing read. The first volume, subtitled *A Wartime Journal*, begins shortly before her forced emigration from Vienna and continues through her time in Falmouth, from June 1939 until her departure for Oxford (to a secretarial college, not the university) in autumn 1944. The two subsequent volumes, both subtitled *The Girl in and out of Love*, cover a decade of her life in Oxford, ending in 1955 on the eve of her marriage. These diaries are, in my view, among the finest to have come out of the experience of those Jewish refugees who fled from Hitler to Britain as children or teenagers; Jacoby's account of her life as a child refugee, as an adolescent schoolgirl in wartime Cornwall, and as a young woman in work and – repeatedly and passionately – in love in post-war Oxford has the power to move its readers deeply, not least because of the author's high gifts as a writer.

The young Ingrid Jacoby rapidly developed a remarkable maturity in her writing. Within a few months of her arrival in Britain, she was writing fluently and idiomatically in English, while recording with great insight the emotional state of a young refugee in unfamiliar surroundings and exploring

the mood switches and nuances of feeling affecting a girl growing into adolescence.



Ingrid Jacoby with 'Fling'

Most notable, perhaps, is the sophisticated way in which she uses the literary form of the diary: she addresses her diary directly, giving it the appearance of a personality of its own, as a partner in an internal dialogue she is conducting with herself. This allows her to reveal her innermost feelings as if to a trusted confidant and also to create a reflective distance between herself and her feelings as she discloses them to 'my darling diary to whom I'll tell everything'. She often teases her diary (and her readers) by delaying or withholding information and appearing to seek its approval for her thoughts or actions, and tests her reactions to the people she meets and the events she experiences by running them past the constant, if mute, companion of her daily life.

Jacoby was at first unhappy and homesick in Britain but her antipathy to the country rapidly dissolved when she moved from her unsympathetic first family to St Joseph's, the home of Miss Davis, who took in children. She was rapidly integrated into the community of this small but happy institution, where she forged lasting friendships, particularly with Connie, Miss Davis's niece. Jacoby was happy in Falmouth, remote though it was, enjoying walks on its

beaches and excursions to beauty spots on the Cornish coast. She found ready acceptance at the girls' High School in Falmouth, where she studied successfully for her School Certificate. Her assimilation into English life was largely accomplished through her school, where, despite her foreign accent and evident otherness, she participated to the full in the friendships and feuds, the short-lived crushes and fevered passions particular to those institutions. Jacoby became known as 'Inky' to her friends, a nickname that mutated into 'Inky Polly', 'Inky Dinky Doo' or just plain 'Nanks'. Her picture of school life in its many and varied facets is amusing and touching; it lives on in the memory as an intense little world of its own.

Jacoby's life was subject to the restrictions of wartime, aggravated in her case by her status as an 'enemy alien'. That status did much to intensify the sense of being an outsider that marked the first period of her life in Britain and contributed to the feelings of inferiority and isolation that she confided to her diary. These, however, tended to decrease noticeably when the current object of her affections took an interest in her. In many ways, Jacoby's diaries reveal her to be not unlike many other middle-class schoolgirls in wartime Britain, thrilling to films like *Rebecca* and *Wuthering Heights*, singing popular numbers like the novelty song *Mairzy Doats*, and eagerly joining in the games and festivities at Christmas and New Year.

Falmouth, then still an important port, was the target of air raids, which killed one of Jacoby's classmates and repeatedly disrupted her studies; in the months before D-Day, it also played host to numerous American soldiers, whom Jacoby regarded, like many other middle-class English people, as brash and somewhat uncouth 'Yanks'. Though the experience of wartime did much to cement Jacoby's admiration for the British and her

Memorable memoirs (II) continued

determination to stay in Britain as a fully integrated member of British society, the fate of her mother, who was deported to Minsk, hung over her life as a permanent reminder of her lost Viennese past.

A new chapter in Jacoby's life began when she moved to Oxford, initially to take a secretarial course, though she was soon drawn to a career in the world of books. Her first job was a lowly appointment at Oxford City Library, where she encountered a young woman who wrote poetry: Elizabeth Jennings. After a brief spell working at a correspondence college, Jacoby took a position at one of Oxford's most prestigious bookshops, Parker's, in the Foreign Department, which appears to have been almost exclusively staffed by German-speaking refugees. Her rapid ascent in Oxford's cultural world reached its peak when she was taken on by the renowned firm of antiquarian booksellers A. Rosenthal & Co., then located in Turl Street. The firm had numerous celebrated clients: once she found herself being introduced to the violinist Yehudi Menuhin and, on asking another client for his name, was told 'Leopold Stokowski' (the conductor).

Jacoby lived in a series of flats across north Oxford, from which one can trace the existence of a lively community of Jewish refugees there. She lived for a time in Lonsdale Road, renting a room from Mrs Labowsky, mother of the distinguished medievalist Lotte Labowsky, who held a position at Somerville College; not to be outdone, her sister Lieselotte rented a room from the eminent biochemist and pharmacologist Hugh (Hermann) Blaschko in Park Town. Among Mrs Labowsky's friends were Mrs Guttman, wife of the spinal injuries specialist Ludwig Guttman, Mrs Cosman, mother of the artist Milein Cosman, and Mrs von Hofmannsthal; not many 25-year-olds have the opportunity of discussing *Der Rosenkavalier* with the librettist's widow. Through the network of refugee enterprises, Jacoby also found

AJR Chief Executive
Michael Newman

Finance Director
David Kaye

Heads of Department
Karen Markham *Human Resources & Administration*
Sue Kurlander *Social Services*
Carol Hart *Community & Volunteer Services*

AJR Journal
Dr Anthony Grenville *Consultant Editor*
Dr Howard Spier *Executive Editor*
Andrea Goodmaker *Secretarial/Advertisements*

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

WORLD'S FIRST PERMANENT KINDERTRANSPORT MUSEUM OPENS IN VIENNA

The world's first permanent museum dedicated to the Kindertransport has opened in Vienna. The opening took place on 10 December, the 76th anniversary of the first group of Jewish children who left Vienna as part of the Kindertransport.

Known as Für das Kind (For the Child), the museum is situated in a basement on the Radetzkystrasse which the Nazis used to house Jewish families before their deportation.

The main exhibition comprises 23 posters of suitcases with objects that Kindertransportees took with them when they left, including



photographs, books, toys, school reports and clothes.

The museum is available for group visits on request. For further information, contact Milli Segal, Initiative und Organisation, at info@millisegal.at

a typing agency, through which she could augment her salary. Once she was told to give priority to the work of an important client; this turned out to be the philosopher Karl Popper. The agency even sent her to work at All Souls College as a temporary secretary for Isaiah Berlin, then the most eminent Jewish academic in Oxford.

Jacoby's diaries also record her love life, from youthful romances with Oxford undergraduates to serious relationships with more mature men, among them Jewish refugee academics. The highs and lows of these love affairs come across with power and immediacy, as the diary entries chart the ebb and flow of her feelings with great sensitivity – as well as an unusual degree of honesty in the description of sexual experiences. At a party at the university's Department of Human Anatomy, where her sister worked, Jacoby met her husband, Stan (Stanislaw) Tkaczyk, a non-Jewish Pole who, rather to her relief, changed his surname to Joseph. And it is as Inga Joseph that Jacoby is now known, having moved to Sheffield, studied modern languages at Sheffield University, and become a teacher, as well as a wife and mother.

Yet the diaries also reveal much about the darker side of life as a foreigner (naturalised, admittedly) in post-war Britain: the isolation of the young refugee in a predominantly British world that often looked askance at any outsider from a foreign country with an 'alien' culture and identity. Jacoby oscillated between her natural tendency to assimilate into British life – she entered into Oxford's cultural and social life with some gusto – and the Viennese identity that formed part of

the foundations of her being. Coming from a family that was already heavily assimilated before 1938, Jacoby's feelings towards Jews and Jewishness were, as her diaries show, deeply ambiguous. Only by the end of the diaries, within the security of her impending marriage, did the author appear to find the stability for which she had yearned.

Anthony Grenville



AJR ANNUAL TRIP JOIN US THIS YEAR IN SCOTLAND 17-21 May 2015

Accompanied travel by train from London to Glasgow, plus four nights' accommodation in Glasgow. We will also help arrange travel from other parts of England to Glasgow.

Highlights of the trip will include a day in Edinburgh with a visit to The Royal Yacht Britannia and the new Parliament building.

Our days in Glasgow will include Kelvingrove Museum; a guided tour of Pollok House; a visit to a whisky distillery; a boat trip on Loch Lomond; and visits to Luss Conservation Village, Keeble Palace, The Burrell Collection, The Botanical Gardens and many other Scottish delights.

All meals and travel included. Places are limited. For a full information pack and booking form, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

Bertha Emily Harder: foster mother to three refugee children

My late mother, Lore Gumpel, and her two sisters, Lilo and Romie, came to Britain on one of Sir Nicholas Winton's Kindertransport trains from Prague at the beginning of June 1939. For the first few months in this country they were looked after by Bertha Emily Harder, in Archway, north London.

Sadly Miss Harder died in April 1940 of lung cancer. She gave my mother one photograph of herself. This photograph, proudly on display in the Selo family living room, is shown above.

I was aware of Miss Harder's importance to my mother from an early age: in 1960, when I was only four, my mother spoke about her in a BBC Radio *Woman's Hour* interview. My mother also wrote a book about her own life, *Three Lives in Transit* (published in 1992), which made clear just how important Miss Harder had been. My mother describes how she and her two sisters arrived at Liverpool Street Station with only small cases of clothes and personal possessions and the maximum 10 shillings they were allowed to bring with them. Nicholas Winton's mother met the children and introduced them to Miss Harder. My mother writes: 'Miss Harder, dressed rather shabbily in old fashioned clothes, came towards me with [a card reading] "Mother Love" in her hand.'

Miss Harder had heard that there were three refugee children whose mother did not want them separated and offered to take them in and look after them.

My mother recalls that Miss Harder had a small shop next to Archway Underground Station selling tobacco and confectionery products. The shop was called The Beehive. They went to live near the shop at 12 Whitehall Mansions. My mother also remembers that the flat had only two rooms with a small kitchen and bathroom. Miss Harder gave up her bedroom for the girls and slept on the sofa in the other room. Soon after their arrival Miss Harder took the three girls on holiday to the Isle of Wight. It's interesting that my own first memory of a family holiday was a trip to the Isle of Wight as a five-year-old.

After my mother died in September 2013, I began to carry out further



research on Miss Harder. What was missing from the BBC interview and my mother's book was Miss Harder's background and possible reasons for taking in three German-Jewish children. My research to date has brought up some interesting findings.

In *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation* (2002), Muriel Emanuel and Vera Gissing write that Winton's main concern was to place the children; it was particularly difficult to place siblings together and sometimes hard decisions had to be made. Sir Nicholas said later: 'Those who offered homes were mainly the lower middle class. Taking one child was a phenomenal undertaking. Had I waited for families willing to take two or more, most of those children would not have got away.'

So who was this remarkable single woman who took in three refugee children?

I discovered that Bertha Emilie Harder was born in January 1891 and baptised on 22 February in Shoreditch. She was the youngest daughter of Robert Rudolph von Harder, born in Poznan in 1846, and Anna Mary Berg, born in Essen in 1853. They married in London in 1872. Miss Harder's parents had come to England from Germany to work. Her father ran a men's hairdressing business. I also found during my research that many Germans came to England in the second half of the 19th century and that men's hairdressing was a popular occupation. At that time – during the reign of Queen Victoria – Germans were welcomed in this country! The 1891 census shows the Harders as living at 38 Holywell Lane, Shoreditch, with at least eight children.

By the time of the 1911 census, the family had moved to 10 Station Road, Wood Green, north London, where Mr von Harder had his hairdressing shop on the corner of the High Street and Station Road. This address is now Haringey Council offices, which I passed on numerous occasions while living in the area!

At the onset of the First World War Miss Harder would have been in her early twenties. The 1911 census information states that she was a machinist of blouses in the city. I expect life changed significantly at this stage, with the well documented hatred of Germans in Britain. Like many families of German origin (such as that of the poet John Betjeman who dropped one 'n' from Betjemann), they anglicised their surname from von Harder to Harder. Miss Harder's forename was also anglicised from Emilie to Emily. Being in Wood Green, the family were very close to Alexandra Palace, which was a German internment camp during the First World War. This is discussed in Janet Harris's book *Alexandra Palace: A Hidden History* (2005).

At the end of the First World War Miss Harder's father died and she moved to Hornsey with her mother. It seems that Miss Harder took on running The Beehive in Archway after her mother's death in October 1928.

I have still to complete my research on how Miss Harder became involved as a foster parent with the Kindertransport. However, I expect her experience of the anti-German feeling during the First World War had a significant impact on her motivation to help human beings whose lives were under threat. The local Archway newspaper during the first half of 1939 contained a letters' page which included a number of anti-Semitic anti-refugee letters, which nowadays could not be published. There were also a few articles on meetings about the need to rescue children from Nazi-controlled countries. Maybe that is how Miss Harder – a single woman without children of her own – joined the group of admirable people who opened up their homes in 1938-39 and became foster parents to the Kinder!

David Selo

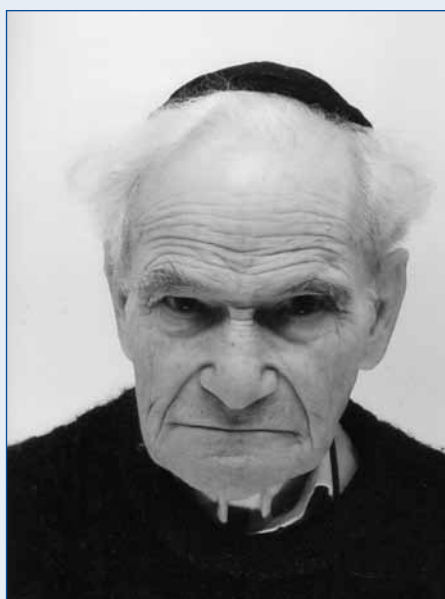
MOTHER COURAGE

The clock in the royal palace in Amsterdam's Dam Square beat out the hour. It was seven o'clock in the morning. And within minutes Lottie knew her life had changed forever.

She was 34. She was lying in one of the two beds in the medium-priced hotel, minutes on foot from Amsterdam's Centraal Station. In the other bed lay Alfred, her husband for the past 11 years. He was 20 years older and a reasonably successful businessman. He had never coined riches but had never known poverty either. His main occupation was representing English firms in Germany's bustling market. In addition, he bought and sold on his own account rubber bed sheeting and rubber raincoats. Riches had eluded him but poverty had never been even a remote threat. As the youngest of three children, he had always had to assert himself. So he had never been lost for words. But this morning he was incoherent.

With Lottie and their three young children he had arrived in Amsterdam a day and a half before from Berlin. Nine months earlier Adolf Hitler had taken power in Berlin. He did not *have* to seize it. It was presented to him by voters and their politicians still looking for a system that would offer them a new era of political security. The previous era had ended some 15 years before with the flight of the Kaiser, fearful of a revolution that had never even left the starting blocks in Berlin. Hitler's virulently Jew-hating propaganda minister was a small man with a big mouth called Joseph Goebbels. He was married to a woman from the lower middle class called Magda. Her mother, married the second time round to a man of Jewish descent called Friedlaender, sewed for a living. Lottie and her mother Martha were among her regular clients.

One question now gnawed at Lottie's mind. Would Mrs Friedlaender pass the names of



Rabbi William Wolff

herself and her family to Joseph for early arrest and transport to one of the camps set up for those whom Joseph and the Hitler crew hated as enemies or regarded simply as undesirables?

Lottie decided that by the time she might find the answer it could be too late. So on the evening of 27 September 1933 she took Alfred and their three children to see her parents. As they left some 45 minutes later Lottie burst into tears. Her face still wet, she arrived with her family at the Lehrter Bahnhof, one of Berlin's major railway termini. With Alfred, she had booked sleeping bunks for them all. As the train with its somnolent cargo sped westwards through the north German plains, Lottie finally calmed herself and fell asleep too. The two Wolffs and their three children were safe. I can report this with certainty because I am the last survivor of that fivesome.

More than 12 hours later, the train rolled into Amsterdam's multi-platform Centraal Station. On one of those platforms stood a dark-haired young man named Jo, newly married to a lively young woman called Miép. Her father, Adolph van Zanten, was Alfred's business representative in Holland. And to his home Jo took them all, for lunch and for anchoring some certainty into their nebulous future.

That task was daunting. Alfred at the age of 55, Lottie, in her mid-thirties, had to start life anew from scratch. They had no home, Alfred had no work; such support networks of friends and relatives as they had inherited from their close relatives or built up over the years, they had forcibly left behind in Berlin. They were on their own.

The job ahead first overwhelmed Alfred then crushed him.

In speech he was still just coherent. But the least decision – whether to take a tram or a taxi – defeated him. And his condition now defied the treatment capability of the general practitioner to whom Lottie took him.

The psychiatrist they consulted next insisted Alfred needed hospital treatment at once. So, barely a day later, Alfred and Lottie were back at the Centraal Station. They boarded the trans-European express to Zurich. Lottie had booked him into probably the best-known psychiatric clinic of its time in Europe, the Sanatorium Bellevue, also known by the name of its medical directors and proprietors, Binswanger, which its founder and first director, Ludwig Binswanger, had set up in a disused monastery in Kreuzlingen.

It was nine months later that Lottie was back there to take Alfred to the new home she had set up for them on the southern outskirts of Amsterdam, in an apartment in what is now called Churchill-Iaan but was then named Noorder Amstellaan.

Alfred was ready to face the world again – its family life, its business life and, vital to him also, its synagogue life. And Lottie put her wits and her warmth into building her own new triptych of family and two new sets of friends, native Dutch and refugees like herself from murderous Nazi Germany.

In the treasure trove that was her soul, one quality had been enhanced by its use. Her courage.

William Wolff

'MORE BRITISH THAN THE BRITISH'

Meeting Prince Charles was like a dream. I'd heard about the Kindertransport 75th anniversary reception at St James's Palace. As a former Kindertransport child, I had applied for, and was amazed and delighted to receive, an invitation from Prince Charles.

My family had lived in the German city of Beuthen, now part of Poland. When I was just three, my mother Käthe (née Lewin) died. Seven years later my father, Walter Brauer, died from consumption, contracted from fighting in the First World War. Although just ten at that time, I remember the funeral well.

My father had six brothers: Alfred, killed in France fighting for Germany in the First World War; Siegbert, Rudi and Bernhardt, all to die in Auschwitz with their families; Willi, imprisoned in Dachau before fleeing to Shanghai and then Australia with his wife; and Georg, who left for Brazil with his wife and daughter before the Second World War.

I was taken in by my uncle Bernhardt, his wife Grete and their children Marianne and Hans. I lived on the third floor of their noisy pub/hotel. I had everything but I didn't feel loved.

Without anyone's permission, my school friend Irene and I submitted our names to leave Germany. Polish Jews were being expelled and my class had become depleted. Uncle Bernhardt turned up unexpectedly at my classroom and announced 'Meine Nichte geht nach England' (My niece is going to England). Things moved quickly now. I never returned to school. A suitcase was bought, my possessions were gathered, and a coat was made. My (maternal) grandparents gave me a *siddur* and a book containing pressed flowers. But I was upset that, apart from a small ring, my mother's jewellery wasn't given to me.

That night Aunt Grete came to my bed saying 'Auf Wiedersehen. Sei ein gutes Kind' (Goodbye. Be good). I had to go with my over-full case to the station, where my grandmother, my friend Irene, and my cousin Marianne said goodbye. On the train were three Jewish boys. More children joined at later stops. During a short break at Berlin Friedrichstrasse, I met uncle Siegbert, his wife Käthe and my brother Friedrich (later to die in Auschwitz) for the last time, before boarding another train to Hanover. Everyone cheered as we crossed into Holland.

At Harwich coaches took us to Dovercourt holiday camp (where *Hi-de-Hi!* was filmed years later). The rooms were ice-cold and a hot water bottle was a necessity. We were taught English and I particularly remember the song 'Two Lovely Black Eyes'.

Hearing the announcement 'The Southport community wants ten girls', I decided to go and very quickly our group was taken to London, then Manchester, then Southport. At the station I was picked up by Max and Pauline Cantor and stayed with them while a hostel was prepared for us. Harris House accommodated five girls in two rooms and had a lovely garden. We were looked after very well and our skinny



bodies soon put on weight. A Professor Holmes taught us and we performed plays in English. One day the mayor of Southport came to watch us perform *Noblesse Oblige*.

Every week we all went to the local cinema. My favourites were Robert Donat and Tyrone Power and I particularly remember the film *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Each Shabbat we attended Southport Synagogue and I always visited the Cantors on the way back. Soon we were joined by three young sisters, all of whom went from no English to perfect English in just one year. (I later learned they all married Hassidic men and had many children.) However, all adults had to evacuate the area so I returned to the Cantors before signing into a hostel in Higher Broughton, Manchester. I worked making hats, earning 10 shillings a week. An attack of appendicitis led to a week's convalescence in the Lake District. I returned to Manchester and worked for a costume maker. I learned typing and shorthand and worked in the office of a cement company.

Boredom set in so I joined the army in 1943. I went to Pontefract, Yorkshire, where we were all given vaccinations. This resulted in swollen arms for the English girls but not for us Kindertransport girls as we had been vaccinated in Germany.

A spell in Oswestry followed, then Barmouth, then Hayling Island and finally Mitcham Junction, south London, where there were six heavy guns ready to fire at German planes. My task was to operate the 'predictors', i.e. to follow the radar with our dials to guide the gunners. But one German flying bomb changed course on its descent, killing an army cook

and knocking me out. The fire brigade removed the bodies – but nobody saw me lying there! After finally coming to, I was in a daze until a colleague asked 'Margot, are you alright?', whereupon I burst into tears.

We were all granted leave – but I had nowhere to go as Mr and Mrs Cantor were away on holiday. I went with Betty, an army colleague, to her home in Hull, the start of a long friendship. Back in south London, I attended Brixton Synagogue to express my thanks to the Almighty for allowing me to survive – but no one there spoke to me. I returned to Mitcham. To cap it all, an army colleague made anti-Semitic comments. But my threat to report her to an officer stopped her and we became friends.

After the end of the war in Europe, I was moved to Chester, where I became the driver of military vans, ambulances and trucks – and met my future husband Dennis at a dance. We married in March 1946, even before we had been demobbed.

We moved to south-east London and had two children: David, who became a police officer and had a son, Robert, and a daughter, Claire; and Diana, who had two sons, Carl and Simeon. Dennis and I divorced in 1965 and he later died from cancer. I then spent many years as a traffic warden, later a senior traffic warden.

An enforced move in 1973 (due to a compulsory purchase order – the whole road was to be demolished!) resulted in a stay in Israel, where I lived in Bat Yam and learned Hebrew. But I couldn't settle and returned to London after nine months and was fortunate to be welcomed back as a traffic warden.

In 1989 I was phoned by a TV producer making a documentary about the Southport Kindertransport girls. So I travelled there again and met them again during the filming. I maintained contact with a number of them, travelling to Rio, Tel Aviv and the USA to see them.

I've had a hard life but I've not felt lonely. I enjoy crosswords and quizzes and like going to my synagogue in Streatham when I can, although it's not near. My 90th birthday was recently celebrated there. Every year I try to visit a friend in Florida for a few weeks; I hope to go again soon, health permitting. I feel more British than the British and I hate people running this country down. I am so pleased I came here and can call myself British. Whenever I return from abroad, seeing Tower Bridge and the other London sights always gives me such a good feeling. And of course I have met royalty!

Margot Barnes, interviewed by David Wirth



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

CAN THE AJR GET FIRST-HAND HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST FROM SURVIVORS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE?

My parents, Ed and Connie Rosenstiel, both refugees who arrived in England from Berlin in 1936 and 1938, died in 2006 and 2012. Fortunately they both had long and fulfilled lives, each to the age of 93.

Only after it was too late to ask them did I see lots of family history material in photos and letters and realise I would have wanted to ask them questions about it – questions only they could answer.

There is correspondence in excellent English between my mother, starting while she was still in Berlin before and after Kristallnacht, and her cousin Rita in New York which narrates first her struggle to get out of Germany and, once safe in England, to get her parents and grandmother out too. Money was offered from the USA to support them in this country but the attempt to gain them refuge was ultimately unsuccessful. They perished in 1942.

My mother never spoke to me about this and only showed me their photos very late in her long life. My father also had letters (including one from Albert Einstein) and photos of his family, especially of his parents who died when he was aged five. There are so many faces in those photos which I can't now ask him to identify. There is probably no one else alive who can. Luckily, two portrait photos of an aunt and a cousin of his who perished have the names of the subjects pencilled on the back. I have been able to pass them to Yad Vashem. But the subjects of other photos remain a mystery.

After my brother emigrated from the UK of his birth to the USA he caught the national family genealogy bug there, enabling us to build up a comprehensive record of the family tree. This included a cousin of my father, one of three young adult relatives including my mother who came to the UK on domestic visas. I was totally unaware of this cousin's existence, despite having met her brother and his family in Mill Hill many times in my childhood.

Both my parents wrote word processor

documents about their families over 20 years ago. I only got to see them after I converted the discs to a modern PC format after they had died. Again, more questions arose.

The question now is how many other refugees in the first generation have similar mementos and records which they could pass on to their families and friends, who might then want to ask similar questions?

I know that many, like my mother, didn't want to talk about their experiences, especially of her loss of loved ones, but, with the passing of time, some have been more willing to talk about a painful past. How many more have material vital to the understanding of this period of history which they could help share and inform for the benefit of future generations? How much more might this material contribute if today's generations could ask questions of those who know about them in time?

Time is getting shorter but it looks like a challenge for the AJR to take on now.

Colin Rosenstiel, Cambridge

This is an issue of considerable importance for the AJR. Among other things, the AJR has produced Refugee Voices, a collection of 150 filmed interviews with Holocaust survivors; the AJR Journal regularly includes articles on this topic; and last month the AJR co-organised the Holocaust Generations Conference. In addition, AJR members can contact the Wiener Library or Dr Clare George (clare.george@sas.ac.uk) at the University of London Library who specialises in materials relating to the Jewish refugees from Nazism in Britain (Ed.).

LEST WE FORGET

Sir – My sincerest thanks to the AJR for presenting the London premiere of *The Last Train to Tomorrow*. The London Premiere was a wonderful and moving event. Although I did not come with the Kindertransport but with the Youth Aliyah, I felt very moved at seeing the smashing up of shops and people on the screen. People broken in mind and body – it was indeed a most heart-wrenching time. Time just stood still and I relived that awful day. But

my point is we survived and have come through it.

I don't think there was a dry eye in the house. I felt very privileged to have been present at the performance. Lest we forget!!

(Mrs) C. Haar, London NW8

QUAKERS AND THE KINDERTRANSPORT

Sir – I am a Religious Studies teacher at Friends' School Saffron Walden and am looking for any former pupils (or staff?) with links to the Kindertransport and/or refugees from Germany at the time of the Second World War.

I understand that Quakers did take in some children during this time and would love to know if anyone can help me with information about Quaker involvement, especially at our school.

I teach the Holocaust every year and try to give the children a sense of how young people like themselves were affected.

Any assistance you can give would be much appreciated.

Helen Golden, Friends' School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3EB, tel 01799 525351

IN DEFENCE OF THE WOMEN OF MACHSOM WATCH

Sir – With regard to the letter from Mirry Reich (January), writing from Kedumim, we at Machsom (Checkpoint) Watch are women who come from Zionist homes and educate our children accordingly. We belong to a group of peace organisations who care for the State of Israel and worry about its future. We fear that the way things are moving, soon there will no longer be a State of Israel and it will have been a fleeting episode in the history of Jewry.

We wish we had the power the writer attributes to us! We are middle-class professional women and have very few connections with wealthy people, the media etc. Unlike the settlers in Kedumim and other settlements in the West Bank, we are not funded by the government and the public. We struggle to survive.

As for one of our leaders being the wife of a former prime minister, that is news to us and we challenge Ms Reich to tell us who she is.

Our aim is to try and strengthen Israel by stressing the immorality of the occupation.

Yes, we frequent the checkpoints because we feel that it is not right that every movement of Palestinian men, women, children and the elderly should be controlled by a foreign army. We are also horrified by what occurs at some of the checkpoints and we certainly do want to make those atrocities known to the widest possible public.

It is ludicrous to claim that many terrorist murders have been committed due to soldiers being 'neutralised' by having the Machsom Watch women photographing them or calling our soldiers insulting names. No soldier has been 'neutralised'

by any Machsom Watch woman (we are mainly grandmas by the way). They heed their commanders and not us. Furthermore, we have nothing against the soldiers. They are our children and grandchildren and they are forced into an impossible situation. Our protest is against the system, not the individuals carrying it out.

It is simply not true to claim that Palestinian youngsters kill and maim innocent Israelis and soldiers on a daily basis. Since about 2007, when good co-operation was established between the Palestinian and Israeli security forces, the number of terrorist attacks has decreased and things have been relatively calm for some years now.

As for our sons and grandsons evading compulsory military service or not being part of a fighting unit, I can only say that the IDF does not assign soldiers to their units and jobs in accordance with what their mothers or grandmas do.

Daniela Gordon, Mevasseret Zion, Israel

Sir – Mirry Reich writes from Kedumim, a small Israeli settlement in the West Bank beyond the Green Line. It was apparently founded by members of the Gush Emunim in 1975. In 2006 three members of the settlement and one other Israeli were killed when a Palestinian suicide bomber, disguised as an Orthodox Jewish hitchhiker, blew himself up near the gas station outside the village. Another settler was killed by terrorists near Kedumim in 2007. These dreadful experiences may have prevented Ms Reich from seeing the overall political picture.

I am, however, always suspicious when innuendo and invective replace logic and fact. Even a quick browse of the Machsom Watch website (<http://www.machsomwatch.org/en>) shows the variety and value of their work – none of which is involved with insulting soldiers.

Close friends of mine recently returned from a day trip to the West Bank organised by Machsom Watch and could not have been more impressed by the organisation.

It would have been much more productive to learn from Ms Reich how the settlers of Kedumim are trying to establish an amicable relationship with their Palestinian neighbours – and also a better memory to the work of her mother, Bertha Leverton, who unveiled the story of the Kindertransport with such compassion.

Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove, Sussex

Sir – Mirri Reich is 'shocked' and 'disgusted' at the publicity given by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson to the activities of the Machsom Women.

The women she attacks as 'traitors' do indeed weaken Israel's image in the world by exposing such treatment. Too many Israelis share the fears (attitudes sometimes called 'colonial') that all 'natives' are potential killers out to destroy them.

Israelis need to protect themselves from harm. They know more about security

systems than any other country. Every day they welcome and thoroughly check thousands of visitors at their airports with efficiency, minimum delay, courtesy and respect. Until such respect is also shown to the people who share their country, there is little prospect for peace.

John Farago, Deal, Kent

ISRAEL AND PALESTINIANS: 'GROSS INJUSTICES'

Sir – I always read the *Journal* with great interest and find much in it that I admire, especially its editorials. I am, however, dismayed that the acute and continuing problems in Israel/Palestine have hardly been addressed by you or your readers. Surely I cannot be the only one who was appalled by the vastly disproportionate response of the Israeli government to the terrorist attacks by Hamas and the firing of their rockets, which led to the recent destruction of much of Gaza, injuries to many thousands, and the deaths of an estimated 2,000 people, the majority civilians.

Whilst I am fully aware that I am sticking my neck out in raising this topic, let me remind you that there is a small but significant minority in Israel who are as opposed to the Israeli government's actions as I am. The fact that Israelis are allowed to demonstrate quite regularly against their government's brutal policies is the one hopeful feature in an utterly dismal situation.

I have permission to quote from a recent analysis of the political situation in Israel by the veteran peace campaigner Uri Avnery, as patriotic an Israeli as the best of them. In putting forward his idea of a grand coalition between the leftist and centre parties, and possibly even the Arab parties, he writes that the Netanyahu government 'is systematically destroying all chances for peace, enlarging settlements in the West Bank and especially East Jerusalem, stoking the fires of religious war on the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, and denouncing both Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas at the same time. All this after the superfluous Gaza war, which ended in a military draw and a human disaster that continues unabated to this present day.' He adds that 'With this government we are galloping towards a racist apartheid state.'

What I find distressing is that the Jewish community in this country, from the Chief Rabbi downwards, cannot bring itself to acknowledge the gross injustices to the Palestinian population and the discrimination practised by the Israeli government against its own Arab citizens - injustices that will be enshrined in law if the current proposal to declare Israel 'a state for the Jewish people' is passed by the Knesset.

I was exposed to rampant anti-Semitism and discrimination in Germany before I came to this country on a Kindertransport in 1938. My family was murdered by the Germans. I visited Israel in 1974 and hugely admired the remarkable way in which the

Israelis had developed their country. But my own experiences make me even more sensitive to the gross injustices meted out by the Israeli government to the Arabs and, whilst I do *not* condone acts of terrorism, I must condemn a policy that is not only unjust but in the long run self-defeating.

Leslie Baruch Brent (Emeritus Professor), London N19

'PROVOCATIVE AND POINTLESS'

Sir – It should be made clear to Clare Parker (January, Letters) that the 1949 Armistice Agreement between Israel and its neighbours Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria specifically mentions the West Bank. There is no reference to Judea. The land in question has been called the West Bank ever since. Calling it Judea is provocative and pointless.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

MEMORIES OF NORTHWAYS

Sir – I am greatly bothered by Frank Beck's letter (December) as I cannot remember any wool store on Northways Parade and I have lived at Northways, just round the corner, for over 70 years! I do, however, remember all the other people he mentions.

There was the optician Norbert Cohn (originally from Berlin). I see him before me so clearly, with his stiff and jerky movements and friendly smile: 'Yes, yes', he would go as he tried to put a pair of glasses on your nose. He had his shop there for decades, until other opticians opened up shops all around with more modern equipment.

As for the refugee tailor, this was Mr and Mrs Vogel from Hungary and their young schoolboy son. A friendly, chatty couple – friendly that is until one day my sister went into their shop bitterly complaining to Mrs Vogel about some garment that had been promised to be ready by a certain date but wasn't. This complaint angered the Vogels so much that they broke off completely with my whole family forever after.

As for the Cosmo, of course I can remember that too.

However, as for any wool shop on Northways Parade, I have no recollection. The only wool shop in Swiss Cottage I can think of was on Regency Parade.

Margarete Stern, London NW3

Sir – Frank Beck mentions the wool shop his mother ran in Finchley Road. I remember it well. My mother, Hansi Kriss, who was for many years a volunteer at the Day Centre, used to buy wool there. She even made dresses which were lined at the shop for her, giving them a very professional appearance.

My grandparents were friends of his grandparents – Mr and Mrs Schlesinger – and they used to meet for tea (or rather coffee) at the Cosmo in Finchley Road on Wednesdays. I remember his mother's name was Edith and her sister's Erna.

Pat Brody (née Kriss), Edgware, Middx

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

Of all the royal dynasties subjected to academic and literary-historical assault, the Tudors must be in the front line. The merciless Henry VIII and his mainly hapless six wives have exercised the public imagination, most recently through Hilary Mantel's award-winning books and plays. Henry's history is horrendous but this was also the king whose divorce from Catherine of Aragon and marriage to Anne Boleyn ushered in the Reformation.

What did they look like, these titans of the Tudor world? Well, you might be surprised to know that the Tudors were painted long after their deaths. Many of their most familiar portraits were created by unknown artists. Now the **National Portrait Gallery** is showing **The Real Tudors: Kings and Queens Rediscovered** (until 1 March 2015, admission free), claiming hidden secrets



King Henry VIII by Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist, circa 1520
© National Portrait Gallery, London

in their survival. A portrait of Elizabeth I, for instance, was airbrushed by an 18th-century artist and a beetle is revealed trapped in varnish in a 16th-century portrait of the young King Edward VI, after Hans Holbein the Younger: X-rays prove 18th-century modernisers painted out the large, stiffened wings which formed an impregnable halo around

Elizabeth's head to make her image more accessible. The need for this makeover, according to Dr Tarnya Cooper, the Gallery's chief curator, was that portraits of Elizabeth I were valued later for her role as the proponent of Protestantism. These works share a microscopic attention to detail of dress and texture.

There are six portraits of Henry VIII, legs astride in white stockings, arms akimbo. The lavishness of Tudor costume speaks to ultimate power, compared to the more contemplative, ascetic portrayal of Henry VI, founder of the Tudor dynasty, by an unknown early-16th-century Flemish artist.

In a 16th-century painting after Hans Holbein the Younger, we see Edward VI, young son of Henry VIII, in an elaborate hat, his childish features gazing out into a world he will not live to change. In a later painting by an unknown English artist, the young king's clothes slightly mimic the style of his father - the fur-lined doublet, the white stockings, his feet standing square.

But then comes Queen Mary I, with her unstinting religiosity, modestly dressed with a crucifix high on her collar. There are five portraits of Mary, daughter of Henry and the displaced Catherine of Aragon, and she wears on her face both the insult of their divorce and the sublime cruelty of her father's reptilian ambition. Here is the stern-faced 'Bloody Mary', who briefly and brutally restored Catholicism to Britain when she took the throne on the death of her half-brother Edward.

Several portraits of Elizabeth I include one by the miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard showing her in high ruff and sleeves like the Tower of London. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger presents her in ethereal white, recalling the sense of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. It is fascinating to discover filial likenesses in these paintings. To see Anne Boleyn in Elizabeth's face you have to go elsewhere to study Anne's features and search for a likeness. You may just notice it.

Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street
(off New Bond Street)
Tel: 020 7629 7578
Fax: 020 7491 2139

**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

REVIEWS

A very odd state of affairs

HOW I STOPPED BEING A JEW

by Shlomo Sand

Verso: London/New York 2014, 102 pp.
hardback, translated by David Fernbach,
£9.99, ISBN 13 978-1-78168-698-0 UK

In my autobiography (*Sunday's Child? A Memoir*, 2009) I included a chapter entitled 'A question of identity'. Apart from the more general question of the identity of someone who came to this country as a child refugee, I also discussed the issue of my Jewish identity. Why, as a religious agnostic married to a non-Jewish woman and largely but not exclusively having spent my life in a non-Jewish environment, did I continue to consider myself a Jew? The conclusion was that my Jewishness was intimately bound up with the fate of my family in the Holocaust and my own childhood experiences in Nazi Germany. I would never want to renounce my Jewishness: I was a Jew by sentiment and that was that.

Shlomo Sand asks himself the same kind of question but, after much agonising and philosophising, reaches a very different conclusion, as the title of his book indicates. His background differs from mine. He was born in 1946 of a Jewish mother (and a non-Jewish father) in an Austrian camp for displaced persons and was educated in Israel, both at school and at university. He is a professor of history at Tel Aviv University, has a family in Israel, and feels deeply committed to his country. His slender but closely argued book is an attempt to explain his deep-felt alienation from Judaism and his almost desperate disillusionment with the way in which the state of Israel has developed since its inception and he discusses in depth the concept of 'Jewishness'. Is it possible to be an 'agnostic Jew' or is Jewishness entirely bound up with religious practice?

The book is slender but not the easiest of reads and many a reader of the *Journal* might well react violently against the arguments (and even some historical facts) advanced by Sand. According to him - and it is a position with which I agree - there is no such thing as a Jewish race or tribe. Whilst there are certain genes that are well represented in Jewish people, there is no overriding genome that determines Jewishness. Jews from different parts of the world can look very different,

while modern Hebrew has evolved into a language remote from biblical Hebrew and, thanks to the influx of refugees from the Maghreb after 1948, has much in common with Arabic.

Sand argues that Israel, far from being 'God-given', was conceived as a secular state and he believes that claims of ownership of the former Palestinian territories have no historical validity. It is the accident of having a Jewish mother that enables a person to claim Jewishness and therefore the right of return - all others are outsiders unless they have formally converted to Judaism. It follows that Israeli Arabs do not have equal citizenship even though they speak perfect Hebrew, are treated differently and tend to be sidelined in various ways, a situation that is dangerously akin to racism. By contrast, the many Jews in the Diaspora who have little if any connection with religious practice and may, like the majority of Israelis, be agnostics or atheists and may not be able to speak Hebrew, have the right of return as fully-fledged Israeli citizens. Where, asks Sand, is the logic or the justice of that?

Sand is himself aware of the likelihood that his views 'may appear illegitimate to more than one reader, not to say repugnant' and sidelined as yet another case of 'self-hatred'. 'They will argue,' he writes, 'that a Jew is a Jew and that's it.' By doing so they would lay claim to belong to a race, thus aligning themselves with obnoxious racial theories. Jewishness thus becomes immutable and Jews become bearers of heritable traits that distinguish them from others. Israel claims to be a state for Jewish people (a claim which, at the time of writing, seems about to be formalised by a vote in the Knesset), thus excluding many Israelis who have been born in the country, speak fluent Hebrew and have contributed to its development.

According to Judaic law, one cannot discard one's Jewishness short of conversion to another faith. That, to Sand, is illogical and unacceptable. For him, you cannot be a Jew if you are agnostic and so the only course for him is to renounce his Jewishness: he has resigned from being a Jew But, despite his stringent criticisms of the state of Israel and the society it has created, he feels unable to divest himself of his Israeli nationality, an act that would be well within his capacity. This seems to me to be a very odd state of affairs and suggests a certain lack of intellectual rigour!

Quite apart from its central theme, the book is full of historical and

philosophical insights and well worth a read even if the reader - or perhaps especially if the reader - takes a very different view of the topics under discussion.

Leslie Baruch Brent

Saga of a well-established Jewish family from Hamburg

TIME OUT OF JOINT: THE FATE OF A FAMILY

by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2014, 382 pp. paperback and Kindle edition, available from amazon.com

The author's name will be familiar to readers of the *AJR Journal* due to her regular column 'Letter from Israel'. Although the book is a novel it is based on the actual events which shaped the lives of her family since 1924. Fortunately, among the very few possessions her father was able to take from Hamburg when he escaped just before the war was a collection of letters, documents and photo albums; he also retained later correspondence received in London. Most of the novel relates to the period 1924-42 with a brief epilogue in 1992. The names in the book are changed and the details of the events described, and the dialogues and thoughts of the people involved, are as imagined by the author, but also based on the many discussions she had with her father.

During the 1920s life in Hamburg for middle-class Jews was pleasant and they appeared to combine a strong feeling of Jewish identity with a pride in being German and a love of German culture. Over half the book covers the period before the Nazi rise to power, although there are hints concerning right-wing ruffians led by a man called Hitler. Most Jews, however, felt confident that these could not cause a threat in such a civilised country.

The principal characters in the book are the members of the van Dornbach family, consisting of a religious and highly cultured couple with their three children. These are clearly based on the father of the author, his parents and siblings. In order to put the unfolding family saga in context, there are occasional background accounts of the political and social developments taking place in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Initially, the entire family lives together in Hamburg and their lives and those of their community are described in some detail. As the children grow older, their very different characters become clear and eventually each goes their own way.

The first to leave Hamburg was Grethe,

the oldest child. She seems to have been the most independent-minded and intellectual member of the family. Her journeys covered Holland, Paris and, eventually, the South of France, while her political views ranged from an early interest in Zionism to Communism. She eventually found happiness in a village on the Mediterranean, where she led a simple life with an ex-refugee from Russia. They survived the war and their son, Henri, appears in the 1992 epilogue meeting his cousin Eleanor, daughter of Hermann, the youngest of the van Dornbach children.

In 1928 Siegfried, academically brilliant and successful, left Hamburg for America, where he worked for a year on a tobacco plantation, initially as an apprentice to his father's business contacts. We are given insight into labour conditions at that time especially regarding the black workers and their masters. Siegfried was so highly regarded that his employers offered him the chance to take over the Shanghai branch of the business. He was reluctant to accept and, while passing through Hamburg to his new posting, told his father that he wanted to back out of his new commitment. His father, however, persuaded him to make the most of the opportunity and he proceeded to Shanghai with tragic consequences.

Hermann was a rather sickly child with poor eyesight, and not very successful at school. However, like his father, he had a great love of music and of the three children was the most committed to Judaism and Zionism. He grew to adulthood while experiencing the early years of the Nazi period, but after Kristallnacht was invited to England by cousins who had already established themselves there. During the war he married and with his wife ran a hostel for the Jewish Aid Committee. They also had a baby, Eleanor, who many years later met her cousin in France, as well as in real life becoming the author of this book.

The children's parents stayed in Germany and, although the father still died in his own bed in Hamburg, the mother was eventually sent in 1942 to Theresienstadt, where she became a victim of the *Shoah*.

This fact-based novel vividly describes the lives of a well-established family with its ups and downs even before the Nazi period and the later dispersion of its members, each with their own dramatic stories. One of the methods widely used in the novel is to inform the reader of earlier events, problems and attitudes between family members by using the thoughts of individuals - perhaps best described as 'thinking aloud in print'. This sometimes jars but doesn't make the book any easier to put down!

George Vulkan

ANNE FRANK'S STEPSISTER – DEVOTED TO HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

My husband and I recently returned from a wonderful holiday cruising across to New York, where we left the ship for one day before continuing up the New England coast, stopping off at pretty and charming places along the way until we reached Quebec.

In Boston, we unexpectedly came across a striking Holocaust memorial near Quincy Market. Six tall glass pillars with steam symbolically coming from them. Six million Jews – six tall structures! People walked through them and there were inscriptions that were powerful and emotional. It made people think, it made them weep!! After the day in Quebec, the ship went back down the St Lawrence River to New York, where we spent 12 days at our son's house.

The evening we arrived in New York I was taken to Tarrytown, to a hotel where Eva Schloss, stepsister of Anne Frank, was giving a talk on her Holocaust experiences. The occasion was sponsored by the Chabad Centres of Westchester County.

Eva's family was betrayed, as were so many, and ended up in Auschwitz-Birkenau. She spoke of the dreadful conditions that Jewish people suffered both in and out of the camps. She spoke lovingly about her family, especially her father and brother who did not survive. The audience was large and she was welcomed warmly. Her every word was listened to with real interest. Apparently, in the early days she, like so many survivors, didn't talk about that dreadful time but she is now devoted to Holocaust education.

To me, Eva's message was that, although she had lived through those very tough times, she had been able

to move on and live a normal happy family life while keeping her murdered loved ones very much in her heart and thoughts. Who could forget, who could forgive? No one, but she is not negative in any way. Asked if she had removed the numbers from her arm, she explained that she hadn't done so because there were still Holocaust deniers. Otto Frank eventually married her mother and thus she became the stepsister of Anne and Margot Frank, albeit after their deaths.

Eva was so warmly received and, after the evening ended, I felt honoured to have been part of that huge audience and pleased to see that so many Americans were eager to hear her story. People like Eva and many of our AJR members do such a good job educating those who really know little about those dark days.

Susie Barnett

THEATRE IN THE THERESIENSTADT GHETTO: NEWLY DISCOVERED WORKS



An invitation to a staging of newly discovered works by prisoners in the World War II Jewish ghetto at Theresienstadt (Terezin). Featuring students from University College London and the University of York in association with the Bloomsbury Theatre and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The Theresienstadt Ghetto was a site of great suffering and deprivation. It was also the site of a vibrant cultural life including music, visual art, poetry and theatrical performance. During interviews with Dr Lisa Peschel in 2004-08, survivors of the ghetto directed her to private collections and small archives, where she found scripts ranging from cabarets and puppet plays to verse dramas. These have recently been published in her anthology *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto*.

This rare staging features both comic and tragic works. After a historical introduction by Dr Peschel (University of York) and Professor Michael Berkowitz (UCL), Part I, *Laugh with Us*, presents comic scenes and songs from the Theresienstadt cabarets. In Part II, *The Smoke of Home*, this one-act historical allegory set in the Thirty Years' War poses the question: If we survive, will we be able to return to the home we knew?

Performances are Saturday, 7 February, 19:30 and Sunday, 8 February, 15:00. Tickets £14 (£8 concessions). Group booking is available for schools, colleges and universities. To order, visit www.thebloomsbury.com/event/run/14151

For further information, contact
Assistant Producer Daisy at
daisy.theresienstadt@gmail.com

At AJR Annual Election Meeting, Chairman stresses need for support for members is greater than ever

Addressing the Annual Election Meeting of The Association of Jewish Refugees, Chairman Andrew Kaufman emphasised that as members became increasingly frail, offering them support was more essential than ever.

Andrew told the meeting, in December at Belsize Square Synagogue, that the AJR currently had some 2,500 members, including those of the 'second generation', and that it continued to attract new members. The AJR had a strategy for at least the next 15 years, he added, noting that it had developed into a national organisation, comprising numerous groups up and down the country.

With regard to the last year of activities, he singled out the London premiere of *The Last Train to Tomorrow* at The Roundhouse in November, which had been a 'wonderful event'.

AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman pointed out that besides its social welfare programme, the AJR was supporting various Holocaust research and educational projects and commemorating anniversaries such as Holocaust Memorial Day and Kristallnacht.

In the question-and-answer session that followed, a question about the urgent need to compile generation-to-generation family records before it was too late was answered by reference to the *Journal* as a regular source of such material as well as to the *Refugee Voices* project (see 'Letters to the Editor', page 6).

Responding to a question whether the AJR should also offer support to Jewish refugees in the UK irrespective of their origin, the Chairman said that we had insufficient resources for that purpose.

Eleanor Angel, Gaby Glassman and Frank Harding were re-elected Trustees.

ARTS AND EVENTS FEBRUARY DIARY

Tues 3 'My Story': Kindertransportee
Bea Green speaks about her life At Wiener Library, 11.30 am-12.30 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247. Admission free but booking essential

Mon 16 Daniel Tilles: 'British Fascist Antisemitism and Jewish Responses, 1932-40' At Wiener Library, 6.30-8 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247. Admission free but booking essential

To Thur 19 'The World Knew: Jan Karski's Mission for Humanity' Exhibition presented by the London Jewish Cultural Centre and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London. In 1942 Polish diplomat Jan Karski was the first person to give an eye-witness account of the Holocaust to the Western Allies. At LJCC, tel 020 8457 5000. Admission free



Stella – The Memories Live On



Not long ago I had a phone call from Julian, Stella's younger son, in Melbourne. 'Sad news,' he said. 'Mum passed away this morning.' She had had three heart attacks recently and I should have been prepared but I broke down and asked him to send me an email. However, this isn't going to be a dirge but a celebration of Stella's life and our friendship.

I first met Stella Zimels, as she then was, in the summer of 1945 at a briefing by the American army at the US embassy. We had both been accepted as ACEs (Allied Civilian Employees) with the CCD (Civil Censorship Division) in Germany.

Both Stella's parents were immigrants to Vienna from what I knew as Lemberg, but was actually Lwów in Poland and is now Lviv in Ukraine. They were ambitious for their only child and Stella obliged by excelling at school. In June 1938 – three months after the *Anschluss* – not only was she allowed to sit the *Matura* (equivalent to A-levels in Britain) but she passed with distinction and the essay she wrote for the German exam was singled out for praise. She had planned to study medicine at the University of Vienna but instead escaped to England on a visa that committed her to train as a nurse. Her parents had visas for Shanghai but liked France, their first stop, so much that they made the fatal decision to stay there. In 1942 they were taken to Drancy, the infamous detention camp, and perished at Auschwitz.

Stella's first words to me were: 'You are slim. That's such an advantage with men.' Stella was – well – plump(ish) but she had lovely green eyes – bedroom eyes, as one admirer put it – which contrasted nicely with her dark hair. We were both 25 years old at the time.

Fortunately we were both assigned to Munich but I, as assistant to the personnel officer, was able to work at the headquarters at Pullach, where we were lodged, whereas Stella had to travel into the devastated city each day to censor letters. But we had all our meals together and when the army

organised a trip to Cannes at the end of the year I made sure that her name was second on the list (mine was first).

Stella was both clever and funny and no one could tell Jewish jokes as she could. She always managed to make me laugh. When she was fretting over some boyfriend or other I used to offer her a peanut chew, a delicacy that came with our PX ration. When she said 'And I don't want any peanut chew either!' it meant that she was truly inconsolable.

In the spring of 1946, in our American uniforms, we hitchhiked to Nuremberg to watch the trials and there they all were – Göring, Streicher *et al*, men in suits with their headphones on and taking notes. The most extraordinary thing about these monsters, who were responsible for the deaths of six million Jews, was their ordinariness.

On our way back, a handsome and friendly officer gave us a lift. In the course of our conversation he said 'If I can't abide two things, it's Red Cross girls and Jews' – in that order. Stella sat in the back of the jeep and may not have heard or paid attention and I, coward that I am, remained silent. Before he drove off, the officer insisted on buying us drinks at the canteen in Pullach.

In the autumn of 1947, when the CCD was dissolved, Stella went back to London and I went to Paris to work for the American 'Joint'. She tried to work for them too but failed the typing test. Had she passed, our lives would have taken a very different course.

She decided to re-emigrate to Sydney in 1948 and persuaded me to join her there in 1949. I was married in July 1950 and she was married six months later in Melbourne.

Although my husband and I settled in London early in 1952, Stella and I never lost touch and, as soon as her two sons were old enough to be left, she frequently came to London, either alone or with her husband Henry Mitchell (born Sigi Manne in Vienna, he had changed his name while serving in the British army). The couple, who had worked hard and done well,

even came to live in Richmond for a year. When she came on her own she always stayed with us and the three of us drove all over Europe in our car.

In 1993, three years after my husband's death, I went to Melbourne for the first time to stay with Stella. Sadly, by then Henry had had a stroke and was in a nursing home. We went to see him every day but took time off to have a holiday in Queensland. From then on, we spent time together practically every year, either in Europe or Australia, and I was a guest at the bar mitzvahs in Sydney of both her grandsons.

I saw her for the last time in February 2011 in Melbourne (when she became a member of the AJR) and we both knew we wouldn't meet again. However, we had regular long skyping sessions until she became too ill for them.

With Stella, my last link to my youth has gone but my memories of her live on.

Edith Argy

PillarCare

Quality support and care at home

- Hourly Care from 4 hours – 24 hours
- Live-In/Night Duty/Sleepover Care
- Convalescent and Personal Health Care
- Compassionate and Affordable Service
- Professional, Qualified, Kind Care Staff
- Registered with the CQC and UKHCA

Call us on Freephone 0800 028 4645

PILLARCARE
THE BUSINESS CENTRE · 36 GLOUCESTER AVENUE · LONDON NW1 7BB
PHONE: 020 7482 2188 · FAX: 020 7900 2308
www.pillarcare.co.uk

www.fishburnbooks.com

Jonathan Fishburn

buys and sells
Jewish and Hebrew books,
ephemera and items of
Jewish interest.

He is a member of the Antiquarian
Booksellers Association.

Contact Jonathan on
020 8455 9139
or 07813 803 889
for more information



GLASGOW CF Chanukah Meets New Year

Chanukah met New Year as we enjoyed a delicious early New Year afternoon tea party. We discussed playing with a dreidel and Chanukah stories from long ago. Cyril lit the chanukia, the candles casting a colourful glow over the tea table. A delightful way to end 2014 and look towards events in the New Year.

Anthea Berg

EALING A Most Enjoyable Afternoon

A lovely Chanukah Party, at which we were joined by many Wembley members. We enjoyed an excellent tea prepared by Esther and Kathryn and were richly entertained by Richard Stanton, who played recordings of songs and Jewish humour from the past. A most enjoyable afternoon.

Leslie Sommer

BOOK CLUB A Good Read

Meeting at Joseph's Bookstore in Temple Fortune, we discussed Natasha Solomons's *The Gallery of Vanishing Husbands*. It was generally decided that it was a good read, probably popular as a holiday book.

Irene Goodman

LEEDS HSFA Betty's-Style Chanukah Party

We had members from Sheffield, Doncaster, Bradford and, of course, Leeds, at our Chanukah Party. We enjoyed entertainment by violinist Elaine Green and keyboard accompanist Barney, all followed by the customary delicious afternoon tea 'Betty's Tea Rooms-style'.

Wendy Bott

ILFORD Miscellany of Songs

The Chapel End Savoy Players gave us a miscellany of songs from Gilbert and Sullivan plus songs from Vienna. It was a great pleasure to hear these lovely voices offset the dismal wintry weather. A very enjoyable morning.

Meta Roseneil

PINNER A Feast of Song for Chanukah

The welcome return of Gayathrie Patrick,

accompanied by her husband Patrick on the keyboard, was a most enjoyable way of celebrating Chanukah. The hall reverberated with works from popular music and opera as she effortlessly attended to her son, a lively toddler, beside her on this lovely occasion.

Walter Weg

ENJOYABLE OUTING TO JEWISH MUSEUM

Ten of us visited the Jewish Museum to see the exhibition 'Designing the 20th Century: Life and Work of Abram Games'. Following an informative talk by Elizabeth Selby, the curator, we viewed this highly colourful and innovative vision of his graphic skills. This was followed by a delicious lunch. Many thanks to Hazel and Esther for organising this most enjoyable outing.

Joan Kalb

WESSEX The Beauty and Importance of Chanukah

We enjoyed a lovely Chanukah Party at the synagogue. Rabbi Barry Sklan gave a moving talk on Chanukah, emphasising its beauty and importance.

Kathryn Prevezer

ESSEX (WESTCLIFF) A Sweet Treat for Chanukah

We strolled with Otto Deutsch through Vienna, Hungary and London with the beautiful sounds of Johann Strauss, James Last, Richard Tauber, Albert Sandler's Palm Court Orchestra, and the Vienna Boys' Choir. A sweet treat for Chanukah.

Esther Rinkoff

LIVERPOOL CF Chanukah Party

Chanukah doughnuts and a delicious lunch were followed by Yiddish songs with keyboard accompaniment by Shelli and Greg Abrams. A good time was had by all!

Wendy Bott

Café Imperial A Cosy Winter Chat

Felix Frankfurter now Franks, Rolf Steinberg now Ralph Stanton, and Esther Rinkoff née Lecash sat down to a cosy winter chat. Both men had managed to have their barmitzvahs before coming to England, Rolf in Hamburg, Felix in Berlin. On being demobbed, Felix bought a cello for £15 and Ralph went straight to work in the timber industry. A most enjoyable chat.

Esther Rinkoff

A TRULY WONDERFUL AFTERNOON: GROUPS' JOINT CHANUKAH PARTY

Some 80 of us gathered at Alyth Gardens Synagogue and had a truly wonderful afternoon. First, we listened spellbound to Richard Jones, who had worked for Harrods for 40 years and told us much about its history from its humble beginnings to the present day. Among his snippets of information was that Oscar Wilde was one of the first account-card holders. Then followed an excellent deli-lunch ably served by the AJR's hardworking volunteers. Finally, a veritable treat: Bronwen Stephens performed songs from opera and theatre. It was a real joy to listen to her. We can't thank Susan Harrod and her team of helpers enough – we do appreciate their efforts.

Hanne R. Freedman (North London)

BRIGHTON-SARID (SUSSEX)

Celebrating Chanukah

We celebrated Chanukah with delicious Crodough and a quiz about historic heritage in Brighton. Shirley Huberman, assisted by her daughter, showed a film of her late husband, Alfred, a survivor of five concentration camps and one of the Boys; he settled in Brighton and worked as a tailor for Hunningtons, the largest fashion retailer.

Ceska Abrahams

KENT Welcoming Chanukah

We all enjoyed a wonderful lunch plus a chance to chat and reminisce with friends at our celebration to welcome Chanukah. The highlights were delicious raspberry and chocolate Crodoughs from Rinkoff's Bakery courtesy of Esther and sharpening our wits with a new quiz!

Janet Weston

MANCHESTER Flawless Event

Some 35 members attended our Chanukah social, where we were well entertained by Shelley and Greg Abrams, a most talented pair of musicians. We had a programme of Yiddish, Hebrew and English songs with much audience participation. Sincere thanks to Wendy Bott, who organised a flawless event.

Werner Lachs

CAMBRIDGE Jewish and Other Pirates

Simon Layton from Cambridge University gave us a most informative

talk on pirates – not just in maritime matters but also in music, aircraft, etc. None of us had realised how wide a subject this could be. We learned of Jewish pirates and Nazi pirates who displayed the skull and crossbones along with the swastika

Hazel Beiny

CHESHIRE Refugees’ Effect on UK

The discussion on what effect refugees had on the UK was amazing even for those well into this subject. From sport to medicine, from chamber music to dentistry was just the start. A fabulous afternoon tea from our hosts, Benny and Judy Brettler, making supper unnecessary, concluded a lovely afternoon.

Peter Kurer

WEMBLEY ‘ABC of Ostrava’

David Lawson gave us a fascinating talk on ‘The ABC of Ostrava’, a town which had hardly any Jews living in it before 1750 but became a thriving community within 100 years.

Kathryn Prevezer

SWITCH ON ELECTRICS

Rewires and all household electrical work

PHONE PAUL: 020 8200 3518
Mobile: 0795 614 8566

AJR MEMBER GIVEN POINT OF LIGHT AWARD BY PRIME MINISTER

AJR London member Harry Heber (pictured), 83, has been honoured by Prime Minister David Cameron with a Point of Light award, which recognises individuals who are making a change in their community and inspiring others.


The former Kindertransport refugee, a retired optician, was determined to give something back to the organisation that saved him from the Nazis – World Jewish Relief (WJR), then known as the Central British Fund.

In 1997, on his retirement and on having discovered that thousands of people in Eastern Europe were unable to afford spectacles, Harry set up the volunteer WJR Optical Programme. Since then, he has dispatched 50,000 pairs of



prescription spectacles to WJR clients in more than 15 countries.

‘He has selflessly dedicated himself to supporting World Jewish Relief, the organisation that was there for him when he was a child in danger,’ Mr Cameron said.



WHY NOT CONVERT YOUR OLD CINE FILMS AND PUT THEM ON DVDS FREE OF CHARGE?

Contact Alf Buechler at alf@buechler.org or tel 020 8554 5635



JACKMAN SILVERMAN

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Telephone: 020 7209 5532
robert@jackmansilverman.co.uk

CONTACTS

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

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

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

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

Kathryn Prevezer
Southern Groups Co-ordinator
07966 969 951 kathryn@ajr.org.uk

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

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

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

FEBRUARY GROUP EVENTS

Sheffield	1 Feb	‘Someone you would like to thank’
Ealing	3 Feb	Esther Rinkoff: ‘Israel Revisited – The Red Coat’
Liverpool	3 Feb	Tribute to Frankie Vaughan
Ilford	4 Feb	Fred Rosner: ‘Favourite Opera Singers (with musical excerpts)’
Pinner	5 Feb	Stephen Myers: ‘Burma: The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful’
Manchester Main	8 Feb	Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines
Newcastle	8 Feb	Jane Haining: ‘The Scottish Schindler’
HGS	9 Feb	Mark King, Registered Guide: ‘Update on Kenwood’
Essex (Westcliff)	10 Feb	‘The History of Southend Jewish Community’
St John’s Wood	10 Feb	Paul Lang: ‘Concorde – Its History and Legacy’
Brighton	16 Feb	Godfrey Gould: ‘How the Railways Changed Our Lives’
Edgware	17 Feb	Dr Susan Cohen: ‘Medical Services in the First World War’
Kent	17 Feb	Film: <i>The Sturgeon Queens</i>
Book Club	18 Feb	Social
Edinburgh	18 Feb	‘Pictures from the Past’
Radlett	18 Feb	Tim Pike: ‘Bank of England Update’
Cambridge	19 Feb	Jane Merkin, Producer, <i>Suitcase 1938</i>
Glasgow	22 Feb	tbc
North West London	24 Feb	Judith Hassan: ‘Jewish Care’
Wembley	25 Feb	Anthony Joseph: ‘In Search of Jewish Ancestry’
North London	26 Feb	David Lawson: ‘ABC of Ostrava’
Welwyn GC	26 Feb	Michael Newman, CEO of AJR

Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies

Thursday 19 February 2015, 6 pm

Dame Stephanie Shirley

will give the 3rd Martin Miller and Hannah Norbert-Miller Memorial Lecture

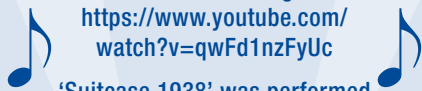
'My Family in Exile'

at the Court Room, Senate House, University of London, Malet St., WC1E 7HU

RSVP by 6 February to jane.lewin@sas.ac.uk tel 020 7862 8966

'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

CLASSIFIED

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.

**LEO BAECK HOUSING ASSOCIATION
CLARA NEHAB HOUSE
RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME**

Small caring residential home with large attractive gardens close to local shops and public transport
25 single rooms with full en suite facilities.
24 hour Permanent and Respite Care
Entertainment & Activities provided.
Ground Floor Lounge and Dining Room
• Lift access to all floors.

For further information please contact:
The Manager, Clara Nehab House,
13-19 Leaside Crescent, London NW11 0DA
Telephone: 020 8455 2286

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 Kosher 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.

**'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

Books Bought

MODERN AND OLD



Eric Levene

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

I also purchase ephemera

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
www.sixpointfoundation.org.uk

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

**Wednesday 11 February 2015
at 12.30 pm**

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

PAUL LANG

'Concorde: Its History, Development and Legacy'

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

**SPRING GROVE
London's Most Luxurious
RETIREMENT HOME**



214 Finchley Road
London NW3

- Entertainment
- Activities
- Stress Free Living
- 24 Hour Staffing Excellent Cuisine
- Full En-Suite Facilities

Call for more information or a personal tour

**020 8446 2117
or 020 7794 4455**

enquiries@springdene-care-homes.co.uk

OBITUARIES

Ernst Fraenkel, born Breslau 19 May 1923, died London 13 November 2014

Ernst Fraenkel OBE, who has died at the age of 91, attended Bury Grammar School from 1939 to 1941.

He was born in Breslau and grew up there and Berlin. He came to Britain aged 16 on one of the last Kindertransports from Germany. He was separated from his parents and four siblings. After a brief stay with one foster family, he lived with the Forrester family, whose sons attended the school. Ernst and Robert Forrester formed a life-long friendship. He felt a great debt of gratitude to the Forresters, who had taken him in as a lodger at very short notice, and Robert's daughters Kate and Emma attended Ernst's funeral.

Having left school, he found his way to London during the war, working as an agricultural labourer. Immediately the war in Europe ended, Ernst returned to Germany with the American army and the Civilian Censorship Department to find his mother, who had stayed there throughout the war but died shortly thereafter.

Ernst obtained a degree at the LSE, studying at night school with Harold Laski and Ralph Miliband. Eventually he went to work at Philipp Brothers, which became the premier global commodity trading firm of its day. He spent 35 years there, becoming managing director of Derby & Co, the UK subsidiary, head of its European operations,

and a member of its Executive Committee.

He was a pioneer in international trade with the Communist bloc. He first travelled to the Soviet Union in 1964 and built up a close relationship with generations of top Russian and East European trade officials. Under his guidance, Philipp Brothers, along with Chase Manhattan Bank, was one of a select group of American companies first allowed to open an office in Moscow.

In the mid-1970s he was one of the first Western businessmen to visit China after the Cultural Revolution.

Approaching retirement, he was introduced to the Wiener Library through a case of mistaken identity - confused with William Frankel, then editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*. The Library was threatened with closure due to financial difficulties. Ernst, with Louis Golden and Alan Montefiore, worked hard to put it on a sound financial footing. This was fortuitous for Ernst too as the Library allowed him to combine his interest in history, his experiences of Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and his commercial experience. He was the Library's Chairman from 1993 until 2003 and Co-President at the time of his death.

In 1990 he established the Fraenkel Prize in Contemporary History, awarded by the

Wiener Library annually for an outstanding work of twentieth-century history in one of the Library's fields of interest. He was firmly committed to building the Library's relationship with Germany.

His OBE was awarded for his services to the Wiener Library and he accepted it as recognition of the work of the Library rather than just his own efforts.

Ernst was a longstanding supporter of the University of Haifa, inspired by its commitment to the education of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, and of the Labour Friends of Israel.

He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University in recognition of his services to Holocaust education.

In later life, he was often called on by schools, synagogues and film-makers to provide first-hand recollections of Kristallnacht and growing up in Nazi Germany. He did this movingly but sparingly, unwilling to become a regular on the growing Holocaust education circuit.

Ernst is survived by his wife of 67 years, Thilde, whom he first met at Herrlingen School in the 1930s, and his two children and five grandchildren.

Richard Schmidt



Otto Gabriel Grünfeld, born Prague 12 June 1924, died Oswaldkirk 9 November 2014

Otto Gabriel Grünfeld, beloved husband, father and grandfather, died peacefully in his sleep on Remembrance Sunday – a poignant date as his world was torn apart by war, the rest of his life gradually healing the deep emotional scars it had left.

Before the war, Otto's family lived in Prague. His father managed several factories. The Holocaust stripped him of everything. Otto's parents were arrested in Prague. Otto and his brother Paul later learned of their deaths at Mauthausen concentration camp. They themselves were interned in Theresienstadt. Later they were transported to Auschwitz. On arrival, Paul was directed to one side and Otto, his devoted younger brother, followed him. Paul, with dark hair and glasses, was sent to the gas chambers. A guard screamed at Otto to go the other way, undoubtedly because of his blond hair and blue eyes. He later recalled being issued with a winter greatcoat, by a sheer stroke of luck due to a shortage of prison uniforms, which saved his life from the freezing cold.

Otto was sent to Kaufering concentration camp, where one day he was ordered to carry sacks of cement from the trains arriving

through the night to underground bunkers where aeroplanes were being built. Again by providence, his life was saved when the trains failed to arrive the following night due to an Allied bombing raid. Towards the end, the Nazis hurried to clear evidence of their horrors and Otto's work involved carrying the bodies of typhoid victims to be piled up in sheds.

After the war he moved to Great Britain and studied music at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Realising he lacked the nervous stamina to perform publicly after playing several concerts, he became an examiner and eventually taught music in schools.

He wrote an account of his war experiences as part of his extensive involvement in the field of counselling entitled *The Survivor's Path*. He spent much time reflecting on psychological issues and writing on subjects including identity, consciousness, uncertainty and existential issues.

A humble person, he only ever showed these works to his family.

Otto never blamed the Nazis for what they had deprived him of: family, friends, country, confidence, education, inheritance. He avoided any school of thought that held 'the truth'. He wrote that he was glad his life 'played out as a Jew' – his Jewishness was

rooted in his genes and upbringing and he had learned so much through it – but even from a young age he felt incomprehension towards Judaism as a religion.

Otto never became embittered. He remained kind and caring to others. He was a survivor – and always clear about that, possibly due to a sense of injustice about his own survival after the loss of his brother at Auschwitz. Perhaps in his parting he finally found a lifelong awaited reunion and left us with the mysterious touch of a man who spread light even though he carried so much pain.

An extract from *Surviving Survival*, an essay written shortly before he died, in many ways concludes the lifelong search for meaning of a Holocaust survivor: 'It is my experience that unconditional and spontaneous loving, caring and compassion, simple and ego-free, unhampered by familial, tribal, national or credal ties, regardless of friend or foe, are the ingredients which, duty-free, become the guides leading us out of darkness into light. Such loving, I believe, is the stuff of life itself: not an extra, a luxury for self-indulgence, but the one vital link to our future.'

Otto is survived by Rosemary, his wife of 56 years, his five children and four grandchildren.

The family of Otto Gabriel Grünfeld





LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Elections again!

And so once again, only two years after the previous election, Israel's long-suffering population has been thrown into the maelstrom of another election campaign – though perhaps maelstrom is too strong a term to describe the boredom and drudgery of being exposed to another round of groupings and regroupings among the various parties and personages concerned.

The constant rearrangement of alliances and allegiances within and between Israel's political parties – with new ones emerging, old ones disappearing and existing ones undergoing a sea-change, so that individuals formerly associated with one of the opposing parties are accepted into a new fold with open arms – is disturbing if not downright confusing.

It reminds me of nothing so much as the way in which amoeba once emerged from the primeval slime, grew excrescences and limbs, incorporated foreign bodies, and eventually became more complex life forms.

Israel is still under the influence of the

longest-running show in town, the trial for corruption of the former prime minister, Ehud Olmert, and his right-hand woman, Shula Zaken. The latter is currently serving a much-abbreviated prison sentence in return for her help in incriminating her former employer. Olmert has so far managed to use the judicial system to the best advantage and has not yet spent a single day in jail. Nothing of all of this inspires confidence in either the justice system or the people who seem to rise to the top, like scum on the surface of standing water.

This unfolding story, together with the relentless mud-slinging and mutual recriminations that are at present prevailing among the former ministers of Bibi Netanyahu's cabinet – with Bibi leading the pack, baying for blood, no matter whose – is not designed to foster the confidence of the general populace in its politicians either. Not only are allegiances easily switched in order to attain positions that appear beneficial, but party ideologies are adapted to changing circumstances, and those who seek to appear as leaders are shown to have feet of clay, and

possibly even more than feet.

Proportional representation, the electoral system that was adopted when the State of Israel was founded, largely because it was already there, suited those who were then in power and little effort was required to amend it, has caused Israel to be plagued by splinter groups, mini-parties and endemic instability. Government by coalition has never been the most stable of systems and provides fertile ground for the blackmail and/or bribery of coalition partners in order to remain in power. Recently the threshold for entry into the Knesset has been raised, and it remains to be seen whether this will have the hoped-for benefits.

The 'first-past-the-post' system that is used in the UK has its disadvantages, but tends in the end to create a more stable government and one that is less vulnerable to threats from within. It also means that minority groups and interests tend to be less well represented – though bearing in mind what this has achieved in Israel that might not be such a bad thing.

I personally am pessimistic, despite the predictions of the pollsters, and believe that the political picture will remain pretty much as before, albeit with a further shift to the right. I think it was Churchill who said that democracy is a terrible system but the alternatives are even worse. It's a depressing thought.

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

INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Sir – A huge thank you to the AJR and Jonathan Rose, who supervises the wonderful volunteer programme that helps struggling members come to grips with email, Skype, the internet and other IT and electronic mysteries.

I am one of the beneficiaries of this effort. Jonathan introduced volunteer Jeannie Levy to me. Once a week this wonderful, clever and infinitely patient woman spends an hour with me at my home and explains how to get the most from my computer and cellphone, helping me to function in the 21st century.

Eve R. Kugler, London N3

FORTHCOMING BOOK ON 'BETRAYAL'

Sir – I am now completing my book on betrayal for publication in the autumn.

I am trying to find out about a Jewish couple who ran a dress shop in Berlin apparently patronised by Mrs Göring. The couple were Mr and Mrs Amerikana

and they fled Berlin in 1938 with their two-year-old daughter Franceska. They arrived in the UK. Does anyone know anything about the shop or the family? Please contact me ASAP. All help will be acknowledged in the book.

*Agnes Grunwald-Spier
agnesgrunwaldspier@gmail.com
tel 07816 196517*

BEN URI CENTENARY

Sir – The year 2015 marks the centenary of the Ben Uri Gallery and Museum.

As we will be celebrating this milestone with a major exhibition at Somerset House in July-December 2015 with accompanying publications, we are keen to hear from readers who may have had contact with the Art Society over the years.

We would be delighted to hear which activities they were involved in, and to see any photographs from Ben Uri exhibitions, events, parties and balls, as well as which pictures might have been bought at the

famous Picture Fairs.

We welcome all information as we know Ben Uri was a significant part of the émigré cultural world in postwar London.

Please call Laura Jones on 020 7604 3991 or email racheld@benuri.org.uk if you have any information to share.

Rachel Dickson, Head of Curatorial Services, Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London NW8

A VALUABLE RESOURCE

Sir – There is a letter in your December issue with a German quotation. It is suggested with some trepidation that the quotation might be by William Busch. It's actually by Erich Kästner.

I know this not because of some superior knowledge of German literature but because I typed a short part of the quotation into Google. Many of your readers might want to know about this valuable resource on their own doorstep.

Frank Beck, London NW3

Published by The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), a company limited by guarantee.

Registered office: Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Registered in England and Wales with charity number: 1149882 and company number: 8220991

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

For the latest AJR news, including details of forthcoming events and information about our services, visit www.ajr.org.uk

Printed by FBprinters LLP, 26 St Albans Lane, London NW11 7QB Tel: 020 8458 3220 Email: info@fbprinters.com