



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

She made us think

Mira Hamermesh was one of the most gifted documentary makers of her generation. Born in Poland, she was behind some of our most thought-provoking TV programmes. She would have been 100 this month.



Mira Hamermesh by one of the cattle trucks used for human transport – a still from *Loving the Dead*

In 1959 her memories of the war caught up with Mira Hamermesh. She had gone to the Academy Cinema in London to see Andrzej Wajda's film *A Generation* (1955), one of the first great films of the Polish New Wave, set in Warsaw during the German occupation.

It brought back terrible memories of the German occupation of Mira's home town in 1939. 'Throughout the film,' she wrote later, 'I had to push my fist into my mouth to muffle the sobs, overcome with a belated sense of loss. I had to suppress an urge to howl like an injured animal.' The film, she said, 'had torn open old wounds.' 'It exploded my defence system, a makeshift survival kit devised to release me from my accountability to the dead.' A year later she returned to Poland to study film.

She went on to become one of Britain's

leading television documentary makers between the 1970s and 1990s. A passionate feminist, her main subjects were women, especially women living under extreme circumstances: the Indian caste system, apartheid South Africa and the Middle East. *Maids and Madams* (1986) about the relationship between black household workers and their white employers in South Africa, was awarded the Prix Italia. However, perhaps her masterpiece, hailed by Steven Spielberg, was *Loving the Dead* (1991), a documentary about her return to Poland to find her mother's grave and explore how after the fall of Communism Poles co-exist with the ghosts of their missing Jewish neighbours.

Mira Hamermesh was born Mirjam Hamermesz in Łódź in central Poland on 15 July 1923, one hundred years ago.

Continued on page 2

CAN WE PROVOKE YOU?

This month's issue is packed with news about forthcoming outings and events as well as some very interesting articles.

The reflections on Stolpersteine (p11-12) and the campaign to stop celebrating Nazis (p14-15) are particularly thought-provoking and would perhaps have provided worthy documentary topics for Mira Hamermesh, who is profiled in our lead article.

Just as we went to press we learned of the sad passing of one of AJR's highest profile members, Sir Ben Helfgott. His obituary will appear in our August issue.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and would, as always, warmly welcome any feedback.

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Please note that the views expressed throughout this publication are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

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She made us think (cont.)

Before the war, the Jewish population of Łódź numbered almost a quarter of a million, nearly half the city's population. She was the youngest of three children, born to a middle-class Jewish family. Her father, Josef Meir Hamermesz, ran a rubber factory. Mira described him as 'a truly thoroughly secularised Jew.' She grew up in a comfortable flat in a fashionable part of Łódź. In her memoir she wrote, 'We enjoyed the trappings of good living: a servant, a telephone, a radio and trips abroad.'

In 1938 her older sister, Genia, emigrated to Palestine. On 5 September 1939 the Germans invaded Łódź and in November Mira and her brother, Mietek, both still teenagers, set off to join their sister. Their parents stayed behind. Their mother, Faiga, died of starvation in the Łódź Ghetto in 1942; their father was killed in Auschwitz. A doctor who worked in the ghetto hospital later told Mira, 'She [Faiga] was very sick when she was taken in. Swollen from hunger, and jaundiced, and we doctors had no proper medicines. Your father would bring her his own bread and soup which, believe me, were starvation rations ... potato peel was a medicine obtained on prescription ...'

Hamermesz describes her extraordinary journey from Poland to Palestine in her deeply moving memoir, *The River of Angry Dogs* (1994). She and Mietek escaped into Soviet-occupied Poland, to Cracow then Lwow, where they were separated when he went off to become a coal miner in the Donbass in the Soviet Union, escaped, was caught by the NKVD, sentenced to fifteen years in the Gulag for espionage but was released after the German invasion to fight with General Anders's Polish Army in the Middle East.

Mira made it to Palestine on her own, from Lwow to Vilnius, where she received a postcard from her parents, 'an officially printed postcard, bearing the swastika seal over the Łódź ghetto stamp. The restricted space and German censorship reduced the communication to a short, cryptic style.' 'In the ghetto life,' they wrote, 'our only comfort is the fact that none of our children are here with us.' Mira managed to leave Vilnius in February 1941 just a few months before the German invasion. She reached Palestine via Moscow, Odessa, Istanbul, Damascus and Beirut. She was reunited with her sister in Palestine in 1941 and with her brother in 1943.



Mira Hamermesz (centre) with her family

In 1942 Hamermesz started studying art at Bezalel Art School in Jerusalem and had her first solo exhibition of her paintings in Jerusalem in 1943. She was awarded a British Council Scholarship to study at the Slade School of Fine Art and came to London in 1947 and held her first solo exhibition of paintings and watercolours at Brook Street Gallery in Mayfair in 1960.

In 1960 Hamermesz made two life-changing decisions. First, she moved from painting to film. Second, she returned to Poland to study film at the famous Polish National Film School in Łódź, whose graduates included Andrzej Wajda and Roman Polanski, Poland's most famous film directors. Here she directed a number of short films, including *Black Pompeii* (1962), a requiem for the Jewish cemetery in Łódź, known before the war as one of the most beautiful cemeteries in Europe. The film shows four mourners with a coffin who move through the desolate landscape like restless sleepers unable to wake up from a nightmare.

Her diploma film was a twenty-minute black-and-white masterpiece, *Lekcja II* (*Lesson II*), about a group of Soviet prisoners of war who are brought to a Ukrainian village and are questioned by their German guards. They are told there will be a literacy test. Those who pass will be given clerical work. The illiterates will be given labour. But there is a second lesson to be learnt. It is one of the most powerful films made about the savagery of the Eastern Front and won widespread acclaim at international film festivals.

She returned to Britain and directed her first British documentary, *End of Term* (ITV, 1963), about an English prep school. In 1968 she went to Israel to make documentaries for Israeli television, including *The Fighters of the Ghetto* (1968) and *One Year After* (1968), about the period after the Six Day War and its Israeli military casualties.

She returned again to Britain in 1969 and her best-known work dates from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, a series of television documentaries for Thames, the BBC and especially Channel 4, where her work was championed by its founding chief executive, Jeremy Isaacs. Her television documentaries include *Two Women* (Thames, 1976), contrasting the very different lives of Mary, an English factory worker, and Suzsa, a Hungarian graduate engineer; *Maids and Madams* (Channel 4, 1986), examined apartheid through the emotional relationship between white-aproned black maids and their white employers; *Talking to the Enemy* (Channel 4, 1987), examined the conflict in the Middle East through an encounter between a young Palestinian journalist and an older Israeli; *Caste at Birth* (Channel 4, 1990), about the Indian caste system; and *Loving the Dead* (BBC 2, 1991), which explored how present day Poles manage to co-exist with the ghosts of their missing Jewish neighbours.

In March 2005 the Israel Cinematheque held a retrospective of her films, in 2011 the Polish Arts Festival screened three of her best-known films and in 2014 the BFI showed a season of her films. She died in 2012, one of the great Jewish refugee filmmakers of her generation.

David Herman



GENERATION2GENERATION
Enabling the continuation of Holocaust testimony

FREE ONLINE EVENT

A HUNGARIAN STORY

WEDNESDAY 19 JULY @ 7.30PM

On behalf of Generation2Generation, AJR member Ella Garai-Ebner will describe how her Hungarian born Jewish grandfather, Dr George Garai survived after the German occupation of Hungary in 1944.

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/g2g-presents-the-story-of-dr-george-garai-tickets-594804665767



Berlin Kindertransport statue

FANCY A TRIP TO BERLIN?

The AJR is hoping to organise a trip to Berlin from Monday 27 November to Thursday 30 November 2023, to commemorate the 85th Anniversary of the first Kindertransport train leaving for the UK.

The itinerary is still under development but is likely to include a reception at the British Embassy, a visit to the Bundestag as guests of the President, and a ceremony at

the Kindertransport statue in Berlin. We then hope to physically recreate the train journey from Berlin to The Netherlands and onto London.

Please note that this trip is **only open to those who came to the UK via Kindertransport and their descendants.** Numbers will be limited and all guests will be responsible for their own flights to Berlin plus sundry costs during the trip.

To register your interest please email susan@ajr.org.uk by 1 August.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Each June the AJR arranges something special to acknowledge the remarkable work of our volunteers.

We know that people don't volunteer to earn thanks, but we like to celebrate what their work means to our members.

This year we held two events. In London we were entertained at South Hampstead Synagogue by young jazz guitarist Miles Mendlin, who is himself 3rd generation. One volunteer, Gary Fisher, brought along his incredible Haggadah, fresh from being restored in BBC's Repair Shop. Gary's grandparents kept it throughout their incarceration in Theresienstadt; the story of its miraculous survival was very moving.

In Manchester we had tea at the beautiful House of Books and Friends. Volunteer Francine White entertained us with her tales of being an international entertainment journalist, interviewing the likes of Dame Joan Collins, Robert De Niro and Donny Osmond. Our Yorkshire social worker, Chris Tweddell, then described the wrap-around service AJR provides clients through our combination of social work and volunteer services.

We also awarded the first Carol Hart



Gary Fisher shows guests his family Haggadah at the London volunteers event

MBE Award for Volunteering, to Steve Newton, who has been helping AJR members to use their laptops and computers for over five years.

We are always looking for new volunteers and offer training and lots of support – please contact fran@ajr.org.uk if you'd like to get involved.



Manchester volunteers event

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

We are so thrilled that Suzanne Rappaport-Ripton, Rolf Penzias, Ike Alterman, Martin Kapel and Jacques Weisser have all been recognised in The King's Birthday Honours.

These remarkable stalwarts of our community and fellow members of the AJR have been recognised for their dedication and contributions to Holocaust education and remembrance.

Ike has been a dedicated member of the 45 Aid Society, speaking regularly about his experiences in the camps. Jacques is one of the organisers of the national Yom HaShoah commemoration at The Dell in Hyde Park. Rolf is a long-standing member of the AJR Kindertransport committee, while Suzanne and Martin both gave their testimony for our My Story book archive.

They all give of themselves so that communities throughout the country have the opportunity to hear from an eye-witness to the crimes of the Nazis. We wish them and their families mazel tov.

A TALE FROM THE DALES

Earlier this year, as part of the AJR's 80 Trees for 80 Years project, Dr Clare Weissenberg planted an oak tree in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales to honour the local vicar who helped her father. Clare takes up the story.

Letter written by Margaret (Meg) Steele to the Yorkshire Post, urging the need to help Jewish refugees



My father, Werner Weissenberg, was born in Pleß in 1911 – the only child of Else and Leopold Weissenberg. He read physics and mathematics at Breslau, but was forced to leave university one term before completing his doctorate. By 1937 he was teaching at Philanthropin school in Frankfurt am Main.

In November 1938 Werner was imprisoned in Dachau. He was released four months later on condition that he left Germany immediately. The Kitchener refugee camp in Sandwich, Kent, saved Werner from the Holocaust that was to end the lives of almost all his family.

In autumn 1939 Werner enlisted in the Pioneer Corps. His company was sent to France in January 1940. During the main 'Dunkirk' retreat, the company held the line while thousands returned to safety. They destroyed vehicles and ordnance before

sailing back on three unescorted fishing trawlers on 16 June.

69 Company was next moved around the country laying mines, digging ditches and erecting miles of barbed-wire fencing. By autumn they were clearing bomb sites in Bexley, recovering victims, and bringing out the dead. Five of the company were killed and 19 injured.

In 1941 they moved to the picturesque West Riding town of Sedbergh, to construct a large petrol and oil depot.

As a child I often heard talk of 'Uncle John' Steele who, with his wife Margaret, had befriended my father, taking him into the heart of their home. Reverend Steele was vicar of St Mary and St John's Church, Hardraw – a tiny village just the other side of the hills. Some of the soldiers stayed in Hardraw, including my father.

John and Meg (as she signed her letters) provided love and support for my father for many years. John was an Oxford graduate, and he and Werner enjoyed a friendly rivalry over chess, and *The Times* and *Guardian* crosswords. For a post-war work reference, John began, "I have known Mr Werner Weissenberg ... from the time when his military unit was billeted here. He has frequently stayed with us in this vicarage, so I know him very well indeed."

John wrote repeatedly to the War Office to have Werner transferred from the AMPC: he was close to breakdown. Correspondence with his family had stopped – the last

letter, from a family friend, informed him that his father had collapsed and died following imprisonment in 1941. His mother and grandmother were deported to a death camp in 1942.

John's efforts to have Werner transferred to work "more suited to his intelligence and temperament" were successful. From autumn 1942, Werner studied at the University of London, retraining as a radiographer. I have his hand-written exercise books, with sketches of bones and organs, and his Nurse's Dictionary. Soon he was working at St Hugh's Military Hospital, Oxford.

Werner was sent to Normandy in 1944. The unarmed medical personnel relied on Red Cross armbands to keep them safe. Meg wrote, "I never thought they would send you again, especially without British nationality. ... Isn't it queer how we met in Hardraw of all places, and we could so easily not."

After the war, Werner wanted to return to research, but it was not to be. Meg wrote to eminent scientists for help, but sadly, without success. Werner reverted to teaching, until his health deteriorated in the 1960s.

In the meantime, on every reference, and on Werner's application for citizenship, John Steele's name appears alongside supportive words of friendship and kinship.

Werner met Sybil Barnes in 1959 while he was head of mathematics at Elland Grammar School. They married in 1960, when Werner was almost 50 years old. Meg had died in 1955, but John travelled from Carlisle to be with Sybil and Werner on this day, which marked a new chapter in Werner's life – and a new family.



Army book; pers. archive Werner Weissenberg



Hardraw vicarage



Our AJR oak tree was planted in Spring 2023 in the field behind the vicarage at Hardraw, near Hawes, with our gratitude for all the Steele family did for my father, and for many other Jewish refugees.

SPOTLIGHTING ERICA BRAUSEN

The Ben Uri Research Unit is recording the émigré contribution to British visual arts and culture since 1900. It has already published some 500 profiles, with a further 800 under research. Here we share their profile of the influential art dealer and gallerist Erica Brausen, whose protégées included Francis Bacon.

Erica Brausen was born into a middle-class family in Düsseldorf, Germany in 1908. After completing her education in Germany, she left her homeland in the early 1930s, fleeing the rise of Nazism, and moved to the Montparnasse area of Paris. Here, she became friends with many celebrated international artists living locally, including Joan Miró and Alberto Giacometti. Through her friendship with Miró, she relocated to Majorca in 1935 where she opened a bar, popular with artists, writers and visiting sailors, through which she assisted Jews and socialist friends in escaping the naval blockade established by the Franco regime during the Spanish Civil War. The French surrealist writer, Michel Leiris, credited her for saving both his and his wife's lives after Brausen successfully convinced an American submarine captain to take the couple to safety in Marseilles.

As the Second World War broke out, Brausen escaped Spain to England on a fishing boat and was reunited in London with a network of international friends from France and Majorca. Settling in the capital, she began organising small art exhibitions, often in artists' studios. She married a gay artist friend in order to work legally, to disguise her lesbian relationship with Catherina 'Toto' Koopman, which began in 1945, and to protect her gallery interests, working first at the Storrans Gallery next to the Royal Academy, followed by the St George's Gallery in Mayfair, and then at the Redfern Gallery on Cork Street, where she presented work by young contemporaries, Graham Sutherland and Francis Bacon, among others.



Erica Brausen in her gallery

In 1948, with funding from Peter and Elsa Barker-Mill, Brausen and American-born banker Arthur Jeffress founded the Hanover Gallery in St George's Street, off Hanover Square, which opened with a solo exhibition of the work of Graham Sutherland. Bacon remembered it as 'an excellent exhibition space with large rooms of good proportions and proper day lighting for the pictures' (*The Independent* obituary). Brausen was key to Bacon's early success, hosting his first solo show in 1949, and they remained close until the artist moved to the Marlborough Gallery in 1958 (also founded by émigrés). Her 'imperious taste' defined the Hanover Gallery's programme which, aside from Francis Bacon, also featured exhibitions of work by major contemporary artists with whom she built relationships, including Marcel Duchamp, René Magritte, Henry Moore, Henri Matisse, Max Ernst, Lucian Freud and William Scott. Brausen also became Alberto Giacometti's principal dealer in London, selling more than 70 of his works.

In 1949 the British Government lifted an earlier ban on the importation of works of art for sale, which the Hanover Gallery swiftly took advantage of, dealing in works by a wide range of European and American artists. The close relationships which Brausen formed with individual artists were instrumental in the business's success. For example, during the Hanover Gallery's annual sculpture exhibitions she allowed Moore to arrange his own exhibitions in the gallery; in return, she was able to buy works directly from him. In 1962 Brausen entered

into a fruitful partnership with fellow London art dealers, Gimpel Fils, opening the Gimpel und Hanover Galerie in Zurich. The Hanover Gallery closed in 1973 after suffering repercussions from the 1971 stock market crash. However, Brausen remained involved with the Gimpel und Hanover Galerie, which continued to trade until 1984. In the 26 years of the Hanover Gallery's existence, it was firmly established as one of the most important galleries in the art world at the time, showcasing the most diverse and interesting contemporary art and establishing an international reputation.

In 1991 Brausen's long term partner, Catherina 'Toto' Koopman, a former model with whom she had been living for more than 40 years, passed away. Heartbroken, Erica Brausen died in London a few months later in 1992, after having donated several important works from her collection to the Tate, as well as the records of the Hanover Gallery to the Tate Archive. Her impact and legacy were foregrounded in the exhibition *Brave New Visions: the Émigrés who transformed the British Art World* at Sothebys in 2019, co-curated by Cherith Summers and Sue Grayson-Ford, as part of the yearlong *Insiders/Outsiders* festival examining the impact of the 'Hitler émigré' generation.

To see profiles of other émigré artists – and maybe even add your own insights – please log on to www.buru.org.uk and click on who you know or know of.

Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication and respectfully points out that the views expressed in the letters published are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

YOUNG KISSINGER

The article on Henry Kissinger in your May issue interested me very much especially since I too come from Fuerth in Bavaria. My sister remembered having seen him and his brother around sometimes.

My mother remembered that his father at a young age taught religion at her school. At a much later date he taught maths in my sister's school. She thought he was the best maths teacher she had ever had. He started by telling her to write her numbers more legibly before anything else, an advice that stood her in good stead throughout her school years.

No wonder that reading about that family has always been of interest to me.
Margaret Stern, London NW3

NOT ONLY THE KINDER

I have always felt that the Kinder have been given more attention over the years than those a bit older, such as my mother Steffi Fabian who did the journey to Harwich also mid-1938 but alone aged 19.

I gather that there is talk of moving the excellent Kinder statue.

I did ask a while back for a statue honouring 'The Elders'. That has not happened. There is a financial crisis everywhere so I accept it will not happen. But how about an additional statue showing a group of Kinder Achievers? They contributed much to the NHS and other institutions and became pensioners, having contributed much to society. Now – and not waiting until 2038?

Eric Elias, Israel

REFUGEE AUTHORS

Thank you for celebrating the centenary of Judith Kerr (June). Her writing and her rare appearances on TV brought such joy and fun from her refugee experiences in those dark times. Thank you also for introducing us to other Jewish refugees who wrote for children.

John Farago, Deal, Kent

CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS

Earlier this year I urged my fellow members to write more often to your *Letters to The Editor*, particularly if their letters are on controversial subjects. The letter by Dr David Goldmeier in your May issue surpassed my wildest expectations. He wrote to say that he does not feel that Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's *Letter from Israel* is balanced enough politically and thereupon sent you a letter that, I assume, he felt was properly balanced. Let me question him on this. He says that many believe that the judiciary in Israel is too left wing. By "many" does he mean the far-right wing members of Netanyahu's current government? Personally, and from talking to many Israelis, I have never heard this accusation made before. Worse still, he believes that studying the Torah, as practised by the ultra-orthodox, benefits Israel in a similar way to the contribution made by secular Jews in helping drive the economy and doing their military service. Surely this is fatuous? Israel has many enemies that seek its destruction. In what way is "studying the Torah" going to prevent this? Israel needs a strong economy and a strong army. To have knowledge of the Torah is a fine ambition for us elderly folk but, for the young, military service must be compulsory, with no exceptions.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

THANK YOU, AJR

Note from Editor: We are always grateful for feedback on AJR's events and activities as well as on the content of this Journal. Thank you to everyone who takes trouble to write.

I should like to let you know how very much my husband and I appreciate the kind and very welcome help which we are getting from the AJR, with cash from the Home Care Scheme and from the Claims Conference. We would never have had anything without your assistance, and in particular living at home with both of us being over 90 years old, is highly unlikely. We would like you to accept a very small cheque as a mere token of our realising that your help and that of your caring helpers is not something to take without a really heartfelt thank you.

Mr. & Mrs. N, London

It was my lucky day when I was offered a lift from Surrey to Oxford on the day the AJR Oxford Group were due to meet.

We found the pub and the part of it where AJR members were already deep in lively conversation. Karen made us, the outsiders, so very welcome. Well, this was only the start. Friends made, backgrounds exchanged, it was time to move on and what was to follow was truly amazing.

In true AJR friendly style at the end of the walk from the pub to the Department of Biochemistry, to view the Blue Plaque erected by the AJR in honour of Professor Sir Hans Krebs, Nobel Prize Winner, there was a treat in store. Who stood by the blue plaque to Sir Hans Krebs

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LOOKING FOR?

but his son, who spoke with warmth, amusingly, informally and informatively on his father's background, his hard work and persistence which finally led to the recognition of his work. This, for me, was a most memorable event and one I feel very privileged to have attended.

However, this was not the end of the day for the Oxford AJR experience. There was still more to come, for it was on to Harris Manchester College to see the AJR tree which was planted there to mark AJR's eightieth year. The tree looked very happy and shapely. Following this I was invited to join the AJR Oxford Group to go into the college, to the Arlosh Hall, where an amazing tea and a display of documents and priceless books was laid out: a tea I can only imagine to be comparable to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party Style and with cheesecake too – and not a mug in site.

Whilst in Oxford I met up with and was looked after and entertained by family who also happen to be AJR members. A big thank you to them and to AJR Oxford for letting an Oxford outsider join your memorable day.

June Wertheim, Surrey

I would like to thank the AJR for the mobility and dance classes that run online at the start of each week. We do the exercise class with Shelley on a Tuesday, and the dance class with Jackie on Wednesdays. They offer their classes with warmth and a friendly smile, which helps greatly, and the careful movements have helped me get back on my feet after a long period of illness.

I would encourage others to try these out with an open mind. We walk in the Cotswolds every day and, when well enough, run 5k a couple of times a week. But we find these classes fun, relaxing, and beneficial in keeping mobility in all the joints – not just those used for other sports.

Join us!
Dr Clare Weissenberg, Oxfordshire

CAMP SURVIVOR

Liz Eastlake, Curator of Science Collections at University College London, is hoping to trace relatives or friends of a Hungarian woman who arrived at Auschwitz main camp on 20 September 1944, one of 22 Hungarian Jewish women transferred from Birkenau to Women's Camp B-Ia. In Auschwitz she was tattooed with the number A-25374 and was subsequently liberated from Belsen. Some time later her tattoo was surgically removed at either University College Hospital or Middlesex Hospital.

l.eastlake@ucl.ac.uk

HENRY ROBERTS/HANS ROBITSCHKE

Rev. Brian Tebbutt has documents relating to Mr. Roberts/Robitschek, born 16 January 1924, Vienna. The papers were discovered in the attic at 48 Palmerston Crescent, London, N18 and consist of documents regarding Kindertransport arrival, military service in Malaya and personal correspondence.

btebbutt@btinternet.com

KITCHENER DESCENDANTS

Stephen Nelken is collating a booklet about all the individuals who stayed at the Kitchener Camp in Kent. He hopes their descendants can provide a brief history of the individual (with a photo if possible) regarding their life, where they lived before the Nazis came to power, how they came to the Kitchener Camp, what they did there and their life after leaving the Camp.

sn.kitchenercamp@gmail.com

OTTO BLEIER

Evelyn Frankford is writing a book about her family's escape from Nazi Vienna and is hoping to find information about a cousin, Otta Bleier, who was crippled by polio. She knows he was cared for in Nottingham during WW2 but has no idea what happened to him afterwards.

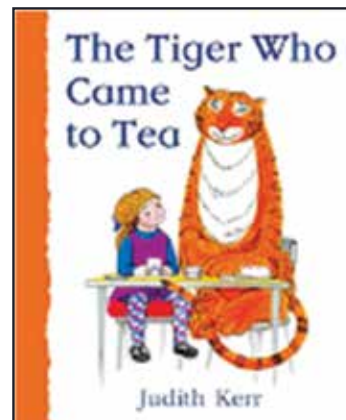
evelyn.frankford@gmail.com



In recognition of what would have been Judith Kerr's 100th Birthday, the AJR is pleased to invite you, together with your grandchildren or great-grandchildren, to a special showing of

THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA

MONDAY 7 AUGUST AT 2PM
RADLETT CENTRE, WD7 8HL



£10.00 per ticket, followed by a celebratory tea at an additional cost of £6pp.



susan@ajr.org.uk



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ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

In his novel, *Howard's End*, EM Forster used a famous expression: "Only connect – the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted". This is the theme of the Royal Academy's 255th Summer Exhibition.

There is some thematic connectivity with food, flowers, crockery, all linked in the same gallery. There's humour and wit, two paintings of toilets, a sculpture of two hands bearing palmistry revelations. John Humphreys' fibreglass caricature sculpture, *Donald Trump* with his art deco blond hair is captivating, and *Anarchy in the UK*, a pin cushion foam sculpture of the late Queen by David Mach, RA, with the anarchy symbol on top of her crown. It's radical; it's funny and yet subtle. You can hear the mood music.

But channelling EM Forster's mantra proved more difficult. Not for the first time I asked myself what is the point of the Summer Exhibition? What is the point of being bludgeoned with endless works of art occupying every wall space, the majority of which is average to mundane. As in every year, however well-intentioned, the art when flung at you from every angle, is rarely inspirational.

But the difference this year is that the show is more measured, less shouty or spectacular or plain silly, and makes quietly valid points about society. The most important point is



David Mach's pin cushion sculpture of HM Queen Elizabeth II

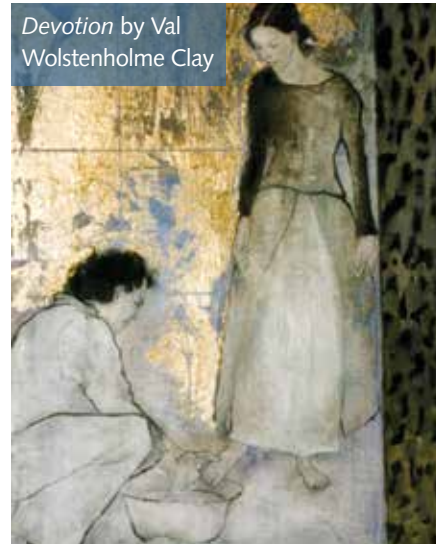
its egalitarian focus, opening up art space to everyone who feels that creative nudge. It is also claimed to provide a vital platform and support for artists at all stages of their career.

So we see comment on refugees and racism and on Covid and lockdown. In *Cloth House Bradford* by Martin Hearne a fully clad Muslim woman in hijab walking past a dress shop named *Exiles* – a word-play on *textiles*. *Somewhere in Valencia* by Jock McFadyen, RA is a rectangular composition of the town glimpsed through an arch defaced with graffiti. Distant palm trees sway nonchalantly against a blue sky whose purity can't hide a sense of decay and neglect.

Reflecting the theme of a changing political landscape, Sue Munson's *Victor*, an intricate map of Africa in acrylic, ink and gold leaf has a post-colonial message. *Ship* by Chris Orr, RA, comments on both the connectedness and separateness of lives in a cruise liner peopled with miniscule, doll like humans in a multitude of different acts. There is humour and social awareness in David Stewart's chromogenic print, *Sisters in Scarves Eating Pimlico Chips*. It is up to us to interpret their shock at being caught out eating chips! Or is there a hidden message? We can only smile at their discomfiture.

Gemma Gowland's white sculpture, *Facebook Turns 18; Coming of Age in the Digital World* shows zombie-like wired up, impassive children. It is a grim message to a generation whose identity faces wipe-out, with more than a hint of the danger of AI. There is much beauty in Andrea Mindell Cohen's *La Reina*, an acrylic collage featuring a solemn face surrounded by leaves and splashes of red. You could interpret it as threatened nature, the lushness of the leaves and the spilling of blood. Or better still, just admire its composition. On the subject of threatened species, I was moved by the delightful *Pangolin Grotesque for New College Oxford*, a sandstone sculpture by the architect David Kohn, with the cute pangolin's nose on a desk, looking utterly forlorn.

When it comes to love, there is nothing more poignant and understated than Ian Ritchie's etching, *Mother*. It is just a thin



meandering line with a tenderly drawn face at the apex – you could almost pass it by without noticing it, but I was struck by its eloquence. Love is clearly present in the vivid standout painting, *Katy (January)* by Chantal Joffe, RA. Her luminous face, lightly outlined, with an enlarged left eye and one prominent ear with a hoop earring, is striking above her blue fur coat; the texture is tangible. But my overall favourite is Val Wolstenholme Clay's *Devotion*. A young woman stands impassively while a friend/lover painstakingly washes her foot in a tub. Both faces are inscrutable yet seem at total peace with each other. Their stilted pose and perhaps the gold leaf background suggests a nod to Klimt.

There is an almost pious moment in the way the late Paula Rego's work is presented in a space of its own. Some have described it as an altar piece. Her tormented dolls sit at the bottom shelf of a cabinet containing sketchy, sexually infused drawings of grim women baying at the moon or dangling a screaming baby by one foot. These are dancing grotesques that ape tenderness but project violence and nightmare which seeps into you as the watcher observing this territory of the damned. I saw this work as a bleak grand finale into which the world is inexorably being pulled.

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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

Behind the 'evergreens'

His evergreen tunes will be familiar to most aficionados of the Weimar era's light music, but his name less so. That's what the refugee composer **Werner Richard Heymann** himself said about his reputation and his rueful observation appears on the commemorative plaque that adorns his former Berlin home.



Gedenktafel (commemorative plaque) on Heymann's former Berlin home

Today, we can listen to his hits via *Spotify* or *YouTube*, many from films made by the famous Universum/Ufa studio in Babelsberg, near Berlin. Among them are classics such as *Irgendwo auf der Welt*; *Ein Freund, ein guter Freund*; *Liebling, mein Herz lässt dich grüßen*; *Das muss ein Stück vom Himmel sein*; *Das gibt's nur einmal, das kommt nicht wieder*; and *Das ist die Liebe der Matrosen*. **Professor Joachim Schlör**, an expert at the University of Southampton on German-Jewish history and post-1933 emigration, told me more about Heymann.

What was Heymann's trajectory in exile?

In the Weimar Republic's late years, Heymann's Berlin-based work as a composer of film background music, and of songs for movies, had established him, together with his lyricist partner, Robert Gilbert, as one of the key figures in the avant-garde scene. After Hitler came to power, Ufa sacked most of its Jewish employees, but offered to keep on Heymann, because he had served as a German soldier in World War I and had been baptised in a Protestant church after his father died.

Heymann, nonetheless, left Berlin for Paris in 1934, and then for Los Angeles; there, after a short stay during which he failed to establish himself in Hollywood, he returned to Paris. He spent some time in London, where he worked on the *The Beloved Vagabond*, starring Maurice Chevalier. In 1936, Heymann went back

to the US, with more success. He began to work with the great director Ernst Lubitsch, who had left Berlin for Hollywood in the 1920s. It was by far the most successful phase of Heymann's life there. He wrote the music for six Lubitsch movies, notably *Ninotschka* (1939) and, maybe most importantly, *To Be Or Not To Be* (1942). That film is set in Warsaw shortly before the outbreak of World War II, when a Polish theatre group is forced to stage *Hamlet* instead of an antifascist play.

Lack of sources makes it hard to reconstruct Heymann's life in those years. Michaela Ullmann, at the University of Southern California's Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, has found letters suggesting Heymann worked on setting Lion Feuchtwanger's short stories to music. Thomas Mann's brother, Heinrich, drew up a contract in 1949, allowing Heymann to set his novel *Die kleine Stadt* to music. The Warner Brothers archives contain some sheet music. Documents confirm Heymann's surveillance by the House Un-American Activities Committee. This seems to have been one reason why Heymann left Hollywood in 1951 and returned to Europe, settling in Locarno and then in Salzburg, although his work obligations often required his presence in Munich or Berlin. He died in Munich, only 65 years old.

A 1951 letter shows Berlin had not forgotten him: '... the radio and the newspapers reported that I was in Berlin and all hell literally broke loose. In the ten

days I was in Berlin I didn't have a single minute's peace. Four radio interviews on four different stations. The sound vans came right up to the hotel, a microphone with a long lead was dragged into the bar and the respective producers interviewed me at the piano, interspersed with me playing little pieces every now and again.'

What made you interested in Heymann?

I came across his work when I started my research about Robert Gilbert. To me, Gilbert and Heymann are important witnesses for significant – but often neglected – aspects of the cultural history of German-Jewish emigration: the transnational connections that existed before 1933; German – and Austrian-Jewish life and culture in exile and the continuity and development of art forms that have been enriched by the exile experience; and the return of some of the protagonists to Europe, which contributed to German, Austrian and European popular culture in the postwar period. I've met his daughter Elisabeth Heymann-Trautwein who, with her husband, Wolfgang Trautwein, the former director of the archives at Berlin's Academy of Arts, is dedicated to keeping alive her father's legacy. She recently published a charming memoir, *Vom Paradis ein gold'ner Schein* (Hentrich & Hentrich, Leipzig). I have published articles about Heymann and Gilbert and assisted the first biographer of Robert Gilbert.

Martin Mauthner

Reflections on laying



Wedding celebration for Egon and Else Baginsky, 1938



The Anonymous Pedestrians by Jerzy Kalina, in Wrocław (formerly Breslau)

The importance of physical markers to mourn, remember, respect and celebrate the lives of those close to us is perhaps too obvious, too taken for granted, even to remark on it. What then do we do for family members for whom there is no gravestone, no identifiable grave, no personal memories and few second-hand memories because of the circumstances in which their lives came to an end in the Shoah?

The question was particularly poignant for my brother Sidney and me when visiting Fort IX outside the city of Kaunas (Kovno) in Lithuania in 2019, the site of two mass killings on 25 and 29 November 1941 of 4934 women, men and children who had been deported in the several days before from Vienna and Breslau. Among those from Breslau were our uncle Willy Baginsky and the woman he married weeks or possibly days before – Dorothea Müller. Our father Kurt and his sister Edith (who came to England in 1939) did not know how or where they had died.

Fort IX has a chilling history of barbarity. Memorials on the site to people who lost their lives there include photographs and names of hundreds of French Jews, a plaque dedicated to

thousands of Lithuanian Jews and a huge brutalist memorial sculpture to 'victims of the Nazis', though nothing refers specifically to these two massacres. We each lit a yahrzeit candle at the foot of the sculpture.

Where do you commemorate these family members – where they lived or where they died? And what do you commemorate – their life or their death? And if it's their life, which surely it should be, what if you know little about that life?

The where is complicated because, at the end of the Second World War, not only did national borders change but also the people. The small town of Rosenberg, Upper Silesia in Germany where, in Hotel Baginsky, Willy and his younger siblings Egon, Edith and Kurt grew up and lived as young adults, became Olesno in Poland. The Jewish population was gone of course. Most of the ethnic German population were moved west and replaced by people from further east. The sculptured bronze figures in Wrocław, Poland at the intersection of Świdnicka Street and Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego Street – formerly Gartenstraße where Kurt had trained as a chef in the once splendid Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten – reflect the complex and troubled history of the city, and the region, appearing to break through the paving stones from beneath the city streets into the foreign land of the twenty-first century.

Hotel Baginsky was destroyed by the Russians at the end of the Second World War. The site has not been built on – just paved over with some shrubs at the

borders – but nor is there a marker to show what once was there. It had been a focal point of many aspects of the town's life – known for good food, as a venue for meetings and entertainment, a place to play cards. It was one of the first buildings in the town to have a telephone and a petrol pump. Egon and Else Angress celebrated their wedding there in 1938. In an antisemitic attack on 5 August 1932 a bomb was thrown and exploded at the entrance, though neither Kurt nor Edith ever mentioned it to us. It was where Willy and Kurt hid in the cellars on Kristallnacht but were discovered, beaten, arrested and afterwards, with other young Jewish men in the town, taken to Buchenwald concentration camp. There is nothing to show where the beautiful synagogue was located until burnt down on Kristallnacht or where other Jewish families lived and worked. However, thanks in large part to Ewa Cichoń, director of the town's museum, and her colleagues, there have been articles and exhibitions in recent years to commemorate the former Jewish community.

Our parents told us about their pre-war experiences in Germany and Austria – in contrast to many parents who did not. But in our father's case I have come to realise just how selective he was. It wasn't just the bomb in the doorway. It was painfully apparent as I prepared to say a few words about Egon and Else Baginsky when Stolpersteine were ready to be laid on Friday 17 February 2023 outside Bregenzer Straße 3 in the Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf district of Berlin, their last chosen address. As we were growing up, we had learned

Stolpersteine in Berlin

Postcard of Hotel Baginsky in Rosenberg, Upper Silesia. The hotel was destroyed at the end of WW2 and its site still remains empty.



Stolpersteine in memory of Egon and Else Baginsky

almost nothing of what they or other members of the family were like as people, though they were always spoken of with the utmost love and respect.

On visiting Rosenberg/Olesno for the first time in 2003, the town became a reality for me rather than an idealised, sepia, second-hand memory. In many respects it was a disappointment – drab not beautiful, not grand as in pre-war photos and there seemed little correspondence between the town Kurt and Edith spoke about so lovingly and the place it was now. My wife Mary and I arrived on a Sunday evening in September. On Monday we were disappointed to find the town hall closed so it was not possible even to find out if there were any pre-war records. However, we went into a travel agent's to ask where we might find a map of the town. On the map they gave us was marked the Jewish cemetery.

We made our way to the edge of the town and walked along a residential road and there, between two houses was the Jewish cemetery. I climbed over the wall – the only way I could get in. It was ramshackle, overgrown, with many broken headstones both in place and stacked against the wall of the prayer hall. But it was beautiful, magical, exciting, as though frozen in time. I was amazed that there was any vestige left of the Jewish community that had lived there.

Since then, snippets of information have become available online – among them a list of applicants seeking refuge in Shanghai, one application dated 1939 in the names of Else and Egon Baginsky.

The documents I downloaded at The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem in 2019 provided some factual details of the lives of Egon and Else – their schools, the jobs they had done before 'aryanisation'. But their applications spoke more of quiet desperation – they said nothing about themselves that gave any clue to the people they were. There were some references to support their application. One from Else's employer says that she carried out her duties excellently and was always 'honest, diligent and zealous' and 'We can, therefore, warmly recommend her to be efficient and reliable and wish her a very successful future.' Another, from Erich Lewin who had been leader of the Jewish community in Rosenberg, says of Egon that he always endeavoured to stand his ground. I would love to know in what ways. If only I had asked my father more questions. But I understand why he and Edith didn't say more. And I now understand why I didn't ask more.

My speech about Egon and Else for the laying of the Stolpersteine was based on the little we know and on what can be gleaned from a few pictures we have – a serious, Germanic, extended-family photograph taken in 1907 when Egon was four years old; a 10 – or 11-year-old Egon looking as if he was 'standing his ground', a dapper 29-year old-Egon with his foot on the running board of his car and a family photograph celebrating the wedding of Egon and Else.

The Stolpersteine were set in the cobble area outside the building in which Egon and Else lived in Berlin. The remarkable

artist Gunter Demnig, whose idea it was to lay polished brass stones in front of the homes of those persecuted by the Nazis that people would stumble across, was there to dig the holes in which to set the Stolpersteine, as were two representatives – Karin Sievert and Hanni Hüsch – from the Stolpersteine project in Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf. A moving speech by Hanni, on behalf of the project, referred to the more than 99,000 Stolpersteine set by Gunter Demnig in 29 countries. She went on to talk of 'remembrance of this terrible German crime' and the significance of the Stolpersteine:

Every one is a small monument for human beings who do not have graves. The Nazis have exterminated them and wanted to wipe out their names. We call back their names to the place where they lived: 'Hier wohnte ... here lived ...'.

I concluded my speech by quoting the words of Romanian survivor Serge Klarsfeld, who said: "5 or 6 or 7 million victims – an unimaginable number! But we always have to think: One ... plus one ... plus another one ... and another one ... and to commemorate them" ... This is why we are placing these Stolpersteine here today for Egon and Else Baginsky.'

Egon and Else were forced to leave their home some time before being deported to Auschwitz on 29 January 1943. Else was 42, Egon was 40.

William Baginsky

AN INVITATION TO DUNERA DESCENDANTS

The AJR is pleased to welcome the creation of a new group focusing on descendants of refugees who were shipped to Australia on the HMT Dunera in July 1940. Alan Lion, the son of one of those refugees, explains more.

For the past two years I have been researching my Jewish family's WW2 experiences. My father, Ernst Max Lion (known as Ernest, he hated the name Max), only briefly talked of his experiences, which is often typical of those who escaped the Nazi regime. I was aware my father was interned during the summer of 1940 and subsequently deported to Australia aboard the *HMT Dunera*. I had little understanding of the circumstances and had just a small file that I found after my father passed to further my understanding of his experience.

I joined the Australia-based Dunera Association to learn more and discovered that there had been a UK based group established during the 1980s by survivors but that it had long since closed as the members aged and passed. The last UK resident survivor passed away in 2021 and with less than five survivors elsewhere (now all over 99 years of age) I was determined that the experiences



Ernest Lion (present)



Ernest Lion during WW2

of those interned would be remembered, and that the second and third generations of the internees should be informed of this 'missing' piece of British history.

Realising that I could not do this alone, I convened a small group of Dunera internee descendants and interested historians with the intention of forming a new online 'UK Dunera Interest Group'. The group's primary objectives are to promote understanding of the circumstances and discover the experiences of those deported overseas by gathering and sharing the knowledge from the families of those involved.

For the 2,546 internees aboard the *HMT Dunera* the circumstances were inevitably life-changing but their experiences and recollections vary considerably, especially as the cohort included Germans, Austrians, Czechs as well as Italians. Although the vast majority were Jewish or political refugees from the Nazis, there were a minority

aboard whose sympathies were not allied to the British cause. Some experiences concentrate on the privations of internment and the appalling conditions aboard the *Dunera*, whilst others (particularly the youngsters) recalled this time as an adventure and one of the most formative times of their lives. Some were only too glad to be far away from war-torn Europe and had volunteered for the deportation, others had no idea where they were

being sent and all had been separated from family and loved ones. Every story is different!

We are grateful to the AJR who have agreed to support the Dunera UK Group, by posting information on their website, and helping us to gauge community support. We hope that any AJR members involved or interested in this lost part of WWII history will sign up to join us. They will receive emails from the group along with details of on-line events. Once established this will hopefully extend to in person events, and possibly small exhibitions.

Whether you are a descendant of a Dunera internee, connected in some other way, or simply interested in this period of history, we welcome you to our community. Our group will provide a platform for information exchange, discussion, and networking among individuals who share a common interest in this fascinating topic. Although principally aimed at UK residents, we will welcome members from around the world, particularly from Europe, Israel, and the USA. Although those living in Australia are well served by their Dunera Association many may be interested in learning more about internment prior to the departure to Australia and the circumstances and policies which led to the Dunera saga and the opportunities for obtaining authorisation for return and release in the UK or release in Australia.

Email al.lion@dunera.org.uk for more information or see <https://dunera.org.uk>

HMT Dunera



AJR FUNDING PARTNER

Council of Christians & Jews



The latest in our series on organisations that receive grant funding from the AJR looks at the leading nationwide forum for Christian-Jewish engagement.

The Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) was founded in 1942, at the height of WW2, with the aim of encouraging Jews and Christians to meet, to understand each other better and to create meaningful engagement between the communities. Today the Council operates a network of 30 active branches around the UK, complemented by a professional team that run national programmes in education, dialogue and social action for those of all faiths and none. It calls on people to use our diversity to challenge prejudice and persecution together so that we can build strong communities that live in dignity, understanding and fellowship.

In Autumn 2022, with the help of an educational grant from the AJR, the CCJ introduced an innovative course, *Witnessing to Memory*. The course aimed to equip the participants with the knowledge and confidence to bear witness to the memory of the Holocaust, so that we never forget and strive to build a stronger, more tolerant society.

Developed by the CCJ's Senior Programme Manager, James Roberts, the course was delivered mainly over Zoom once a week for seven weeks. It was aimed at both Christian clergy and lay leaders in religious educational contexts (such as RE teachers, Interfaith Advisors, and others) who wished to deepen their knowledge and understanding of teaching on the topic of the Holocaust in relation to faith and religion.

In addition to highlighting the imperative of teaching on the Holocaust, this course sought to explore the religious aspects of Holocaust education, both by identifying its religious elements (for example, religious intolerance as a motivating factor of Jewish persecution and an appreciation of the complexities

of religious identity) and explored the ways in which this can be communicated in a multi-faith, multi-cultural learning environment.

Participants were drawn from across the UK, including Bradford, Glasgow, West Sussex, Huddersfield, Leicester, London, North Wales, St Asaph and Leicestershire. Predominantly they were religious ministers, or professionals from the faith sector (including a director of an interfaith centre, and a chief executive of a Church Diocese). Some participants had a teaching role alongside a religious one, such as two school chaplains. There were also several participants who work for various Holocaust education charities.

To deliver the course the CCJ drew together world-class specialists from Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Educational Trust, UCL's Centre for Holocaust Education, and other institutions. As well as lectures the Zoom sessions included small-group discussion and reflection, and a centrepiece of the course was a visit to the National Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire, which took place last October.

The course was divided into six different modules:

- Teaching the Holocaust
- Holocaust Education in Multicultural settings
- The Ghettos and Resistance
- Testimony from the Camps
- The inter-religious dimensions of the Holocaust, Christian-Jewish Relations
- Non-Jewish Victims of the Nazis

Participants responded with overwhelming enthusiasm. One wrote: 'I am much more confident in sharing the subject to others whether 10 years old or 100 years old.' Another of the participants reported that 'I feel the course has added a new layer to the knowledge that I had been accumulating about the Shoah. The importance of personal stories has hugely impacted me and I am very keen to ensure when I speak about the Holocaust that I do so with a greater sensitivity to overcome the distance naturally felt



Witnessing To Memory course participants visit the National Holocaust Centre in Nottingham

between those events and today. I am so much more aware of how the events of 80-90 years ago find many uncomfortable parallels today.'

Post-course evaluation has found that participants are sharing their learning in a variety of contexts, including:

- Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations
- Discussed and shared the learning in church community groups
- Sessions in RE/History education in secondary schools
- Writing articles in local press
- Speaking engagements in local primary schools
- Speaking to local community groups for young people (eg air cadets)
- Developed a network of local youth workers to deliver material on Holocaust education in further education colleges.
- Delivered training to school staff and chaplains

The combined total of people who have already been, or will shortly be, reached through the participants' engagement is 1,500+.

"As readers of the AJR Journal will know well, Holocaust education is in a time of transition, and this course enabled us to help teachers in religious contexts have access to current scholarship and thinking. We are grateful to the AJR and others for their support and expertise." – Nathan Eddy, Co-Director, CCJ

Stop celebrating Nazis

Steve Karneinski, whose father Rudy Kennedy was a Holocaust survivor, has created an online petition urging U.S. institutions to stop what he sees as celebrating the work of known Nazis. He explains why.

I am the son of a SLAVE.

I grew up comfortably in Hampstead Garden Suburb, the son of secular Jewish refugees. My mother fled Czechoslovakia with her family just before Germany invaded, my father wasn't so lucky. He was brought up in Rosenberg (now Olesno in Poland) and went to a school where the headmaster happened to be an early member of the Nazi party. From his first day he suffered antisemitism with the class blackboard stating 12 boys, 11 girls, 1 Jew. He had the opportunity to join his sister on a Kindertransport but wouldn't leave his family. He was expelled and sent to school in Breslau (Wroclaw); his mother, father and sister soon followed when Rosenberg was cleared of Jews. His school closed in 1941 (though a 1940 bar mitzvah gift from a teacher incredibly survived). His sister was too young, but he and his father were slave labourers in a local factory and his mother made uniforms. In 1943 they were all sent to Auschwitz.

His mother and sister were sent to the left, he and his father were sent to Auschwitz-III to 'work' for Siemens, the electrical contractors for I.G. Farben. His father soon became ill and was sent to the hospital and died.

Vengeance Weapons

In 1945, my father left on a death march to Gleiwitz and was then sent to Mittelbau-Dora, the concentration camp attached to the Mittelwerk, five miles from Nordhausen where V-1s and V-2s were built. His job was final testing of the V-2 turbines.

Germany was desperate to gain advantage over the Allies. Although they had technologically superior weapons, they couldn't produce enough of them, so they developed a program of vengeance



Rudy Kennedy (formerly Karneinski) speaking about his experiences



Rudy Kennedy

weapons: the V-1 flying bomb (or Doodlebug) and the V-2 missile. They were designed to cause terror to civilians, not for military targets. Though the V-1 was initially a success (you knew it was coming down, when the engine cut out), they were slow and could easily be disabled. The V-2 missile on the other hand, rose from a launch site 300Km away and the first you knew about it, was when it exploded.

Initially the V-2 was developed at Peenemunde on the Baltic Sea but after the Allies heavily bombed the site under Hydra, manufacture was moved to the Mittelwerk. The conditions were horrendous and of the 70,000 slave labourers used to construct the site or build V-2s, over 20,000 died (a magnitude more than were killed by V-2s).

The V-2 was the most complex piece of engineering and technology at the time and for a good time after the war too, being the basis for US missiles. This meant that every single part of the manufacturing process was closely supervised by the civilian scientists, engineers and technicians (and of course the SS). Prisoners suspected of sabotage were hung opposite the engineers' offices.

Dad's survival

As the US Army was advancing my Dad was sent to Bergen-Belsen where he was one of the diseased, dying skeletons found by the British. He eventually recovered, was sent to Zilzheim DP Camp. It took over a year to come to the UK (his flight to join 'The Boys' was cancelled at the last moment) and drove an ambulance for the US Army.

When Dad first came to England he tried to put his past behind him. He joined English Electric and had to be security cleared, so managers knew his history. When U.S. 'rocket scientists' visited, he was asked to stay

away as they didn't want to embarrass their American counterparts. They feared he might recognise them or worse, they recognise him, from Dora/Mittelwerk.

When EE sent Dad's team on a 'fact finding' mission to the U.S. he was granted a higher security clearance than his 'true blue' British colleagues yet he - and only he - didn't receive clearance to visit Huntsville, where WvB and team were based.

In the '70s Dad set up his own business, which he sold to Roche Pharmaceuticals. He often travelled to the U.S. for business and holidays and "talked about these men, but no one would believe me that those nice and well-liked Germans who did so much for American Space technology could have had anything to do with ex-slaves like me, the real odious side of the glorious third Reich."

I always knew Dad was a Holocaust survivor as he had his big Auschwitz camp number tattooed on his left forearm. He also had a huge scar on his back from an operation to remove half his lung as he'd contracted tuberculosis in camp. However, he rarely talked about his early life.

He also had what I perceived as an odd attitude to the Apollo moon missions: I was fascinated by the huge rockets and would beg to be allowed to stay up late to watch the launches (I was 8 when Apollo 11 launched) but Dad never showed the same enthusiasm.

Operation Paperclip

After the war the US/Soviets and, to some degree, the UK and other Allies secretly each took in a number of Germans/Nazis they believed might be useful to them. The U.S. especially wanted experts in the fields of synthetic rubber and oil catalysts, armoured equipment, V-2 (rocket) weapons,



A V2 in production at Dora-Mittelbau



Time magazine cover of 'WvB', 1958



Bust of 'WvB' at NASA

jet and rocket propelled aircraft and gliders, naval equipment, field radios, secret writing chemicals, and aero medicine research.

Though President Truman had stated that no active Nazis should be allowed to enter the U.S, the country took in over 1600 Germans under a secret program called Operation Paperclip (originally Overcast, then National Interest which still exists today). U.S. Immigration weren't allowed to look beyond the 'cleansed' papers, which were affixed on top of the real (Nazi) histories by a paperclip.

As Nazi Germany started collapsing, General Walter Dornberger and Wernher von Braun (WvB) offered themselves and the whole rocket team to the U.S. and 127 of them accepted contracts under Paperclip.

If the U.S. couldn't hide the German's Nazi records, they tended to offer them to General Peron in Argentina and other friendly non-communist countries.

Post-war US

These Nazi Germans integrated into U.S. Society and some of them, like WvB, even became celebrities writing space articles and appearing on TV. Huntsville, Alabama, became NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center where the Saturn-V rocket was developed as part of the Apollo space program. WvB was made Director of Marshall while his ex-colleague from Mittelwerk, Arthur Rudolph, directed production. Other famous Nazis included Hubertus Strughold, who was appointed Chief Scientist of NASA and is known as the father of Space Medicine.

NASA maintained biographies of all the Germans that had come via Paperclip, and they continue to display the whitewashed biographies that had been used on their immigration papers.

Attempts to seek justice

In the 1979 the U.S. Office of Special Investigation began looking into the Nazi War crimes carried out by Germans who had arrived under Paperclip. Over 100 German expats were prosecuted for their crimes and either denaturalised or removed. This included Arthur Rudolph. Both von Braun and Stughold had already died, so couldn't be prosecuted.

Strughold's past did eventually catch-up with him and his portrait was removed from Ohio State University, in 1995 the U.S. Airforce renamed a library that carried his name and the Space Medicine Association retired the Dr. Hubertus Strughold award in 2013.

Wernher von Braun never showed any remorse for his war activities. A bust of him still stands in a place of honour outside NASA's Marshall Spaceflight centre and he is still hailed as the 'father of space travel'.

Our trip to Auschwitz in 1995

Dad wanted to show his children his history and decided we should go for the 50th anniversary of the liberation. He contacted various UK groups and eventually connected with a Polish organiser who told him to "just come along". As everything was booked, we went two weeks earlier, on the anniversary of his death march.

We hired a guide and, after being lectured about the Poles killed etc, Dad shared his history, and the guide changed his stance. After seeing Birkenau, the guide insisted we go to the records office, much to dad's annoyance ("what would he learn that he didn't know already", his mother and sister had been killed within hours of arrival and he'd seen his father's ambulance leave). However, seeing his father's death certificate, which stated he'd died of a 'heart attack'

(i.e. murdered for being unfit for work) something irreversibly changed him. On leaving we were told some people wanted to meet him. It turned out to be an ITN film crew and he agreed to be interviewed, stating "50 years is long enough to be silent".

On return to England, he setup the Association for Slave Labour Compensation with Roman Holt, Freddie Knoller and others which led to the reparation process and the Claims Conference. His fight was documented by Luke Holland and shown on the BBC's Storyville ("I was a Slave Labourer"). Unfortunately he got Alzheimer's and subsequently died in 2008.

In 2012 I changed my name back from Kennedy to Karneinsky (I'd always promised him I would).

Like my dad, I'm a member of the professional engineering association, The IET, which published an article about the Allies using ex-Nazis, like WvB. I responded by stating dad's history and my belief that "many should have prosecuted for war crimes (including WvB)". The IET published my complete letter.

An ex-colleague and once friend then replied "Rubbish". He was a huge fan of WvB's work and couldn't believe that he was an ardent Nazi involved with slave labour. He wasn't a Holocaust denier, but like many people in the U.S, he has bought into the whitewashed histories of WvB and other Nazis brought over after WW2. It appears that when it comes WvB there's still an impregnable bubble re his history and Holocaust Distortion.

To sign Steve's online petition, go to <https://thedarkersideofthemoon.org>

REVIEWS

LONDON YIDDISHTOWN: EAST END JEWISH LIFE, 1930 –1950

Selected works of Katie Brown, A.M. Kaizer and I.A Lisky

Translated with commentary by Vivi Lachs

Wayne State University Press

When Jewish immigrant writers described Whitechapel life, they perhaps little expected how successful their stories would be years afterwards in offering new perspectives on the culture of their day.

In this innovative book Vivi Lachs has translated contemporary stories by journalists who wrote for the Jewish press. She focuses on short stories and sketches by Katie Brown, A. M. Kaizer and I. A. Lisky. Her book shows the tireless efforts made to keep the Yiddish culture going during an era of great political upheaval around the time of the Second World War. The scene changed with the Nazism threat and writers were influenced by Oswald Mosley's black shirt Fascist rallies; but despite all the difficulties, including hardship and unemployment, they were able to use a light and humorous touch to explore local life.

From the mid-1880s, Whitechapel was Britain's Yiddish speaking metropolis, as immigrants brought Eastern European culture into their new lives, homes, workplaces and leisure time, founding newspapers, theatres and literary organisations. A generation later it was in decline but writers, intellectuals and activists fought hard to keep it alive. Meanwhile the upwardly mobile moved out to other London suburbs or left for America, and Zionism spread. As the author explains, those remaining in the East End were mostly of a generation of working-class immigrant tailors, cabinetmakers and market-stall holders who still spoke Yiddish. Many did not want to pass the language on to their offspring. They were worried it might hold them back or lead to them suffering antisemitism, and schools insisted children spoke English.

But these previously untranslated stories, always with witty descriptions of social and everyday happenings and well

observed characters, kept alive culture and attitudes. It is impossible not to laugh at some of the situations, admire the clever endings and wry humour. Lisky's impassioned stories show anti-fascist activism, political debate in a kosher café, film set extras desperate for cash, and a hunger march by the unemployed. Kaizer's witty and satirical tales explore philanthropy, upward mobility, synagogue politics, and competition between Zionist organisations. They expose the character and foibles of the community and make fun of foolish and hypocritical behaviour.

Katie Brown – Whitechapel's Yiddish "best seller" – married at 16 and had five children but, unlike the other two, continued to live in the area for the rest of her life. Her work includes often hilarious sketches and addresses episodes of daily life. These highlight family shenanigans and misunderstandings, and point out how the different attachments to Jewish identity of the older generation and their children created unresolvable fractures. I particularly identified with the piece about preparing for meeting the in-laws (but not the consequences) and the visit from the gentleman with a long manuscript...

As always, everything is anchored down to contemporary events. The poet and cultural activist, Avrom Nokhem Stend is said to have escaped Berlin in 1936 by crossing the border in a coffin as the Holocaust gathered. The East End was devastated during the Blitz but nothing stopped cultural organisations trying to keep literature and traditions alive.
Janet Weston

THE TELLING: ONE FAMILY – TWO CENTURIES

Daniel C. Tabor
i2i Publishing

In the 1990s Daniel Tabor retrieved his father's diaries from a dustbin when his parents were downsizing. Another piece of luck was that some family members lived well into old age and so were available for interview concerning their earlier years; his mother lived until the age of 95 and his maternal grandmother to 105. I will undoubtedly not be the only reader envious of the amount of family information Daniel Tabor was able to obtain. Also fortunate is the survival of many marvellous photos, so the stories of individual ancestors become

even more alive, and the provision of family trees helps ascertain their placing. Apart from the family members others come into the story who are known to us all – Albert Einstein, Anne Frank, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Abba Eban.

This family history starts in the nineteenth-century with Rabbi Kahan 'from a family of thirty-two generations of rabbis'. This, however, is definitely not a narrow family account as the story is skillfully told in the wider context of history, politics, social and economic conditions and beliefs. So very much of the European Jewish experience is here, from, for example: matchmaking; to denying Jewish origins and changing names in the hope of gaining acceptability; to religious affiliation consisting less of orthodoxy than a sense of belonging.

Unsurprisingly, antisemitism was a too constant experience. In Russia Jews were restricted in where they could live, whether they could study and what professions they could enter, while pogroms furthered the urge to emigrate; but the countries family members escaped to had their antisemitism too. In London's East End there were fascist marches. In Germany many Jewish citizens were proudly patriotic, which did not save them from the ravages of Nazism. In Hungary there was endemic antisemitism and anti-Jewish legislation. In Australia Jewish refugees were treated with hostility as Germans and, moreover, often even not welcomed by the local Jewish communities.

All this was, of course, a great stimulus to Zionism. Already in the 1880s Rabbi Kahan joined a movement that encouraged emigration to Palestine; his youngest son was part of the 'First Aliyah'. This tendency continued; in 1930 David Tabor, the author's father, living in Notting Hill, started a Young Zionist Society which later merged with *Habonim*.

And so to Israel. There might have been milk and honey but it was not quite heaven on earth. David's elder brother moved to Palestine in 1946. His wife Lena found it very difficult to adjust. Initially, she found some Israeli patterns of behaviour difficult to accept, and would say that 'it wasn't done, it wasn't polite enough, or people were not dressed the right way'. Daniel notes that 'the liberal, humanistic version of Zionism of my parent's generation seems to have receded.'

I've read a number of good histories of Jewish families; this one is very definitely the best.

Michael Levin

MOTHER COUNTRY

By Monique Charlesworth

Moth Books

Monique's mother Inge was German, half-Jewish and a Holocaust survivor, all of which she chose to deny until the very end. Talented and able, charismatic and infuriating, she surged through life constantly reinventing herself. Sent out of Nazi Germany to the souks of Meknes, she fled a freezing attic in war-torn Brussels to land in a council estate in Birkenhead. London offered the refuge of a new start until her past caught up with her. Triumph finally came in France where nobody knew who she was – least of all the friends who adored her.

Led by emotions she could barely understand, let alone control, Inge divided and often conquered. After her death, deep secrets emerged. Her daughters knew that she had always misled others – but not that they, too, might be collateral damage.

Compelling, frank and witty, this memoir is part detective story and part daughterly fury. Drawn to embrace the identity her mother could not bear, Monique Charlesworth has dug deep into Inge's story, unveiling tragedy, passion, heartbreak and – finally – the truth.

Subtitled 'a story of love and lies', this is a well presented and very easy to read book which gives insights into the complex relationship between mothers and daughters as well as the extraordinary world which surrounds them.

Jo Briggs

AJR AMBASSADORS

For a small charity AJR has a very high profile and is represented on several major international platforms.

Trustee Danny Kalman and Social Worker Lesley Miller recently travelled to Gdansk to attend the unveiling of the city's Kindertransport monument, which had been in storage since 2010. Look out for the full story in our August issue.

In May our Head of Education & Heritage, Alex Maws, took part in a presentation at the European Parliament entitled 'Educating against antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination', hosted by the European Parliament Working Group against Antisemitism (WGAS). Days later he appeared on ITV News criticising Pink Floyd bassist Roger Waters for "Holocaust distortion" after he dressed up in a Nazi-style costume during a stage show.

Meanwhile AJR CEO Michael Newman, together with other AJR colleagues, has been promoting awareness of the UK's Presidency of the International



Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2024. This will be a major opportunity to reinforce the UK's role as a leader in this vitally important global arena.

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CORONA DIARY

Eighteen-month old Judith Moller, née Grossman-Binet, was hidden with a Christian childless family on a farm on the outskirts of Budapest. She stayed with them for two years before joining the rest of her family in Israel.

Judith's father was a teacher in the local state recognised Jewish secondary school. Her mother was book keeper to a successful businessman who managed to secure a place for his own daughters with a Christian family. But when the time came, his wife refused to part with their daughters. The money for their hiding had already been paid so Judith's mother was given permission to send her daughters instead. But they were brought back. Judith's four-year old sister looked very Jewish and kept making blessings over her food and the couple felt it was too dangerous to keep her. Judith herself had whooping cough and they didn't know how to cope. When Judith's mother gave her typewriter to the foster father, he agreed to take her back.

Judith has fond memories of 'Papushka and Manushka' despite the severe winters. She remembers Papushka wrapping his feet in newspapers before putting on his boots. She also remembers the Russian bombardment when the shelves with glass mugs were

smashed.

Her family survived by being on the well-known 'Kastner Transport', named after Israel Kastner, who negotiated with Eichmann on behalf of the Rescue Committee in an attempt to rescue Hungarian Jewry. Sadly he only managed to secure this single transport of 1684 people.

Her parents arrived in Palestine in the summer of 1945. They settled in Pardess Hanna where her uncle, who had arrived in 1938, was established.

It took a year of negotiations, through the Red Cross, to persuade Judith's Hungarian adoptive parents to return her to her parents, which happened in September 1946. At first she used to cross herself and say her evening prayers on her knees every night. Wisely, her mother instructed her sister to ignore it, so gradually the habit faded into oblivion.

Adjusting to her 'new' family and surroundings took a while. She had regular nightmares and was sick every night. Eventually she settled down as though native born. After completing her secondary education in Ramat Gan she travelled to London, where she met her husband to be and where they live to this day. As a mother of four boys she studied at the Open University, finally taking her degree at the University of London. For 30+ years she taught Hebrew, Biblical Studies and Jewish History in various Jewish secondary schools.

Her parents kept in touch with Judith's Hungarian 'parents', sending them photos and receiving letters with pressed flowers and gifts. In 1956, during the Hungarian Revolution, her parents sent food parcels through UNRRA. When,

Childhood Traumas

Do childhood separations have a long-lasting effect? Do they cause fractured relationships? I was separated from my parents during the war, Then from my loving, gentile, foster parents.

I had to learn to be my parents' daughter: I had problems, nightmares, clashes with my mother – I thought I was adopted... Surely no mother would treat her real daughter so.

Yet, my mother loved me and I loved her. I think the difficulties made me more resilient. It gave me greater understanding, the power to stay; It made me look with hope upon the next day.

So now, during the Corona, I know there is no need to despair. Though times are hard, Good times will follow, As tranquil night follows tumultuous day.

Judith Moller, February 2021

years later, her sister visited them in Hungary, she found their home something of a shrine to young Judith and her growing family in England. She is eternally grateful for her mother's courage and for her adoptive parents' care and love.

She started writing poetry during the pandemic when a close friend and ex neighbour fell victim to Coronavirus. She wrote his widow a poem by way of a consolation letter. Thereafter she got into the habit of writing at least one poem a day, with many poems perfectly capturing the mood of the moment.

Now she has compiled 103 of these poems into a 250-page book which she describes as "a sort of patchwork tapestry of childhood and youth experiences, reflections on the present, on old age, on coping with difficulties and on faith." The book, which she has titled *Corona Diary*, contains the poems in both English and Hebrew.

Looking back, Judith considers her Corona poetry as a way of gaining something positive out of a uniquely difficult time for all. At the same time the poetry is a legacy to her family and to the next generation in general.

Judith's poetry book, *Corona Diary*, is available to purchase direct from judith.moller@yahoo.co.uk

יהודית מולר
יומן קורונה
Judith Moller
Corona Diary





WALK TALK BAKE
SUNDAY 23 JULY AT 11AM



A 2-hour walking tour of East London, that takes you through Bishopsgate, Spitalfields and Whitechapel and ends at Rinkoff bakery in Stepney Green.

You will learn of the history of the Rinkoff bakery and the journey of its Ukrainian founders, bringing you right up to date with the now five generations of Rinkoffs currently working.

The tour costs £25 per person, including lunch, and there are only ten places available

debra@ajr.org.uk



SOUTHEND TRIP
TUESDAY 8 AUGUST 2023



Including a delicious Fish & Chips lunch and return coach.

roshart@ajr.org.uk



VISIT TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE
SUNDAY 23 JULY AT 11AM



Join us to see the Coronation outfits worn by King Charles III and Queen Camilla as well as the fabulous State Rooms and stunning gardens.

£30 per person

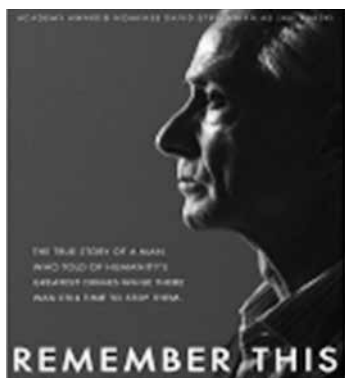
roshart@ajr.org.uk



PRIVATE SHOWING
REMEMBER THIS

starring Academy nominee David Strathairn as Jan Karski

THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 3PM
THE EVERYMAN, BELSIZE PARK



A genre-defying true story of a reluctant WW2 hero and Holocaust witness whose timely story of moral courage and individual responsibility can still shake the conscience of the world.

£15 per person including refreshments.

www.eventbrite.com/e/private-showing-of-remember-this-tickets-657459106887



SUMMER EVENING WALKING TOUR OF FINCHLEYSTRASSE

SUNDAY 20 AUGUST 5.30PM – 7.30PM



Spacious homes in NW6 provided a haven from the East End and a refuge for émigrés escaping 1930s Europe. This tour, led by Rachel Kosky, Blue Badge Guide, will uncover the tale of how the refugees established a new community in and around Finchley Road. Two hours of gentle walking will be followed by the opportunity to have dinner in a local restaurant.

susan@ajr.org.uk



AN AFTERNOON OF SOCIALISING, BOARD AND CARD GAMES

AT AJR'S OFFICE ON
TUESDAY 18 JULY AT 3PM – 4.30PM



(if you don't fancy cards or games bring your own activity)

£3 to cover refreshments.

roshart@ajr.org.uk



TRIP TO SANDWICH, KENT
WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2023



Clare Ungerson will lead us on a walking tour around Sandwich, the home of the Kitchener refugee camp.

The day will include a visit to the local museum, where we will meet children learning about the area's unique WW2 history, and lunch at The Bell Hotel, where an AJR plaque is situated.

karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	IN PERSON MEETING	CO-ORDINATOR
Tuesday 4 July	11.30am	Central London (Baker St)	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 5 July	12.30pm	Yorkshire	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 5 July	2pm	Kingston	Ros Hart
Wednesday 5 July	2pm	Edinburgh meeting	Agnes Isaacs
Tuesday 11 July	2.30pm	South Manchester – Games Afternoon	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 12 July	10.30am	2nd Gen outing to Loch Lomond Duck Bay Marina	Agnes Isaacs
Tuesday 18 July	3pm	London – Games Afternoon	Susan Harrod
Tuesday 18 July	11am	Cambridge	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 19 July	2pm	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Thursday 20 July	12pm	East Midlands	Karen Diamond
Monday 31 July	12.30pm	North London	Ros Hart

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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Michal Mocton
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07966 886 535

Susan Harrod
susan@ajr.org.uk
020 8385 3078

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY DETAILS TO FOLLOW

Tuesday 8 August	Outing to Southend Southend
Sunday 20 August	Summer evening walking tour of Finchleystrasse, followed by dinner
Wednesday 13 September	Trip to Sandwich, Kent
Thursday 21 September	Private showing of <i>Remember This</i>

Books Bought

MODERN AND OLD

Eric Levene

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

ZOOMS AHEAD

Details of all meetings and the links to join will appear in the e-newsletter each Monday.

Monday 3 July @ 4pm	Colours of the Diaspora – a kaleidoscope of classical Jewish songs https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83462449655	Meeting ID: 834 6244 9655
Wednesday 5 July @ 2pm	David Barnett – Harrod's Jewish Owner: the Flamboyant Life of Edgar Cohen https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83037638202	Meeting ID: 830 3763 8202
Monday 10 July @ 4pm	Margaret Mills – The life story of Sam Courtauld https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/8415567203	Meeting ID: 841 5567 2033
Wednesday 19 July @ 2pm	AJR Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> by John Steinbeck https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86026551528	Meeting ID: 860 2655 1528
Monday 31 July @ 4pm	Janet Muir – Masks and Faces: the life and career of Harry Braham https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85234189383	Meeting ID: 852 3418 9383

KEEP FIT WITH AJR

All AJR members & friends are invited to take part in these online exercise and dance classes throughout the coming month.

Every Monday @ 10.30am	Get Fit where you Sit (seated exercise) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439	Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Every Tuesday @ 11.00am	Shelley's Exercise class https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622	Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622
Every Wednesday @ 10.30am	Dance Yourself Fit with Jackie Turner https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86302485494	Meeting ID: 8630 248 5494

SCAN
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MUSEUMS ON THE MOVE

The trustees of Jewish Museum London have announced closure of the current site in Camden's Albert Street.

The Jewish Museum London houses and displays the UK's nationally designated collection of Judaica, and has hosted numerous transformative exhibitions and events and established an award-winning education programme. But space restrictions and unanticipated rising costs have hampered its sustainability. The current Camden site is the smallest Jewish museum among major European cities, despite being home to Europe's second largest Jewish community and boasting the second largest collection. The museum is unable to meet all the demands of its successful schools' programme in the current site, and its exhibition space is not sufficient for the future ambitions of the organisation.

The museum will shut its doors on 31 July, after which the current site will be sold to provide seed money for a more modern, engaging and inspiring visitor experience in a new, more prominent location. In the



meantime, visitors will be able to encounter the collection in new and different ways.

Nick Viner, Chair of Jewish Museum London, said: "As we approach our centenary, we have an opportunity to re-visualise the museum for the future. Our decision to sell the current building is not taken lightly, but we must consider the longer-term sustainability of the museum. As the collection leaves Albert Street for a new temporary home, it will also create opportunities to experiment, as we develop the new vision for Jewish Museum London together with all our stakeholders."

Meanwhile the UK's Migration Museum, which has been temporarily housed in Lewisham, is to be given a state-of-the-art permanent home at 65 Crutched Friars in the City of London. The new venue, a stone's throw from the Tower of London, will house exhibition and event spaces exploring how the movement of people to and from these shores has shaped who we all are – as individuals, as communities, and as nations. It will be allied to a network of venues across the UK providing a platform for people to explore and share migration stories and our connections to each other.

UNCOVERING NEW EVIDENCE

Last September the *AJR Journal* published a fascinating report (Nazi crimes on British soil) about the work of ‘conflict archaeologists’ Caroline Sturdy Colls and Kevin Simon Colls, who investigate the evidence of modern genocides, especially the Holocaust. Here we share details of some of their current research.

WINDERMERE

Caroline and Kevin have been locating the traces of the Calgarth Estate, where 300 orphaned Jewish children were housed in August 1945. Liberated from Theresienstadt, these children – the ‘Windermere Children’ – were sent to the Lake District for rehabilitation. They lived in a barracks within a Sunderland aircraft manufacturing plant at Calgarth. After the war, these buildings were knocked down.

Friends and colleagues at the Lake District Holocaust Project wished to know more about the children’s lives whilst they were at Calgarth, and so the Colls devised an archaeological project to locate the buildings that housed the children, and to look for any objects left behind. Although the estate had been demolished, they located the foundations of six buildings and found many relevant postwar objects. Volunteers, including second – and fourth-generation refugee descendants, took part in the excavations in 2019.

In 2022 the Colls returned to the site and, using geophysical survey techniques, found the remains of more structures. They are continuing this work and plan to scan objects that Windermere children and their families have shared. These are items that they acquired whilst in Windermere, or after the war – items that meant so much to children who had been robbed of everything whilst in the Nazi camps.

TREBLINKA

Kevin and Caroline have spent over a decade analysing documents, photographs, witness testimonies, and maps relating to the notorious Treblinka extermination camp. Their forthcoming book, *Finding Treblinka*, will provide new insights into the creation, architecture and evolution of Treblinka and the people who encountered these killing sites.



The Colls and their team have used geophysical and topographic survey methods to uncover new evidence at Treblinka

Kevin explains: “Using a wide range of state-of-the-art, non-invasive technologies and excavations, we uncover and explore the spaces and traces the Nazis tried to hide, providing a nuanced history of Treblinka’s genocidal operations. I reveal how my research led to the discovery of the gas chambers, mass graves and other structures in the extermination camp area. I discuss the objects that were uncovered during the excavations and what they can tell us about the things people took with them to Treblinka when they were transported to the camp. I show how the Nazis thought through every part of the death camp’s architecture, and tried to deceive people who were sent there into thinking they were being sent ‘to the East’ to work. I relate how inmates tried to resist, individually and in groups.

“Much of the book focuses on the evolution of genocide and mass violence at Treblinka, and I demonstrate how the existence of a labour camp and execution site facilitated the first mass executions of Jews, Roma and non-Jewish Poles in this area. I consider the relationships between the two camps and demonstrate the network of locations that comprised Treblinka’s landscape.

“At Treblinka, my colleagues and I

have been creating 3D models of the Holocaust-related items we found during our archaeological fieldwork. These, with items belonging to the Windermere children, will appear soon on a virtual museum attached to Staffordshire University’s Centre of Archaeology.”

UKRAINE

The Colls and their team have been working in Ukraine since 2016, documenting Holocaust mass graves. Since the invasion of Ukraine, they have carried out this work remotely, and have also recently initiated a project which aims to document the Russian invasion’s impact on these sites, and on those dating to the Holodomor – Ukraine’s Great Famine of the early 1930s – as well as to the Jewish heritage in Ukraine generally. This project is in the hands of the Colls’ university colleague Dr Daria Cherkaska, who spent a lot of time in Ukraine during the invasion. The team is using new satellite and aerial imagery to document the impact of Russian attacks and believe that their expertise in forensic archaeology might also assist with locating clandestine graves, if needed.

Martin Mauthner