



Covering Nuremberg

At the end of July a new exhibition opened at the Ben Uri Museum in St. John's Wood. The exhibition, called *A Brush with Evil: The Nuremberg Trials, 1946* featured two powerful works by Dame Laura Knight (1877-1970).



Dame Laura Knight, *Prisoners in the Dock at Nuremberg Trials, No. 2*

In 1936 Knight was only the second woman to be elected to full membership of the Royal Academy. In 1965 she was the first woman artist to be honoured with a full retrospective at the RA. She was also the only woman to be appointed as an official war artist in both World Wars.

More important for readers of the *AJR Journal*, at the age of 68 Laura Knight was appointed as Britain's official war artist to the Nuremberg Trials and was granted access to the courtroom where more than twenty leading Nazis, including Goering, Hess, Hans Frank and von Ribbentrop, were tried. Knight went to Germany in January 1946 and spent three months

observing the main trial from inside the courtroom at Nuremberg's Palace of Justice. This led to a large oil painting, *The Nuremberg Trial* (1946) held at the Imperial War Museum.

What is most striking about the painting is that she splits her canvas in two spatially, between interior and exterior, and temporally, between the present and the immediate past. The foreground realistically depicts the Nazi war criminals sitting in the dock. The rear and side walls of the courtroom are missing, to reveal a ruined city, reduced to rubble and partially in flames. As one critic writes, 'just in front
Continued on page 2

SHANA TOVAH

This month's issue includes news about many different events and activities, as the AJR moves into what looks set to be another very busy Autumn.

We also have several articles written by different AJR members and trustees, relating to their travels, as well as the second part of Anthony Grenville's thought-provoking comparison between Britain in 1953 and today.

We hope you enjoy all our content and wish you and your families a very happy and healthy new year.

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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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Covering Nuremberg (cont.)

of the unseeing men on the defence's benches, are piled the naked limbs of the victims of Nazi power. On the very front bench, the thin white arm of a victim (survivor or living corpse?) attempts to pull his or her body into the courtroom.' The painting dramatically captures the new face of war in the 1930s and '40s, from Guernica to Dresden, which shows what aerial bombardment could do to major cities.

The Ben Uri exhibited two chalk and watercolour sketches, *Prisoners in the Dock No.1* and *No. 2* in addition to works on the home front by a number of Jewish artists including Enid Abrahams, Bettina Adler, Harry Blacker, Barnett Freedman, Stephen Roth, Hans Schleger, Feliks Topolski, Katerina Wilczynski and Zeev Ben Zvi.

Laura Knight was not the only leading cultural figure at Nuremberg. Her painting, *The Nuremberg Trial*, is on the cover of a brilliant book of essays, *The Judicial Imagination, Writing After Nuremberg* (2011), by the literary critic, Lyndsey Stonebridge. The essays are about how a group of women writers were part of a revolution in thinking about the law and human rights: Rebecca West at Nuremberg, Elizabeth Bowen at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, Hannah Arendt and Muriel Spark at the Eichmann Trial, and Martha Gellhorn at all three. It was a moment, writes Stonebridge, when 'the law was at its most audacious and creative.' '[T]he imaginative pull of that juridical moment,' she writes, 'was – and remains – considerable.' Curiously, she doesn't mention Thomas Mann's daughter, Erika, who wrote regular reports on Nuremberg for the *Evening Standard* or men such as the exiled Germans Alfred Döblin, Willy Brandt, Erich Kästner and Markus Wolf.

Stonebridge begins with an essay on Rebecca West who was reporting on Nuremberg for the *Daily Telegraph* and the *New Yorker* (her reports for the *New Yorker* were later published as *A Train of Powder* in 1955). 'West,' she writes, 'was both a defender and a critic of the trial.' The *Nuremberg Trial*, writes Stonebridge, 'was not only the first international war crime trial, but the first really internationally visible – and

visual – trial in history. The defendants were photographed so frequently that some took to wearing sunglasses as protection against the flashbulbs... 18,000 photographs were prepared as evidence. Images of the infamous shrunken head and tattooed skin from Buchenwald were reproduced in newspapers across the world.'

West was also struck by the 'shallowness' of the defendants, especially Goering, anticipating Arendt's famous insight almost twenty years later about the 'banality of evil.' These women writers at Nuremberg were among the first to confront the paradox that these men, guilty of such terrible crimes, possessed 'neither depth or any demonic dimension,' as Gershom Scholem wrote about Eichmann. In 1946, the German-Swiss philosopher Karl Jaspers warned Hannah Arendt that going beyond the notion of criminal guilt, 'inevitably takes on a streak of "greatness" – of satanic greatness.' 'It seems to me,' Jaspers continued, 'that we have to see these things in their total banality [sic], in their prosaic triviality.'

There is another crucial issue. West, Stonebridge writes, was damned by her critics 'for failing to recognise the horrors of the Holocaust,' a charge also levelled against the Nuremberg Trial itself. Perhaps the greatest difference between Nuremberg and the Eichmann Trial was that Nuremberg failed to address the murder of the Jews as genocide, and refused to have Jewish voices at the trial, whereas the Eichmann Trial attempted to make up for these shocking absences or, as Stonebridge puts it, 'this was because the Holocaust was not sufficiently in the European imaginary in this period [1946].'

There were two absences, then, at Nuremberg. First, the subject of the Holocaust. Second, the subject of evil. For an artist like Laura Knight or writers like Rebecca West and Martha Gellhorn, what does evil look like? How do you paint or write about evil, so soon after the Holocaust, when there was no available language for English-speaking writers to describe or to explain genocide?

Perhaps it is worth noting that Knight, West and Janet Flanner, were not Jews, though Gellhorn had a Jewish father and a Jewish maternal grandfather. Arendt, of course, was Jewish, but crucially she was a German Jew not an east European

Jew and this is what her critics – Isaiah Berlin (from Latvia), Saul Bellow (whose father was born in Vilnius), Irving Howe (the son of Jews from Bessarabia) – could not forgive. In a new edition of his 1998 biography of Isaiah Berlin, Michael Ignatieff writes, Berlin 'was genuinely infuriated by her argument that European Jewry might have resisted the Holocaust more effectively... The thought that his own people, the gentle, inoffensive, unheroic Berlins and Volshonoks of Riga should be criticised from the safety of New York for having failed to stand up to the SS struck him as a piece of monstrous moral conceit.'

Laura Knight was not Jewish, but her painting, *The Nuremberg Trial, 1946*, is fascinating because she knew it wasn't enough to show what she could see in the Nuremberg courtroom. She needed to find a way of showing the terrible violence that led to this new kind of trial. We should also acknowledge what West, Gellhorn, Flanner, and their contemporaries, Elizabeth Bowen and Iris Murdoch, also tried to do. They knew something extraordinary had happened to 'the Judicial Imagination,' between Nuremberg and the Eichmann Trial, and they tried to capture this in their reports: only recently have we started to appreciate their powerful legacy.

David Herman



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CHANNEL ISLAND REVIEW

Lord Pickles has appointed a panel of eleven internationally recognised experts to conduct a review of evidence into the number of prisoners who died on the Channel Island of Alderney during the Nazi occupation.

There has been considerable speculation in recent years over numbers of individuals murdered by the conditions in the camps. This has caused distress to the people of Alderney as well as the families of those affected.

Lord Pickles' announcement has inevitably prompted claims that the government inquiry will become overly obsessed with numbers. But others argue that raw, credible data is essential when framing Nazi barbarity and Britain's response to it.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-into-the-number-of-prisoners-who-died-on-alderney-during-the-nazi-occupation>

NEW BRNO MUSEUM

AJR members – especially those of Czech descent – may wish to plan a visit to the new MEHRIN Moravian Jewish Museum, which will present the history of the Jewish presence in Moravia, including the tragic events of the Holocaust and the subsequent silence of the communist era. More info at <https://en.mehrin.cz/>



WALK TALK BAKE

At the end of July a group of AJR members donned sunglasses and rain jackets for a walking tour of the East End led by Esther Rinkoff. Esther used to be part of AJR's Outreach Team and now leads tours around Bishopsgate, Spitalfields and Whitechapel, ending at the Rinkoff bakery in Stepney Green for a delicious bagel lunch. As with all our walking tours, this one was sold out and we hope to bring you many more in the future.



AJR first generation member Paul Lederman was surprised and delighted to learn that this photo – taken by Mary McConnell at the Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust, and simply entitled 'Paul and Flo' – had been selected as a top five winner in a national photography competition for NHS staff and volunteers to mark 75 years of the health service. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/2023/07/05/our-nhs-at-75-london-photos-amongst-winning-entries-for-fujifilm-photo-competition/>

STAMMTISCH



AJR Next Generations' first Stammtisch was a great success. Around 25 of us met at the Bohemia House in West Hampstead at the beginning of August. We were able to spend most of the evening in the garden, enjoying great Czech wine and beer while meeting new friends. Bohemia House (originally called the Czech & Slovak Club) was originally acquired after WW2 as a meeting place for Czech and Slovak immigrants, many of whom had fought alongside the Allied Forces during the war. Our group was split between those who were there for the first time, and those who remembered having dinner there with their grandparents. Whichever the circumstances, everyone agreed it was a great venue and we will be returning for the next Stammtisch on Wednesday 11 October.



A GRRRRREAT AFTERNOON!

Several AJR members and their children & grandchildren had a terrrrific time watching a performance of *The Tiger Who Came To Tea* during the summer holidays, followed by a celebratory tea to mark 100 years since the birth of Judith Kerr.

MY STOLPERSTEIN JOURNEY

My journey started in June 2019 when, by pure chance, it was brought to my attention that an appeal had been placed in that month's issue of the AJR Journal that the local history society and Stolperstein Initiative in Malsch, Germany, was looking for Peter David Katz, son of Emanuel and Hilda Katz (née Hess).

I never knew that my German mother's birthplace was Malsch, a small village that even today only has a population of under 4,000 people. In fact I knew very little about my mother's family as neither my mother nor my father (who was Austrian and born in Bratislava) ever really spoke to me about their past. Both my sets of grandparents were murdered by the Nazis and there has always been a large void in my life since I was missing my heritage.

My father (born in 1911) was held in Camps until he was able to leave for the UK in March 1939.

My mother (born in 1918) arrived in the UK in April 1939 with just a small suitcase and speaking very little English.

Now organisers in Malsch were planning to lay six stones for my maternal grandparents Wilhelm and Betty Hess and their four children (one being my mother) and another stone for Therese Hess, my great-grandmother. Numerous efforts had been made to trace and contact descendants of the family, but with little success – hence the insertion in the *AJR Journal*. The organisers wanted to enhance their knowledge of the Hess family and sought my help.

Soon after we established contact the organisers sent me photos of the house that my grandparents had bought when they married in 1910, as it was then and as it is today. This was followed by an immense amount of information from then until May 2023.

The date for the formal placing of the Stolpersteine was set for 23 May and the local organisers made it very clear that they wanted my presence. I had mixed

emotions, and I was concerned (as was my wife Sherry) as to the possible psychological effect on me of visiting Malsch and being in the place where my mother was born. There were many times when I felt I did not want to go but after receiving the formal invitation from the Mayor in February, I made my final decision and accepted, albeit still with trepidation. We were invited to stay with retired Protestant minister, Hans-Georg Schmitz and his wife Eva. In fact, it was Hans-Georg who had been the main researcher on my family history.

Sherry and I arrived in Malsch on Sunday 21 May, both feeling quite nervous. Our three-day programme included a Commemorative Evening at the local Civic Hall, where I made a speech to an audience of nearly 100 people including the Mayor, the placing of one Stolperstein outside my great-grandmother's house and six Stolpersteine outside my grandparents' house, followed by a tour of my grandparents' house, kindly opened up to us by the present owner.

During the Commemorative Evening Hans-Georg gave a presentation entitled *Biography: Wilhelm Hess and Family*. When I saw the photos of Wilhelm and his wife Betty projected on the screen, it was the first time that I ever felt that the grandparents whom I never knew were real people who had lived.

I now feel that a part of this void in my life has been filled and, at long



Looking For notice in *AJR Journal*, June 2019

last, I have a heritage which I can pass on to our own children and grandchildren.

There are many stories to tell, some of which are quite unbelievable, but my intention is to go into more detail when talking to friends and to my local Bushey Community.

The pandemic has turned the world upside down and we are living in difficult, and uncertain, times but it is reassuring to know that there are many good people living on this earth, some of whom we had the privilege to meet in this small German village where my mother was born.

Peter Katz



A local newspaper report about the Malsch Stolpersteine

DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S LETTER FROM ISRAEL



A NEW DAWN?



For the last few months Israel's long-suffering population has been subjected to a double

barrage of government legislation on the one hand and demonstrations protesting said legislation on the other.

Anyone living in Israel who is not completely cut off from the news media is unable to avoid involvement at some level in the ongoing dispute between the warring parties, and I use the term 'warring' advisedly because that is essentially what is happening between the two main segments involved. As is the case in many countries, the result of the recent general election left Israel with no party having a clear-cut majority. In the past this situation has generally been overcome by forming a coalition government, and in recent years Binyamin Netanyahu has proved himself most adept at this. When a rival party used the same tactic to form a government a year ago, he refused to acknowledge its legitimacy and expended considerable energy and resources on undermining it, which took him just a year and a half to achieve.

The government which he has subsequently formed combines his right-leaning Likud party with a motley crew of ultra-orthodox, extreme right-wing and self-serving adherents. It is this collection of individuals which now seeks to radically alter Israel's legislative basis, overthrow its system of checks and balances and impose laws which refer to Talmudic principles as the basis on which society is to function.

When I immigrated to Israel in the 1960s, before the Six-Day War, it

was essentially an open, liberal society where orthodox, ultra-orthodox and secular Jews lived more or less in harmony. Today the fear among secular Jews like myself is that the narrow view of orthodox Judaism has prevailed in the government and is being imposed on society in general through the new legislation. After all, by revoking the criterion of 'reasonableness' in assessing laws, what is there to stop the government from restricting the rights of women and LGBT individuals in accordance with orthodox Jewish practice? And the concepts of equality and human rights, as enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence, are irrelevant for those in the government who seek to repress the Palestinian population, whether in Israel proper or in the West Bank territories.

Today most Israelis are secular, but there's no guarantee that this will continue to be the case. Reproduction rates among orthodox and ultra-orthodox Israelis are far higher than those for the secular population. As a former member of B'nei Akiva in England, I know that the ultimate aim of even the most moderate of orthodox Jews is for Israel to become a state based on religious law.

That is a prospect that is anathema to me and all my compatriots who go out to demonstrate and remonstrate whenever they can. And it is a tragedy to see Netanyahu and his government ride rough-shod over anyone who adheres to the open-minded spirit that once characterised Israel, causing internal dissension and wreaking havoc in so many spheres.

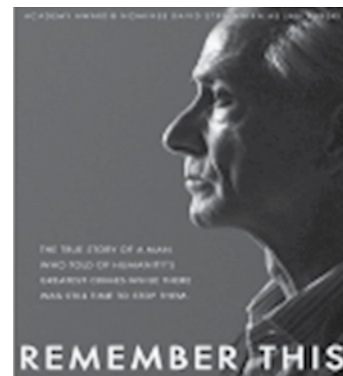


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TRIP TO ISLE OF MAN

In March 2024 West End Travel is organising another four-day trip to the Isle of Man on behalf of AJR and Jewish Renaissance. The itinerary will include all the main sites associated with the many refugees who were interned on the island during WW2. More information from Marcel on 07712 290 520 or e-mail marcel.manson@westendtravel.co.uk

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.

LIGHT MUSIC, GREAT SINGING

Martin Mauthner's tribute to composer Werner Richard Heymann (July) struck a personal chord. Heymann's compositions epitomised the Weimar era's light music, none more than the song, *Irgendwo auf der Welt*. Its best-known recording was made by the Comedian Harmonists in 1932, but in the same year another version of this hauntingly evocative tune became a best-seller for another popular close-harmony group, the Kardosch Sängern, whose bass voice belonged to my uncle, Paul von Nyiri. Like the Comedian Harmonists the group fell foul of Nazi racial laws and was forced to disband in 1935.

A fascinating history of the Kardosch Sängern and their times, *Herr Kardosch und seine Sänger* by Martina Wunsch was published in 2022. My uncle's extraordinary career is detailed at https://profilbaru.com/article/Paul_Alexander_Nyiri
Joseph Seelig, London NW2

OPPENHEIMER AND THE ATOM BOMB

Watching Christopher Nolan's brilliant film *Oppenheimer* reminded me of being in the Sixth Form in 1952 and being asked to write an essay on: *By dropping Atom Bombs on Japan the United States committed as big a crime as the Germans did in building concentration camps throughout Europe.*

I repeat, this was 1952. The world did not yet know all about the Holocaust. I, however, knew about concentration camps because I knew that my mother's sister and brother-in-law had perished at Auschwitz. But I was the only Jew in my school, and most of my peers saw dropping the bombs as a worse crime.

I argued that the bombs shortened the War. The counter argument was how inhumane the dropping of the second bomb was and how indiscriminate were the victims. Yes, the Germans chose their victims, the Americans didn't care whom they killed. It was difficult, as a 17 year old, to counter this.

I knew very little about Oppenheimer before I saw the film. I didn't even know he

was Jewish, as were many of those helping him create the bomb. His conscience clearly troubled him. Wouldn't yours if you had created something that could destroy mankind? But it cannot be compared to what happened in the concentration camps – can it?

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts.

HMT DUNERA

In his very interesting article (July) about the *Dunera*, Alan Lion does not say that the Germans on board were prisoners of war.

My brother Richard was one of the passengers. He did not talk about it much (as most survivors/refugees) but he told me that a lot of the Jews were very unhappy about the POWs wandering around free; some of the Jews could not cope and committed suicide.

Victor Garston, London NW11

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

I note that AJR does not appear to have published any 'Letters from Israel' by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson for some time. Her perceptive insights into the Israeli social and political landscape, especially considering that her articles are crafted from the vantage point of an Anglo-Jewish background.

Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove

Your August *Letter from Israel*, whilst very informative about the AICEO history and collaboration with AJR, had no indication of the turmoil in the State of Israel rising to a peak beyond that reported by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's *Letter from Israel* in June.

What happens 'in' and 'to' Israel is very important to most, if not all, of us. I would respectfully ask that you consider the need to have a balanced report of what is happening, in your next edition.

Anthony Levi, London N2

Note from Editor: We appreciate that many of our members are interested in the situation in Israel and we hope you find Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's latest Letter, on page 5, informative.

HUGO (PUCK) DACHINGER



I was delighted to read your article about Hugo 'Puck' Dachinger (August).

One of my most treasured possessions is this portrait of my father, Josef Meller, painted by Dachinger in 1940 when both Jewish 'aliens' were interned in Mooragh Camp, Ramsey, on the Isle of Man. It is an excellent likeness of the 19 year-old, bewildered at his loss of liberty after having suffered the trauma of being forced to flee Nazi-run Vienna the previous year.

My father kept in touch with 'Puck' for many years, he and my stepmother, Ruth Meller, meeting the painter in cafés near their London home. On one of these meetings, Dachinger sketched both Ruth and Josef (Puck's café sketching being mentioned in your article). I have been left pieces of correspondence between Dachinger and my father, including a letter the painter wrote following the death of his wife Meta in May 1983. According to my father's meticulous notes on the publicity flyer, he (and Ruth?) attended the Memorial Exhibition Dachinger put on in Meta's honour in July 1983. They were also sent an invitation to the private view of Puck's show in Hampstead in October 1986. Sadly, my father died the previous year; however, I am glad that my stepmother kept the catalogue, which I now treasure along with my father's teenage portrait.

Rachel Meller, Cambridge

CORONATION BLUES

Thank you to everyone who wrote in response to Dr Anthony Grenville's *Coronation Blues* article, part one of which appeared in our August issue. We received

too many letters to reproduce them in their entirety, so here is a summary.

Anthony Levi “found Anthony Grenville’s article a succinct and excellent description of UK history of the past 70 years”. These thoughts were echoed by **George Donath**, who described Dr Grenville’s courage as “admirable”, adding “The decline we have lived through since landing in this country is palpable but best not talked about. Well done for doing the opposite”.

But several readers described the article as unduly gloomy, feeling that there is much about Britain that can still be admired. According to **Susan Hamlyn**: “We do not have the upheavals caused by the short-sighted mismanagement of immigration now so catastrophic in France. We are not dominated by the far right, as in Italy, Hungary and elsewhere. The racist culture so prevalent in much of Eastern Europe is not tolerated here. We have humane and accepting attitudes to difference of all kinds and we do not punish our fellow citizens for their sexual orientation, as is becoming dangerously common abroad. We may be economically poorer but we are a more tolerant, kinder and freer society than most. We are far from perfect but I feel that my grandparents who arrived here from Nazi Germany in June 1939, would still find the humanity and generosity of spirit they met here.”

John Farago described Britain as “... a rich country with a diverse and varied culture in which a majority of the population live peaceful, satisfied lives. True, there are too many citizens living in unacceptable poverty and suffering from poor health, education and sub-standard housing. That is a disgrace to our government. We have a desperately polarised political class that spends its time on trivial controversies and fails to deal well with the way the nation is governed or the way we interact with the wider world. But in cities, towns and the countryside many of our people live safe, comfortable, fulfilled lives. We see giant TV screens in people’s living rooms, cars in our forecourts, flowers and vegetables in our gardens. The internet, technology like Google, Zoom, YouTube enrich our lives, knowledge and skills. We

enjoy Glastonbury, the Proms, a greater variety of sports and we go on holidays... Those of us who were lucky enough to come to the UK as Jewish refugee children have much to be grateful for – including years of support and understanding of our community by the King.”

Peter Oppenheimer told us that “By 2021 Britain’s gross national income per head, measured in US dollars on a purchasing-power-parity basis, came to a little over \$49,000. The corresponding figures for France and Germany were both \$51,000 and for the United States \$70,000.” He added “...even this discrepancy does not make all Europeans yearn to move across the Atlantic.”

George Donath wrote: “Dr Grenville does offer a reason for this decline and what might/ought to be done to reverse it. His reference to BMW looked at the result rather than the origin. The question to ask is why a regional, initially second class, German motor car manufacturer was allowed to achieve such prominence in the face of parallel UK manufacturers such as Rover and Triumph, in the process acquiring, developing and crowning such a British icon (albeit of Greek parentage) as the Mini.”

Part 2 of Dr Grenville’s article can be found on page 15 of this issue.

MIRA HAMERMESH FILMS

The British Film Institute catalogue, available on their website, includes a large number of Hamermesh films. BFI staff are delighted to receive viewers at their research unit. It’s also possible to hire a screen there.

John Reizenstein, London NW3



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LOOKING FOR?

BERNHARD (BENNY?) WINKLER

Bernhard came to the UK from Vienna, where he was born in 1922. His father was Heinrich Winkler, his mother Judith Duchowny from Buczacz. Prof. Jonathan Skolnik is also a descendant of the Duchowny family. Benny Winkler met his grandfather (P. Kirschner, New York) decades ago.
jskolnik@umass.edu

LEEDS JEWISH BOYS HOSTEL



Boys at the Leeds hostel

Helen Frais is conducting research into the work of the Leeds Jewish Refugees Committee and is especially looking for any information relating to the 60+ Kindertransport children who were hosted in the Leeds Jewish Boys Refugee Hostel on Stainbeck Lane.
afrais@tiscali.co.uk

ACKERMAN’S CHOCOLATES

Nicholas Rose is writing a history of the chocolate business started by his grandparents Werner and Lotte Ackerman and is keen to hear from anyone with memories of them and/or their firm. Photos or shop memorabilia are of particular interest.
privatenr@gmail.com

HERBERT LEITER

Genealogist Judith Joseph, honorary archivist for Birmingham Hebrew Congregation, is seeking information as to the whereabouts of Herbert Julius Leiter, aka Herbert Israel Leiter, born 1923 in Nurnburg. He married Senta Fassbender, who passed away in 1977, aged 49.
josephj-2007@hotmail.co.uk

SPOTLIGHTING ERIK ESTORICK

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 **Eric Estorick**.

Elihu [Eric] Estorick was born in 1913 in Brooklyn, the son of Jewish émigrés who had fled the pogroms in Russia in 1905. He studied sociology at New York University, where he embraced left-wing intellectual ideas. By 1938 Estorick was a lecturer in sociology at New York University, a position he kept until 1941 when he came to England to undertake research for his book on the Labour politician Stafford Cripps. During WW2, he became head of the British Empire Division of the United States Broadcast Intelligence Service.

Travelling home on the Queen Elizabeth liner after the war, he met Salome Dessau, the daughter of a German-Jewish refugee. She had studied art in London, specialising in textile design. They married in New York in 1947, moving back to London the same year. During their honeymoon in Switzerland, they met the Polish émigré artist Arthur Bryks who showed them Umberto Boccioni's book on Italian Futurism with illustrations by Severini, Giacomo Balla and others. Eager to buy art, the Estoricks travelled with him to Milan to visit Mario Sironi, a former Futurist artist, impoverished, unfashionable and

ostracised because of his earlier support for Mussolini. They bought the contents of his studio on the spot. From that moment on, Estorick became an avid collector, travelling frequently to Italy in the late 1940s and 1950s to visit studios. In 1956 he employed émigré Annelly Juda as his secretary; she in turn would establish her own successful eponymous gallery in London which still runs today. Bolstered by a strong post-war dollar and a feeble lira, he was able to build one of the world's greatest collections of early 20th-century Italian painting, often buying them at knock-down prices. He also became an official export agent for modernist Russian artworks, visiting Russia 14 times between 1960 and 1964.

In the 1950s Estorick started exhibiting his collection across Britain, with the help of the Arts Council, and in 1960 took up art dealing full-time. He opened the Grosvenor Gallery in Mayfair later that year, selling works by artists such as Marc Chagall and René Magritte, as well as by previously unknown painters, including from Czechoslovakia. In 1965 he mounted an exhibition of works by Oskar Rabin, one of the leaders of Soviet 'unofficial art' of the 1960s, the first one-man show by a living Soviet artist held in the West. In 1966 he mounted the first London exhibition devoted to the Russian avant-garde artist El Lissitzky.

In 1967 he met the Russian-born French designer Erté (Romain de Tirtoff), whose art deco work had been popular in the



Estorick helped Erté become one of the best-selling artists of the 1980s

1930s. In 1967, the Estoricks signed an exclusive contract with Erté, organising a series of solo exhibitions in Europe and the United States which brought him back into the public eye and made him one of the best-selling artists of the 1980s.

Unwilling to sell his collection to museums, shortly before his death in 1993 he founded the Eric and Salome Estorick Foundation to house his Italian works. In 1998 the Estorick Foundation opened its doors to the public, in a Georgian house in Canonbury Square in north London.



Erik Estorick

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Cornish Stories of Survival



The latest in our series on organisations that receive grant funding from the AJR looks at **Cornish Stories of Survival**, a project that supports Holocaust education throughout Cornwall.

The project centres around a series of award-winning animation films which were created by students at Falmouth University and tell the true story of Blanka and her sister Klara, both Holocaust survivors.

The project was devised for HMD 2020 by Blanka's daughter, Cynthia – a local resident – together with the Interfaith Development Worker at Cornwall Faith Forum, Rita Stephen, who was concerned that “the lessons learned from one of the darkest chapters in human history were slowly being forgotten.” They then contacted Katharine Nicholls, a senior lecturer at Falmouth University – to see if a resource for schools could be developed. With weekly support from Rita and Cynthia, students had the exciting opportunity to create animations of Blanka & Klara's story to create a unique Holocaust education resource for schools in Cornwall.

The project draws from a range of sources – fundamentally from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education's ground-breaking study, 'What do students know and understand about the Holocaust?' (Foster et al, 2016) and the Centre's seven research briefings, developed to help teachers increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning about the Holocaust. The resulting resource was piloted by seven schools across the county of Cornwall before being rolled out across the county. Participating schools are encouraged and celebrated throughout the project by Cynthia and leading practitioners, thereby providing maximum support to students and their teachers while approaching this



Cornish Stories on display

challenging area of our collective history.

The resource includes many practical suggestions and examples as to how each part of the story might be realised by young people, but these are not designed to be prescriptive. Neither are the resources intended to 'speak' to a particular subject discipline. Whilst teaching about the Holocaust is a compulsory element of the National Curriculum for History at KS3, there are limitless opportunities for this story to be followed by teachers and young people in other subject disciplines across the curriculum.

The future for Cornish Stories of Survival is exciting. Following consultations between Cynthia and Rita and leading Holocaust education practitioners, this project – with Blanka's story at its heart – offers schools in Cornwall a unique insight into the story of a family, stories of their community, stories of faith, hope, strength & courage and stories of survival.

The support from the AJR has been

invaluable and has led to the creation of an open-access website resource for participating schools, due for launch in September this year, designed as a central resource 'hub' and the recent appointment of Charlotte Lane as Project Lead. The AJR's Alex Maws also provided a keynote speech at our annual Cornish Stories Teacher Conference,

This project would also not have been possible without the support and guidance of Cynthia's family, Rita, our regional partners and colleagues at UCL Centre for Holocaust Education and to them we extend our warmest thanks and gratitude.

Charlotte Lane



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The Suitcase

Eve Forman recently attended a writing course organised by AJR after which she wrote this story.

It all started on 8 March 1980 when my father Hans Fisher died, aged 71. He was a lovely, kind Viennese gentleman who had lived in London for 41 years.

A few weeks later I was going through his paperwork in his office when I found a battered old Suitcase at the back of his files. With great trepidation I opened the clasps, gently lifted the lid and found it was full of treasured memories of his family's past life.

Numerous documents, including birth and marriage certificates from his parents and grandparents dating back to 1880. My eyes were drawn to the big red 'J' stamped on his Austrian passport and his first name written as Israel when I knew he'd always been known as Hans. I later discovered that all Jewish men had the name Israel added to their real name and all Jewish women had the name Sarah added to their names, to depict they were Jewish.

I also came across a small pair of white baby shoes which I suddenly realised were mine. I couldn't believe that Hans, who rarely showed any emotions, had kept these shoes for over 30 years. Many old photos: one of him in Venice with his parents, when he looked about 16, and another on a tram in Berlin when he was even younger. Photos of me, my mother Elsie and lots of my three children.

I found documents from the Jewish Relief Agency who had met him when he disembarked at Harwich and found him a room with a Jewish family in Stamford Hill.

So the story emerged of the life Hans and his parents, Rosa and Simon, led in Austria before Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party invaded and changed their lives forever.

SIMON FISCHER'S STORY

Simon was born on 7 December 1880 in a small town called Nitra, which is now in Slovakia, but was then in Czechoslovakia.



The only precious son of Moritz and Marie Fischer, he had four older sisters. Nitra was a small, poor town with less than 2000 Jews. After violent anti-Jewish riots, the family moved to a small house on the outskirts of Vienna. Moritz found work as a tailor, but money was hard to come by.

Aged just 13, Simon found work in a shop in a wealthy suburb of Vienna selling trimmings and cloth for men's suits. He worked all hours to provide for his family, enabling his parents to save enough money to marry off all his sisters.

One summer evening he left work to meet his friends in Leopoldstadt, in a beautiful palm lined street. Most Viennese went to the famous coffee houses for lunch and after work. Leopoldstadt was the area allotted in 1622 to the Jewish population of Vienna. This is where most Jews lived, until 1938 when they were either murdered, moved abroad or taken to the notorious camps.

Walking down the street his eyes were drawn to a beautiful young lady across the road. She had lovely hair and bright blue eyes. Discreetly he followed her home and the next evening arrived at her address in a horse and carriage to ask her father's permission to take her out for a coffee. Her

name was Rosa Broddman and he knew instantly that he would marry her.

After he was promoted to manager of the shop in 1906, they married and rented a nice apartment nearby. Rosa was a marvellous cook and their home was always filled with wonderful aromas.

On 2 December 1908 their first son Hans was born, followed a few years later by another son Kurt, who was the apple of Rosa's eye, always laughing and giggling.

Life was good for the Fischer family. One day his employer walked Simon into his office and told him he had become unwell and decided to leave the business to Simon. His only son was a gambler and he knew that Simon would look after him when times were hard. So *S. Fischer* began, and as business was good, he soon bought the shop next door.

They moved into a beautiful and larger apartment and Rosa employed a maid to help look after the boys. Sadly, when Kurt was nine, he caught chicken pox and died a few days later. Rosa's hair went white overnight. Hans became quite withdrawn until, aged 12, they realised he needed glasses and he became a much happier child.

He started working in the shop at 15 and Simon retired when he was 50, when he could pursue his hobbies of cards and chess meeting his friends.

In 1933 their lives changed forever when Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party swept into power in Germany. Most Jewish families were sure they wouldn't be affected as they considered themselves Austrian and not Jews. How wrong they were!

On 12 March 1938 the Nazi Party marched into Austria; this was known as the Anschluss (joining) and on 9 November 1938, Kristallnacht, the night of the broken glass, occurred when Hitler ordered his Nazi thugs to smash all Jewish businesses, including *S. Fischer*. They all had the word *Jude* daubed on what was left of their shops.

Simon was sure this would pass. However Hans, who had now married Gisela, reached out to his cousin Karl, who had emigrated from new Czechoslovakia two years before to England, asking him to find work visas to escape to England. In 1939 Karl found visas for Hans and his wife and Simon and Rosa. Hans was to be a pattern cutter and Simon a caretaker of a synagogue.

Simon refused to use this visa. He said he had fought for Austria in WW1 and would not demean himself. So Hans came to Britain on his own. But life in Vienna soon became intolerable, so Simon and Rosa sold all their belongings and walked to Czechoslovakia, then Paris, ending up in Brussels. Eventually the Nazis caught up with them and put them in a holding centre. Fortunately for them, this was just a few weeks before liberation.

They arrived in England in 1946, penniless, where Hans had bought a four bedroom house in Cricklewood.

Simon and Rosa were married for 64 years, always holding hands and playing Rummy cards. Simon died aged 91, followed by Rosa, three months later, aged 89. A love story from beginning to end.

MEET THE KINDER

Senior AJR representatives are holding 1-2-1 meetings with various Kinder this year in preparation for the more formal commemorations surrounding the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport in November. These are three of the Kinder we recently met.



Henry Radnan holding a picture of his parents

Henry Radnan

Five year old Henry travelled from Mannheim via Kindertransport with his older brother and younger sister. They stayed initially in Sheffield with their Rabbi and Rebbetzin aunt and uncle, who helped to settle them.

Their father was deported to the Polish border. Their mother tried to get to the UK but was arrested, sent to Drancy and from there to Auschwitz. A postcard that she dropped from the train miraculously found its way to the family in Sheffield.

Henry stayed with several families before being adopted by the Radnanski family (he later anglicised the name). He studied pharmacy at Manchester Uni where he met his wife at a Maccabi club. He has never been back to Mannheim.

Gerda Rothberg

Now 97, Gerda was born Lützen (East Prussia) and had a convoluted journey to the UK via Königsberg, Danzig, Berlin and Hamburg, finally arriving in Southampton in June 1939 with her older and younger sisters. Their parents



Gerda Rothberg holding a drawing of her parents

were deported to and murdered in Theresienstadt.

Gerda, whose story features in a display at IWM North, had an unhappy time with her foster family in Liverpool and then moved to Manchester where she became a dressmaker and met her husband. They have three children, six grandchildren and – so far – seven great-grandchildren.

Edith Conway

Edith was born in Koenigsbach in the Black Forest and came via Kindertransport aged eight with an older sister. Her other older siblings had come to England on domestic visas. Their parents were murdered at Auschwitz.

The two girls were settled with an orthodox family in Manchester, but evacuated to Glossop in Derbyshire when the war started. After the war Edith worked in Reading as a nursery nurse before settling down in Manchester where she got married and had two children. She has never had any desire to return to Germany.

THE MOST LOYAL INTERNEES?

Following the recent creation of an AJR group focusing on descendants of refugees who were shipped to Australia on the *HMT Dunera*, we are delighted to include a report from the son of a refugee who was sent off to Canada.

On 21 June 1940 my late father Karl Rikowski departed from Liverpool with 2108 other Category A and Category B Enemy Alien internees and 523 POWs on the *HMS Duchess of York* bound for internment in Canada. In the face of Nazi advances in the Low Countries and France and the imminent threat of invasion, Enemy Aliens in the UK had been caught in the crude dragnet of Winston Churchill's "Collar the Lot" policy. This meant that even Enemy Aliens previously allowed to remain at large in the UK were liable to be reclassified as dangerous and interned, or somewhat randomly shipped to Canada or Australia.

It was a very unhappy voyage to Canada as almost immediately tensions arose between the Nazi POWs and the supposed Enemy Aliens, the majority of whom were Jewish, anti-Nazi or victims of Nazi oppression. One unfortunate



Guards and prisoners at Red Rock internment camp in Ontario

internee was shot by his guard whilst on board. Things did not get better when they arrived at Red Rock Internment Camp in Ontario. Not only were conditions basic, but conflict, sometimes violent, erupted between the captives.

It soon however became apparent to the British and Canadian authorities that a terrible mistake had been made interning Aliens who were in fact friendly to Britain and implacably opposed to fascism.

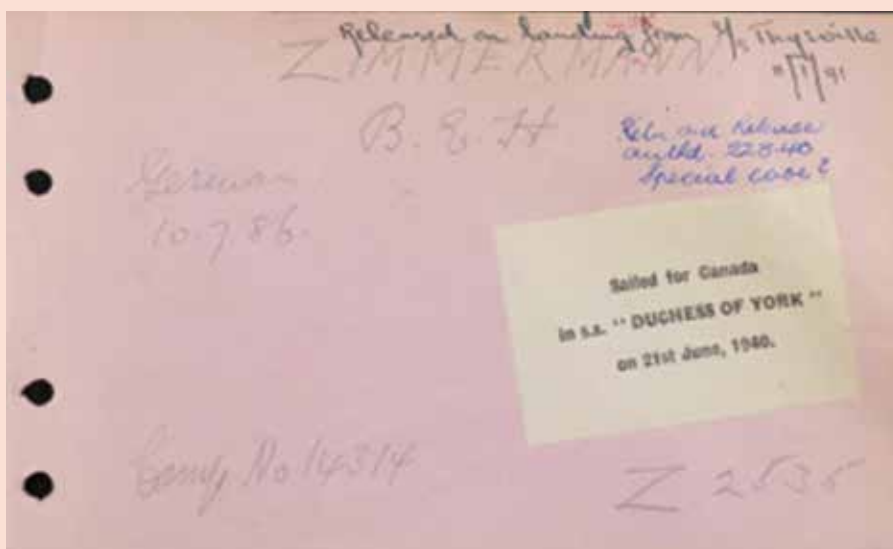
Among those on the *Duchess of York* and interned in Red Rock were Bernhard Zimmerman, the eminent Physical Education teacher at Gordonstoun School, and his colleague Erich Meissner who taught History and German at Gordonstoun. Zimmerman fled Germany

before the war as his wife was Jewish and subject to Nazi persecution. The headmaster at Gordonstoun was Kurt Hahn, who was a Jewish refugee from Nazi oppression. Meissner was released back to the UK in September 1940, and Zimmermann in January 1941. On their release papers they were both marked as "special cases" for release. I wonder if this was because of advocacy from their former pupil at Gordonstoun, one Phillip Mountbatten, later to become HRH the Duke of Edinburgh?

In 1940 the Jews and anti-Nazis were separated from POWs in Red Rock Camp and transferred to Sherbrooke Camp in Quebec. At Sherbrooke conditions were much better and a programme of reclassification of Enemy Aliens into Friendly Aliens ensued, releasing most without restrictions to the UK, and later Canada. There were unsurprisingly many brilliant minds in the camp including Nobel Prize winners, eminent professionals who were leaders in their field, many of whom worked in the war effort after release including the UK Pioneer Corps and in the Canadian Forces.

You could say that those Enemy Aliens shipped to Canada were in fact what the artist Fred Uhlman, a Jewish refugee from Stuttgart who was interned in Hutchinson camp on the Isle of Man, would later call in his book *His Majesty's Loyal Internees*.

Simon James



Record card for Bernard Zimmerman, PE teacher at Gordonstoun School

THE REFUGEE CONTRIBUTION TO TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENGINEERING

The triennial conference of the Research Centre for German & Austrian Exile Studies will be held on 13-14 September in London and will focus on a previously under-explored topic. Attendance can be in person or online. Full details at <https://ilcs.sas.ac.uk/events/refugees-nazism-britain-trade-industry-and-engineering>



The AJR wishes a hearty mazeltov to our member Fred Stern, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday and is pictured here dancing with his daughter.

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Castaway Stories



Jessica Shepherd



Former AJR Trustee Joanna Millan being interviewed for her Castaway Story

Jessica Shepherd captures people's life stories in top-quality audio recordings. She explains what inspired her.

The very first guest – or ‘castaway’ – on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* was the entertainer Vic Oliver, who was born into a Jewish family. That was in 1942 and I'd guess that, ever since, hundreds of Jews have appeared on the programme, including the Holocaust survivors Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Ben Helfgott.

As a Jewish journalist, it was perhaps always on the cards then that I'd be a huge fan of *Desert Island Discs*. So several years ago, inspired by the journalist Jonathan Freedland's recording of his sister in the style of the programme, I interviewed my mother, Elisabeth, who was dying of cancer.

To my surprise, I discovered things about mum that I'd never known before – it was the format that made this possible. I captured her laughter as she talked about a composition she'd written as a teenager in which she declared her intention to work with children when she left school.

Since she died, I've gained much comfort – and some sorrow – from listening to the recording. Hearing mum's voice, her music and her retelling of familiar jokes is a different experience to looking through photos and re-reading letters and emails.

The experience of recording mum made me begin to think that the format of *Desert Island Discs* was just too good.

I then started to offer private recordings in the style of *Desert Island Discs*, but with a few tweaks. I've now done 25 Castaway Stories recordings and I've had

the privilege to count several Holocaust survivors among them, including former AJR Trustee, Joanna Millan, born Bela Rosenthal. Joanna was sent to Theresienstadt with her mother Elsa as a baby. She was later one of the six youngest children sent to Windermere, in August 1945.

Janine Webber is another. When WW2 started, Janine was seven. Aged nine, her family were forced out of their home in Lvov, then in Eastern Poland. By the age of 10, her brother and parents had been killed.

It's important to me that the experience for the castaway is enjoyable – this is not about prodding intrusively into their lives. We don't have to speak about anything that they might find uncomfortable and the emphasis can be on remembering family jokes and anecdotes just as much as heart-wrenching, life-changing moments.

There are of course questions I always ask, such as what are your earliest memories and how do you think you will fare on this desert island. But every interview is tailored to the castaway. To echo the words of the late Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks: "I believe that I am a character in our people's story with my own chapter to write and so are we all. To be a Jew is to see ourselves as part of that story, to make it live in our time and to do our best to hand it on to those who come after us."

Jessica Shepherd
www.sparrowhawkcommunications.com/castaway-stories

THE SOUL RESCUERS

July saw the opening of a new exhibition in Budapest celebrating the life-saving activities of Ottó Komoly and other members of the Hungarian Zionist movement during WW2. Ottó's nephew Tomi Komoly takes up the story.

The exhibition, *LÉLEKMENTŐK (Soul Rescuers)*, is in the Holocaust Memorial Centre (HDKE), at the Páva Street synagogue. It was officially opened on 12 July by Victor Orbán's Deputy State Secretary, Vince Szalay-Bobrovniczky, at an event attended by many Hungarian and foreign diplomats, including the Ambassadors of Israel and Great Britain.

Vince Szalay-Bobrovniczky said that he deeply regretted the loss that befell the Hungarian nation with the murder of hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews, and went on to describe the achievements of Ottó Komoly:

Born Ottó Kohn in 1892 into an assimilated merchant family, Ottó took an active role in the Zionist movement at a young age. After WW1 he obtained a degree in civil engineering at the Budapest University of Technology and got married. In 1931, he changed his surname from Kohn to Komoly. "In Zionist public matters the name Kohn often harmed the case in which he acted," wrote his wife, Lila, in her memoirs. In fact Ottó's moderate views on Zionist politics and his strive for compromise helped his election to President of the Hungarian Zionist Association in 1940.

As the Hungarian government was unable to protect its Jewish citizens deportations began in May. Ottó and his Zionist colleagues' efforts to prevent them only managed to slightly improve the conditions, with the exception of the much publicised Kasztner Train, which carried 1,600+ Jews safely to Switzerland in June 1944. Ottó helped to compile the passenger list for the train but declined to leave on it himself, although he could have. As he explained in his last



Dr Zima speaking during the launch event for *The Soul Rescuers*

letter: "For my part, I could not decide to go with them. I would feel morally dead if I left my post now."

In September 1944 Ottó was entrusted with the leadership of Section "A" of the International Red Cross. With the help of the Halutzim and the Rescue Committee, he established 52 children's homes, saving around 6,000 children and their 600 carers. They also supplied the ghetto and Jewish hospitals with food and medication. Late in December 1944 he moved into the Ritz Hotel, notionally protected by the Red Cross, but on 1 January 1945 he was taken by the Arrow Cross fascists for "supplying information". Never seen again, he was most probably shot and thrown into the Danube.

In 1948 Ottó Komoly was posthumously awarded the silver degree of the Hungarian Order of Freedom, which his wife received in Israel. There is also a symbolic tombstone for Ottó on Mount Herzl, and streets named after him in Haifa and Netanya and in moshav Yad Nathan.

However, during the subsequent Soviet era, the history of the Zionist resistance and the memory of Ottó Komoly became taboo in Hungary. Nevertheless his name is mentioned on the memorial erected on the wall of the Dohány Street synagogue in honour of Hungarian victims of the Holocaust, and a plaque was recently placed at the entrance of the Jewish Museum and Archives, opposite his one-time residence, drawing attention to Ottó's life-saving activities and martyrdom.

After the speeches, András Zima, director of the Holocaust Memorial Centre, gave a guided tour of the new exhibition. He outlined the Centre's desire to bring Ottó Komoly into the collective social memory, because that is where he deserves to be. Just as the Poles do, Hungarians also have to appreciate such heroes, he said. Mr Zima also explained that the exhibition has been designed to be portable, so that it can be exhibited elsewhere in the country later. They do this in the hope that the public opinion of the whole country will be drawn to Ottó's heroism and self-sacrificing life.

IHRA GRANTS AVAILABLE

Applications are now open to the IHRA grant programme, which has co-funded over 100 international projects relating to Holocaust remembrance and education.

The match-funding programme has two criteria: Safeguarding the record of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Roma, and Countering distortion. A separate programme, the Professor

Yehuda Bauer Grant, will also award a single €50,000 grant to one international project which guarantees significant new research on the Holocaust and antisemitism, with no co-funding required.

To apply please submit a 300-word project by 29 September to jsilverman@holocaustremembrance.com

Coronation Blues, part 2

Dr Anthony Grenville continues his comparison of King Charles III's Britain against that of his mother's in 1953.

Britain emerged from WW2 with its prestige amongst the nations of Europe at heights hardly achieved during the grand days of its imperial might. In 1953, by the time of the coronation of Elizabeth II, this was no longer due to Britain's wealth or to the extent of its dominions, but to the moral standing that the British people had earned by their stand against Hitler in the darkest days of the war. Britain's democratic institutions, which were seen to have withstood the test of time as well as the challenge of totalitarianism, were also the object of admiration. Events like the coronation, with their combination of ancient tradition and modern media, helped to cement the image of British integrity, courtesy and decency, of tolerance, fair play and respect for others, of pragmatism, common sense and suspicion of ideological extremes.

But although Britain had emerged from the war on the winning side, in material terms it had been a clear loser; it could no longer sustain its empire, and it had been forced to sell off its overseas investments, the source of a great part of its wealth, to finance its war effort. By 1945, Britain was effectively bankrupt, reliant on American loans. Whereas the new state of West Germany began its life free of debt, the United States insisted that Britain repay its wartime debts on onerous terms. To maintain its role as a supposed world power, Britain also took on heavy military expenditure,

whereas West Germany had none. Little wonder that West Germany was to boast Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz, while Britain produced a nuclear deterrent that had little more credibility than a floating tin can.

Yet Britain continued to prioritise projects that supposedly contributed to its status as a world power ahead of the essentials of sound economic growth; an example was its eagerness to preserve sterling's role as a principal reserve currency alongside the US dollar, allotted to it at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, despite the strains that this imposed on an already weak pound. Regardless of the financial burden, Britain also maintained a huge force in the Suez Canal Zone until 1956 despite the facts that India was now independent, and that Australia and New Zealand had placed themselves under the military protection of the United States. Another relic of imperial thinking was the maintenance after 1945 of a British naval force in Chinese waters, as if Britain could still dominate that area as it had with its former China Station.

Confirming US statesman Dean Acheson's dictum that Britain had lost an empire and failed to find a role, Britain hesitated in the 1950s to choose between the three power groupings open to it. Successive governments continued to place their confidence in the nation's 'special relationship' with the US, though it was evident from 1945 that for the US that relationship was valid only for the duration of the war. Britain also saw the Commonwealth as a kind of successor to the empire that had given it worldwide influence. But the Commonwealth is far too disparate and incoherent a body to wield much

more than symbolic influence. What do Fiji and Uganda have in common, or Canada and Jamaica, other than a former colonial master? Two of the Commonwealth's most populous members, India and Pakistan, have fought three wars since 1947 and are currently involved in a nuclear stand-off, while at the height of the Ukrainian war the South African navy has recently engaged in joint manoeuvres with the Russians.

It is generally acknowledged that after 1945 Britain could have had the leadership of Europe for the asking. But Britain's commitment to Europe was never more than lukewarm. It adopted a semi-detached attitude to what became the European Union, negotiating a plethora of opt-outs, and allowed the Franco-German axis to dominate policy in Brussels. When Britain voted to leave the EU in 2016, it found itself alone, a middle-sized power with a largely rhetorical claim to a world role. For centuries, it had been British foreign policy to avoid facing from a position of weakness a single power that dominated the continent of Europe. Now it is in precisely that position, wielding less power and influence in Europe than at any time since the Stuart monarchs of the seventeenth century gazed apprehensively across the Channel at the France of Louis XIV; today, as befits Britain's second-class status in Europe, British citizens do not even have the right to live, work or study freely in the European Union. Fortunately for us, the EU is not an aggressive, expansionist power. But who would have anticipated in that hopeful summer of 1953 that Britain, formerly the world's leading commercial and industrial nation, would suffer such a decline?

Anthony Grenville

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IMPRESSIONS OF BERLIN

AJR Trustee Miriam Kingsley recently made her inaugural visit to Berlin. She shares her reflections.

When Michael Newman first asked me if I would like to represent AJR at events to mark the second anniversary of the passing of the Fourth Act Amending the Nationality Act, I had very mixed feelings. I was intrigued by the prospect of visiting this city I had heard so much about but had never felt a desire to visit: I really didn't know what to expect.

Both my parents came from Germany; my dear father Hermann Hirschberger was born in Karlsruhe and came to England on the Kindertransport at the age of 12, while my dear mother Eva was born in Beuthen but escaped with her family to Brazil when she was three.

Despite being fairly well travelled, my only previous visit to Germany was a short stint in Stuttgart when I was 15, when my parents thought it would be useful for me to spend a fortnight with some elderly cousins in preparation for my German 'O' level.

So it was with some trepidation that I travelled to Berlin on a rainy June early morning...

My first impression on arriving at Berlin airport was of a rather cold and soulless building. I had heard stories of the German love of efficiency so I was surprised to find their public transport system rather lacking in user-friendly maps and signage, and no staff around to provide advice on travel directions or train delays which I was to encounter – come back Transport for London, all is forgiven!

As I walked around central Berlin exploring its wide boulevards, large imposing buildings and monuments, such as the Brandenburg Gate, I pictured the Nazi rallies. This contrasted with the picturesque *Museuminsel* – a prettier area with a buzz. I was struck by the modernity of many buildings, but of course so much of the city has recently been rebuilt, particularly in the former East Berlin.



Miriam by the Kindertransport memorial in Berlin

Although I normally manage to orientate myself when I travel, I couldn't work out when I was in what was historically east or west Berlin until someone told me a helpful trick...look at the *Ampelmänner*, the symbols on pedestrian crossing signals. If the male figure was wearing a hat, I knew I was in what was formerly East Berlin; without a hat, and I was in the former West.

I was struck by the cutting edge design of the (controversial) Holocaust memorial. The monument is composed of 2,711 rectangular concrete blocks, laid out in a grid formation. This allows for long, straight and narrow alleys between them, along which the ground undulates. It succeeded in making me feel disorientated and caused me to reflect. It impressed upon me just how embedded German Jewry was in German culture.

A surreal moment came when, arriving at the Bundestag on Friday evening, I was greeted by a security woman with 'Shabbat shalom' and watching musicians performing the work of Jewish composers in the Parliament, with the German flag flying behind them.

Equally poignant was lying on the grass listening to a klezmer concert in the beautiful gardens of the Jewish Museum on a warm sunny Sunday afternoon with 200 others; I couldn't help but wonder what Hitler would have made of that!



Street crossing signs in East & West Berlin

The content of the programmes marking the new law were no less impressive and emotionally challenging, not least the sheer number of people who have applied and exchanging anecdotes about the feelings and motivations for doing so.

Credit was rightly given to Felix and Isabelle Couchman who did much to drive the advocacy to widen access to citizenship rights. We heard too from Tad Kelly, who relayed the story of his late mother-in-law whose German citizenship was restored shortly before she died. He wisely noted, "...Reconciliation is a journey, not a destination. We must continue to move forward and strengthen our efforts – now and without hesitation."

I returned home so grateful for the opportunity to explore Berlin and meet with others, hear their different stories, and reflect on what was common to all of us, a curiosity to connect in some way to our German roots.

It was cathartic to mix with others who grew up with a German parent or parents – comparing notes on cakes we would eat – *apfel strudel* – songs our parents would sing to us when we were little – *hoppe, hoppe, reiter*. It has given me a new and different perspective. Above all I loved being able to talk about my parents and piecing together all their stories.

REVIEW

THE BOX WITH THE SUNFLOWER CLASP: UNCOVERING A JEWISH FAMILY'S FLIGHT TO WARTIME SHANGHAI

By Rachel Meller
Icon Books

This wonderful book traces the story of a family forced to flee from Vienna to a radically different life in colourful wartime Shanghai following the annexation of Austria by Germany. After author Rachel Meller's mother, Ilse, had humiliatingly been forced by the Nazis to scrub the pavement she escaped to England on a domestic visa. But tragically Rachel never knew the woman who had given birth to her as she died when her little daughter was a baby. Her Jewish refugee father soon re-married and although she and her older sister Claudia were brought up by a loving stepmother, Rachel still yearned to find out more about the past.

However somebody else had been close to Ilse and that was her younger sister Lisbeth and the two girls had grown up alongside each other for 16 years. Little was known about Lisbeth who had eventually settled in California. There were rumours of a mysterious childhood accident – some said self-inflicted – but otherwise she was inscrutable. But later she bequeathed Rachel a Chinese-style cabinet she had long admired. Deep inside was a carved wooden box with a clasp engraved with a sunflower. Inside was a treasured collection of photographs, letters, documents including passports and visas. Most items dated from the mid-1930s with the last from the early 1950s, a collection from Lisbeth's early teens to her thirties. It lay untouched for years until Rachel decided to delve into the family history.

Ilse and Lisbeth grew up in an elegant apartment with parents Arnold and Edith Epstein in Leopoldstadt, the city's second

district. But with increasing safety risks Arnold fled to Shanghai, the only place remaining for which – thanks to a compassionate official – he could get a visa. He was finally able to send for Edith and Lisbeth who sailed on the month long voyage in some comfort. Vivid local scenes met them on arrival and they lived in a cramped one-room apartment although they were much more fortunate than many.

Shanghai was home to a thriving community of people of similar backgrounds with Jewish culture flourishing in "Little Vienna". Everything was radically different with a mishmash of customs, English, Chinese and Russian – some very rich people, others desperately poor – and filth and smells in the enormous hectic city and waterfront. Rickshaws, street performers and sellers all jostled for space, with deadly diseases including typhoid, malaria and typhus rife, as was gambling and prostitution. Life was cheap particularly for the Chinese.

Things became more frightening and difficult after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 as the Japanese consolidated their hold on Shanghai. Food was short, and "stateless refugees" were forced to move into a square mile ghetto by May 1943. This though was less restrictive than ghettos in Nazi Europe and the family remained unharmed. Interwoven with the Epstein story is that of the Berlin bookseller Bruno Loewenberg who had escaped after being released from a horrific 13 months in Buchenwald.

The book captures Shanghai's vivid atmosphere in a story which is beautifully written, flowing along in a very compelling way with some surprises. Little is known about family who perished in the Holocaust. But there are other characters which maybe one day might form the basis of another book?

Janet Weston

Errata

The National Literacy Trust has asked us to make clear that no payment was made for its HMD activities to Holocaust Survivor Mala Tribich, who never charges for taking part in educational events.

SECOND GENERATION GROUP ON ZOOM

Psychologist Gaby Glassman, who is herself 2G, is starting a new group for other people of a similar background to explore the impact that the Holocaust and our parents' experiences had on our lives as we grew up and continue to have on us today. There will be 12 weekly sessions, running on Tuesday evenings between September 26 – December 12 at 8.00 – 9.30pm.

Contact Gaby on **07811 353423** or gaby@glassman.com

Mitzvah Day

It's almost time for Mitzvah Day and this year the AJR is implementing 'Plan Bee'. We invite you to visit a friend, plant some bee-friendly seeds with them, and send us a photo – thereby helping us to repair the world. More info from – and photos to – volteam@ajr.org.uk

THE DAY THE MUSIC CHANGED

The National Holocaust Centre has just published the life story of AJR member Hedi Argent in a booklet aimed especially at 'tweens'. It focuses on the experiences of a child who had to learn how antisemitism feels and what becoming a refugee means.

OBITUARIES

Alice FRASER

Born: 11 September 1919, Merzig, Saarland
 Died: 11 June 2023, Stanmore, Middlesex



Berta KLIPSTEIN

Born: 12 March 1927,
 Bielsko, Polish Silesia
 Died: 14 July 2023, Israel

Alice was the youngest child of Sarah and Julius Frenkel, a horse trader who had served in the German army during WW1. She had an older sister, Hanna, and a brother, Max, who had died in infancy.

Alice and her sister went to the local Catholic School where Alice was the only Jewish child in her class. There was some antisemitism from children but, as the teachers did nothing about it, Alice accepted the antisemitism as normal behaviour. By the time she was ready for higher education, Jews were no longer accepted. She therefore left school and went to work as a draper's assistant.

After Kristallnacht Alice could no longer work for non-Jews and took a job in Wangen as a nursemaid to a Jewish family. When she heard that her father was amongst the 30,000 arrested Jewish men, she returned to Merzig. She went to the police station and made such a fuss that the police returned her father's watch and personal effects to Alice – but her father had already been taken to Dachau.

When her father was released six weeks later, he was a broken man. The family then resolved to leave Germany. Their father took the sisters to the railway station, but Alice did not know that she would never see her parents again.

The girls arrived in England in March 1939 and were sent to a non-Jewish household in Gerrards Cross, where Alice was the parlour maid and Hannah the cook. The sisters corresponded with their parents until 1941; after the war they learned that the parents had been taken to Lodz Ghetto and then to Auschwitz.

In May 1940 the sisters were interned on the Isle of Man. They were released in 1941 and sent to Manchester to live with the Nahum family, who were very kind to them. When Hannah wanted to go back to London, they took rooms in Cricklewood and quickly became part of a group of young German Jewish refugees. One of these was Ralph Feibusch who had recently returned to England from internment in Canada.

Alice and Ralph married in 1943; their marriage lasted 71 years. In 1947, after their son Ronnie was born, the family moved to Westcliff, where Ralph's parents lived, and Ralph enrolled at Southend College to train as an Architect. In his spare time he worked as a delivery driver for the local kosher butcher and Alice worked as a cleaner. They had a happy and rewarding life in Southend. For many years Ralph commuted to work in London while Alice became an active life member of WIZO. She worked as a dinner lady at Hamlet Road school, later volunteering as a driver for the Jewish community's 'meals on wheels' service.

Alice said she never thought that she would live to be over 100. They lived in Southend for nearly 60 years and were only persuaded to move to Stanmore in 2005 to be nearer to the family. Alice began to talk about her Holocaust experiences, speaking mainly at schools which her great-grandchildren attended. Less than a month before her passing she attended Belmont Synagogue for the Barmitzvah of her great-grandson Nathan, following every word as he recited his Parsha.

Often asked for the key to her long life, her reply was 'healthy eating and walking every day'. She will be sadly missed by her family and her many friends.

Ronnie Fraser

My name is Berta Klipstein, and I made Aliyah from England two years ago. I was born in the beautiful town of Bielsko in Polish Silesia. I was nine when my father died, and my mother remarried two years later.

After Hitler came to power scores of Jewish refugees flocked into Poland.

On 1 September 1939 we fled from the German invaders – mother, stepfather, myself, an uncle, aunt and grandmother. We boarded a train heading East and were now in Russian territory.

In June 1940, Soviet soldiers broke into our room, confiscated our valuables, and took us to the railway station. We were loaded into cattle trucks, 45 per truck, and sent East. After two weeks the train stopped. 3000 of us were left to cut trees in a swampy clearing in the Siberian Tayga. Two weeks later our jailers took some of us down the river in a massively over-crowded barge. The only food was salt herring. Polluted water came from the engine. Most people suffered from dysentery and there were no toilets. Typhus, cholera and malaria were rife. People who died at night were buried on the river bank. Two weeks later, this journey to nowhere ended in Tomsk, not far from where it started!

We were then moved in a passenger train whose carriages were left at different villages en route. Seventy-eight of us ended up in the village of Pichtach, close to the town of Tayga. We were told we would remain there for the rest of our lives and were soon cutting down trees as before. As winter came, we worked at



Eva SHEPHERD
 Born: 3 March 1934, Vienna
 Died: 23 June 2023, Scotland

– 45C and constantly had to dig ourselves out from overnight blizzards.

In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia so we were released from the Gulag, to join the fight against Hitler. Thousands of European refugees arrived, and many died with no means of support. Bodies were collected from the street each morning. Prices rose, queues for anything lasted for hours, and disease was rife. Half of the group that had survived the year in Siberia, already weakened, died in this place of misery, including my grandmother.

The Russians tried to force Soviet citizenship on us but we all refused and many were imprisoned. During this time, a Polish unit was formed to fight with the Soviets which my stepfather joined. We left Uzbekistan on 2 May 1945, and six days later, we arrived in Moscow. Incredibly, the war had ended and we could return to Bielsko. My parents left for Haifa in 1948. In March 1946 I was fortunate to join about 100 young Jewish survivors taken out of Poland by Rabbi Dr. Schoenfeld. I became a British citizen, and earned a degree in Chemistry and Mathematics at London University. My childhood friend, Zygfryd, who had been deported to the Urals during the war, joined me on a two week pass in 1952 and we were immediately married by Rabbi Dr. Schoenfeld, with a minyan of strangers. We moved to the north of England for Zygfryd's work as a textile designer; he died in Leeds in 2014.

My older son and family live in London, where I have one grandchild, and four great-grandchildren. My other son moved to Zikhron Ya'acov in 2000. In Israel, I have four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. I am proud of them all, and of all they have achieved. They are all proud to be Jews and I am happy to have finally made Aliyah and come home.

This obituary was written by Berta Klipstein herself, in 2020.

Eva Antscherl was born twenty minutes after her twin brother, George. Their parents divorced not long after so the twins lived in Vienna with their mother, Alice, and Alice's parents, Max and Franz Schwarz.

Eva's father was a teacher of music as was his father, Heinrich, who was murdered in the camps along with his wife.

Eva's other grandfather, Max, was a well-known businessman in Vienna. When the Nazi unrest started, he thought it would blow over, but Eva's mother, Alice, was not as hopeful. Because she spoke fluent English and had studied French at the Sorbonne in Paris, in 1838 she got sponsorship to work in England.

Eva and George followed via Kindertransport in March 1939. Eva was fostered by a Jewish family in Great Yarmouth, Dr and Mrs. Rodker, whose son Mervin was around her age. George was fostered by a Quaker family in Norfolk. Eva's mother, working in Macclesfield as a servant for a family Lomas, managed to get her parents out of Vienna at the last minute.

The Lomas family was extremely kind, renting a house for Eva's grandparents. When Eva's grandfather had a stroke, Alice went to live with them. Mr Lomas contributed to his support until he died.

In May 1940, with the threat of invasion, Eva and George came to live in Macclesfield with Alice, who then became an official translator for the government, until the German POWs were repatriated in 1945/46. She remained connected

with the Civil Defence until it was disbanded in the 1960s and was awarded two medals, one of which she received from King George VI at Buckingham Palace.

Leaving school, Eva joined the Hovis baking company as an office administrator until her marriage to Roy Shepherd in March 1961, when they moved into their own home in Watford. Unfortunately, Roy and Eva were not able to have children and in 1970 their marriage ended in divorce. Eva became a loving aunt to George's son Mark, and his step children, Karen, Peter and Graeme.

Eva took over the ownership and running of the Watford house by working fulltime at the Jersey Shop and taking in lodgers, who were all looked after extremely well.

Eva's nephew, Mark, became the "fourth lodger" when he started working in London in 1986. He was the son she never had and she enjoyed a very special and loving relationship with him until she died.

Eva spent many happy holidays with George and his family in North Berwick, Scotland, and everyone loved her visits.

In 2008 George and Eva celebrated their 74th birthdays together, just before George passed away. She was devastated at the loss of her beloved brother. In 2017 she moved to a nursing home in Scotland to be near George's son, Mark, and his family.

Eva will be lovingly remembered by her many friends and family as a very caring, generous and fun person, with a fantastic sense of humour and a sweet tooth!

Mark Antscherl



It was a sad occasion in the AJR office as we said goodbye to our wonderful ARSP volunteers for 2022/23, Clara and Greta. If you have been to any of our events in the past year, chances are you benefited from their hard work and smiling faces whether they were planting oak trees, assisting at our testimony conference, creating wonderful artwork, organising the poetry and knitting groups or simply visiting members. ARSP stands for Action Reconciliation Service for Peace which enables young, non-Jewish German students to volunteer for a Holocaust organisation. Our ARSP volunteers are always amazing and this year has been no exception.

IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	IN PERSON MEETING	CO-ORDINATOR
Monday 4 September	12.30pm	New Outreach Group, Enfield	Ros Hart
Tuesday 5 September	12.30pm	Glasgow Pre Yom Tov Meal	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 6 September	12.30pm	Edinburgh Pre Yom Tov Meal	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 7 September	2pm	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Monday 11 September	All day	Glasgow – Wiener Holocaust Library events at the Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre	Agnes Isaacs
Monday 11 September	12.30pm	Northern Regional Pre-Yom Tov Lunch	Michal Mocton
Thursday 14 September	2pm	Bromley	Ros Hart
Monday 18 September	2pm	Muswell Hill	Ros Hart
Tuesday 19 September	11.30am	Brighton & Hove (walking tour with lunch)	Ros Hart
Tuesday 26 September	11.30am	Wembley	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 27 September	12 noon	St Albans	Ros Hart
Thursday 28 September	11.30am	Central London	Karen Diamond

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

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ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Monday 4 September @ 4pm	Angela Shapiro – Gathering The Voices: Innovative ways to teach about the Holocaust https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83860739706	Meeting ID: 838 6073 9706
Wednesday 6 September @ 2pm	Jackie Kohnstamm, author of <i>The Memory Keeper</i> https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81349759260	Meeting ID: 813 4975 9260
Tuesday 12 September @ 2pm	Joseph Finlay – full details will appear in the weekly e-news https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88127315727	Meeting ID: 881 2731 5727
Wednesday 20 September @ 2pm	AJR Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>The Women of Rothschild</i> by Natalie Livingstone https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88495439680	Meeting ID: 884 9543 9680
Wednesday 27 September @ 2pm	George Hafin – Inspirational & uplifting real life stories https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83811137655	Meeting ID: 838 1113 7655

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

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