



Refugees on the High Street

Many Jewish refugees played a huge part in the transformation of the British high street: starting up famous shops and businesses, transforming shop design, working in advertising and revolutionising famous brands. They changed the look and feel of London.



The imaginary Gruber's antique shop, as featured in the Paddington movies, was based on Michael Bond's experience of his first agent, a German Jewish refugee

First, there was the impact of refugee architects. Walter Bor worked for the London County Council where he was in charge of the reconstruction of Stepney in the East End. Berthold Lubetkin worked on a series of housing estates for Finsbury and also designed the High Point flats in Highgate. Ernő Goldfinger masterminded the huge Ministry of Health complex in Elephant and Castle and built three houses at Willow Road in Hampstead. He was one of the key figures in post-war brutalism. As Daniel Snowman wrote in his acclaimed book, *The Hitler Emigrés* (2002), "A tour d'horizon of the architectural legacy of the émigrés in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s leaves a recurrent image of bold rectilinearity, long uninterrupted lines,

horizontal roofs and a commitment to clear and firm external structure... These schools, hospitals, factories, office blocks and housing estates proclaimed the integration of function and form..." He goes on, "The ideas of Le Corbusier and of German Modernism, in outline so contrary to the traditional tastes of Middle England, helped provide a firm intellectual scaffolding precisely as Britain sought to rebuild the fabric of its civic life. Thus the Modernist architecture of the exiles ... gave post-war Britain much of the physical character by which it can still be recognised to this day."

Some of these buildings became famous landmarks. Peter Moro, born in *Continued on page 2*

DIFFERENT QUEENS

With Purim upon us it seems highly appropriate this month to pay tribute to two different Esthers – Esther Simpson, who rescued hundreds of academics from the Nazis (p15) and Dame Esther Rantzen, who famously helped to reunite hundreds of Kinder with one of their saviours (p11).

Looking forwards as well as backwards, on p4 Dr Gilly Carr shares details of a new charter to safeguard some of our built heritage. On p12 we share some new research by the Claims Conference looking at the changing needs of Holocaust survivors.

We welcome all feedback, including suggestions for future articles.

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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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Refugees on the High Street (cont.)

Heidelberg, was the architect behind the Royal Festival Hall, still the most dramatic building on the South Bank. He went on to build or renovate theatres all over Britain, from Nottingham and Hull to Bristol, Plymouth and Swansea.

Then there were the cafés and restaurants of Soho and the *Finchleystrasse*. Cosmo's and The Dorice and the first Polish restaurant, Daquise, opened in South Kensington in 1947 by Tadeusz Dakowski, a restaurateur in Warsaw before the war. In the West End there were Schmidt's on Charlotte Street, Café Vienna in Cleveland Street, The Schubert Coffee Lounge in Blenheim Street, Balsam's Restaurant in Mayfair, the much-missed Gay Hussar on Greek Street, and The Elysée on Percy Street where Orwell, Koestler and Muggerridge used to eat regularly through the 1940s. These all added a distinctive continental flavour to eating out in post-war London.

There were other connections between European refugees and London eating places. Robert Neumann lunched regularly with Stefan Zweig at Lyons Corner House on the Strand, a favourite haunt of German-speaking exiles. One of Eva Frankfurter's most famous paintings is of West Indian waitresses at Lyons. In Judith Kerr's classic children's story, *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (1968), the family go out for dinner in a local café on the high street and have sausages and chips and ice cream. Kerr's drawings capture the feel of London in the Sixties, buses and streetlights, a world away from mini-skirts and pop music. Interestingly, the food devoured by the Tiger could not be less European. It's very standard English fare.

Central European refugees were significant cultural entrepreneurs. Many had successful careers as film producers, cultural critics and perhaps, above all, as book publishers. But there were also many art dealers and bookshop owners. In 1946 Harry Fischer co-founded The Marlborough Gallery on Albermarle Street, Erica Brausen started The Hanover Gallery, where Francis Bacon had his first one-man show, there was The Lefevre Gallery where Lucien Freud had his first show in 1944, The Modern Art Gallery founded by Jack Bilbo (born Hugo Baruch) which held exhibitions

by Heinz Koppel, Oskar Kokoschka and Kurt Schwitters among others, The Brook Street Gallery in Mayfair run by Robert and Rena Lewin from 1950 to the 1980s, Roland, Browse and Delbanco on Cork Street and Agi Katz's Boundary Gallery in St. John's Wood, where she championed many refugee artists.

Then there were the bookshops: Dillon's University Bookshop on Malet Street where Eva Dworetzki was, writes Tony Grenville, a "formidable figure ... who moved its German section in 1959 from the well-known bookshop Bumpus"; Breslauer & Meyer, the Berlin bookshop restarted in Bloomsbury by Martin Breslauer in 1937 and which his son continued after his father's death in the Blitz in 1940; R and E Steiner on Gloucester Terrace; Hans Preiss booksellers on Bury Place, Libris, a German-language second-hand bookshop on Boundary Road, run by Joseph Suschitzky for almost thirty years after the war; Lola Mayer's specialist bookshop in Maida Vale; St. George's Gallery, off Bond Street, run by Hans Brill's sister and financed by her father which *The Guardian* once described as "the most important art bookshop in London."

There were so many lesser-known shops too. Ackerman's Chocolates, which started up on Kensington Church Street in 1956 and then moved to Goldhurst Terrace; Mathilde Freud's dress shop on Baker Street, designed by her brother Ernst, which she opened with two dress designers from Innsbruck; Stephen Freud spent forty years managing the obscurely named 'Successors to Charles Harden', a shop off Baker Street selling doorknobs, usually packaged in dusty Boxes; and Otto Lucas ran a famous hat shop on New Bond Street. The best guide to small shops and businesses owned by refugees in north London is Anthony Grenville's superb book, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain 1933-1970* (2010). And, of course, there is one of the most famous shops in modern fiction: Mr. Gruber's antiques shop in the Paddington books. Michael Bond based Mr Gruber on his first agent, a German Jew, who Bond said, 'was in line to be the youngest judge in Germany, when he was warned his name was on a list, so he got out and came to England with just a suitcase and £25 to his name.'

Then there were the designers who

invented the look for some of London's most famous shops. Stefan Buzas designed the interiors of the showroom and shop for Finmar and the South African tourist office and Qantas Airways next door, both in Piccadilly, which, in the grey days of the 1950s, made an impact out of all proportion to their size. In an article by Atkinson for *The Architectural Review* entitled 'The Disappearing Shopfront', these were the key images, and a prescient indication of how the appearance of our high streets would be changing. Ernst Stern, Max Reinhardt's designer, designed the Christmas decorations for Selfridge's, where he was "chief of design" and Moholy-Nagy arranged displays for Simpson's in Piccadilly. Already in the 1930s Franz Singer was designing interiors for Peter Jones in Sloane Square and John Lewis in Oxford Street but he didn't emigrate to Britain until the Anschluss. In 1935 Frank Pick commissioned the famous London Transport bus-stop from the designer Hans Schleger. Schleger also designed trademarks for Penguin Books, John Lewis and the Design Centre and created famous posters for Shell and London Transport.

Some of the most enduring images of streets in post-war London come from films like Karel Reisz's *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, the paintings of Frank Auerbach and the photographs of Dorothy Bohm and Bill Brandt.

From architects and designers to art dealers and café owners, from children's writers to photographers and artists, Jewish refugees changed our sense of our cities and high streets, a story that is being carefully studied and retold by a new generation of historians and cultural critics.

David Herman

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AJR MEDIA STARS

The AJR and its members attracted a swell of media coverage in January as organisations and communities across the UK commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day.

An audience of millions watched Sky News special report, which rolled out every hour and featured multiple interviews and footage of AJR's service. Elsewhere, kids TV news show FYI captured our service through the eyes of a 4 G Kinder descendant, for its young viewers and the testimonies of John Fieldsend and Ruth Schwiening were shared on BBC News Online on 27 January. The Sunday Mirror carried a

double page in-depth interview with AJR member and former Trustee Joanna Millan and Rob Rinder, while Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines was featured in both The Times and The Sun.



A selection of the media coverage about AJR and our members during the week of HMD

You can read more about our own activities for Holocaust Memorial Day on page 10.

WALK IN HEROES' FOOTSTEPS

Rudolf Vrba and Alfréd Wetzler risked their lives to try to save Hungarian Jews from certain death. This July you can join a six-day guided memorial walk in their honour, as part of an international group organised by the Czech office of the ICEJ. The approximately 130km route goes from Auschwitz to Skalité, then on to Žilina by train. The costs of the ground arrangements, including half-board accommodation, is 359 Euros per person and you would need to arrange your own flights.



More info and a registration form available via www.on.icej.org/Vrba-Wetzler-2024-july

FREE BRCA TESTING

People with Jewish ancestry are more likely to carry faults in the BRCA genes, which significantly increase the risk for certain cancers.

Free genetic testing is now available to anyone who has at least one Jewish grandparent, is 18+ and already receives NHS care in England.

www.nhsjewishbrcaprogramme.org.uk

We've recently seen a spike of enrolments, especially amongst the third and fourth generation. It's fantastic to see the AJR continue to reach new audiences and grow. The fruits of this were evident in the success of AJR's first 3G/4G Stammtisch, held at Bierkeller in Covent Garden.

Please spread the word about the AJR to your children and grandchildren. Our next 3G/4G Stammtisch will be on 26 March. Contact debra@ajr.org.uk for more details



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SAFEGUARDING HOLOCAUST SITES

On 29 February the UK assumed presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which has recently adopted a new charter for safeguarding Holocaust heritage. Dr Gilly Carr, a member of the UK delegation to the IHRA, explains:

What is an authentic site of the Holocaust? A camp, a ghetto, a killing site, a hiding place, a mass grave: they were the places where the acts of the Holocaust were carried out. Because many of these sites are now suffering from a multitude of threats and risks, the IHRA and its 35 member countries have created a new heritage charter to safeguard them.

The **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Charter for Safeguarding Sites** aims to safeguard all historic Holocaust sites and those of the genocide of the Roma. It is also applicable to authentic sites of persecution of other victim groups by the Nazis and their collaborators. Why should we, in the UK where there are few relevant sites, care?

In fact, British sites do exist, as members of the AJR in the Channel Islands know full well. German forces occupied Jersey and Guernsey from the end of June 1940 until 9 May 1945. Occupation of the tiny island of Alderney ended on 16 May 1945. Thousands of forced, slave and volunteer labourers were brought to the Channel Islands to build the Atlantic Wall, but only Alderney had SS-run concentration camps: Lager Sylt and Lager Norderney.

As an expert on the topic, I am currently co-ordinating the Lord Eric Pickles Expert Review, which seeks to identify how many people worked and died in the island. Today, traces of all camps can be seen in the undergrowth but only one camp, Lager Sylt, is marked with a plaque. None of them is a heritage or educational site, and Sylt received

its plaque only in 2008; even this was put up by a former prisoner. In 2023, an information board was erected a little way outside the camp. Archaeologists have also recently discovered evidence of at least one mass grave, but it currently remains unmarked. There is, however, a memorial in Alderney to those forced and slave labourers who died during the Occupation.

Visiting vulnerable sites like those in Alderney helped the IHRA Project team on Safeguarding Sites to identify common threats and ways to counter them. The Charter begins with principles which outline why it is important to safeguard Holocaust sites. It then lists 16 common threats, risks and challenges which impact sites in the 21st century: climate change, vandalism, lack of funding, decay, wear and tear, inappropriate re-use, and lack of acknowledgement or research. It outlines the duties and responsibilities, offering good-practice solutions and recommendations.

One of the biggest revelations during our research for the Charter was the realisation that not a single site in Europe is safeguarded today. 'Safeguarding' goes beyond 'preservation'; it ensures that the risks and threats have been identified and engaged with, so that preventative or protective measures can be taken. We had imagined at the outset that sites that are visited the most regularly, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau or Mauthausen, would be less vulnerable, but sadly not. They simply have different challenges.

The Charter emphasises and encourages an international approach of mutual help and advice. Thus, countries with less obvious authentic Holocaust sites still care what happens to the camps, ghettos, traces of escape routes and mass graves.



Dr Gilly Carr in Alderney at Lager Sylt

Jewish survivors and refugees settled around the world and their descendants have vested interests in what happens to the sites where members of their family suffered and perished. With fewer survivors to look to for testimony, sites are an enduring testament and provide a tangible link to the past – in safeguarding them, we are ensuring dignity for the victims as well as crucial places of learning for generations to come.

The AJR recently created an online map of sites of UK Holocaust memory; it includes the Channel Islands, with entries written by the author. While the great majority of these authentic sites lie outside those covered by the Charter, it reminds us of the journeys that refugees took across Europe to the UK, before and after the war. This tool is a great example of how sites can be marked digitally and used educationally. There is also a great interactive tool on the IHRA website for understanding the common threats, risks and challenges facing Holocaust sites today and how to safeguard them. Please go online, try it for yourself, and spread the word to friends and colleagues in other countries.

<https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/ihra-charter-safeguarding-sites>

DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S LETTER FROM ISRAEL



OUR NEIGHBOURS



We bought an exercise bike via the internet. We chose the option to have it assembled rather than doing the

work ourselves. On the appointed day a van drew up outside our house, and from it emerged three young men, all wearing black T-shirts and black trousers. They manoeuvred the rather large carton containing the equipment into our house and down the stairs to our basement. Once there, they promptly unpacked the contents and sat down on the floor around it, inserting screws and bolts in their places, turning wheels to and fro and getting the bike assembled. As they talked and laughed among themselves we realised that they were speaking in Arabic. After they left it dawned on us that if they had been so inclined they could have overpowered and killed us, as the terrorists had done in southern Israel.

The following week we had the air-conditioning units with which we heat and cool the various rooms of our house checked. We have had them for a long time and it is advisable to make sure that they are working well with regard to energy efficiency and effective operation.

The two young men who came to do the work arrived with a box of tools and a small ladder enabling them to gain access to the units, which are installed high up on a wall of each room. They, too, were Arabs, as we ascertained when they spoke to one another. They worked in all the rooms of the house and went away, having done a good job.

The person who delivered and installed our new drier (we'd had our previous one for almost fifty years) was an Arab. The people who work in many of our local stores are Arabs. All of them provide polite and efficient service.

When I need to collect my prescription medicines at the local medical clinic I am almost invariably attended to by one of the Arab pharmacists, both male and female, who work there. The same applies to many of the nurses and even some of the doctors who provide my various medical needs in this and other clinics. Not to mention the many physicians and surgeons in our hospitals.

At the moment, as a result of the war and the Hamas massacre of 7 October, Arab residents of the West Bank are not allowed to enter Israel. The builder on whom we rely for the occasional repair and construction jobs that we have implemented over the years told us over the phone that he cannot enter Israel just now. So our building work will have to wait

until that situation is remedied.

The restaurants and shops in the neighbouring village of Abu Ghosh are suffering from the lack of customers as Israelis have reduced their visits there in the last three months. Whenever my OH and I go to eat in one of them we are greeted like old friends and given delicious food and excellent service.

All of the Arabs who provide the services I have mentioned live in nearby villages which are within Israel proper. They come into our homes, provide the service they have been trained to do, clear up the debris and return to their homes. They do not kill us or harm us. At a time when Israel is at war with Hamas in Gaza, many Israeli Arabs (mainly Druze) are an integral part of the IDF and are fighting side-by-side with Jewish soldiers. Although terrorists have used vehicles to harm the general population in Israel, such incidents are relatively rare. After all, similar attacks could in theory happen at any time anywhere.

It is my firm belief that most Arabs wish to live in peace with us, their neighbours, earning a living, making a home, and creating a life that provides security and prosperity for their families. The exceptions who use our good will to our – and their – detriment will not succeed, and in the long run logic – and peace – will prevail.

#everynamecounts

The Arolsen Archives in Germany is in the process of building the world's largest digital memorial to the victims and survivors of Nazism and would love your input.

The Archives team has already scanned documentation relating to the fates of 17.5 million people and is now aiming to make these visible in its online archive, thus enabling people all over the world to find them easily.

So far, over 75,000 volunteers have got involved with the project, helping to process more than 6 million documents. It's easy to get involved as long as you have access to a screen



that's at least as big as a tablet (mobile phones aren't suitable). It only takes minutes to process one document – and add one more brick to the digital memorial.

<https://arolsen-archives.org/en/>

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.

TRACING FAMILY RECORDS

Thank you, Helen Levy, for an excellent article and clear instructions on tracing one's family's compensation records (January).

I have applied for information for both my parents' families and received replies very promptly from the inquiries.

I have forwarded your article and action points to friends in the UK and overseas who had no idea this information was readily electronically available.

*Steven Anson,
The Gathering the Voices Association*

ART NOTES

I always read Gloria Tessler's insightful articles with great interest. I am not an art historian but find it interesting to reflect on the contemporary scene behind many of the great works of art that we admire today. I think this is particularly relevant in the case of both Degas and Renoir. To illustrate this, I would just like to quote from Edmund de Waal's outstanding book *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*. He describes Paris of the 1890's involving one of his forebears Charles Ephrussi:

"Amongst Charles's artist friends, Degas became the most savage anti-Dreyfusard and stopped talking to Charles and to the Jewish Pissaro. Cezanne, too was convinced of Dreyfus's guilt, and Renoir became actively hostile to Charles and his 'Jew Art'."

Thus, sadly even in the supposedly "civilised and enlightened" world of Art, the ugly spectre of antisemitism lurked just below the surface. This, notwithstanding the well-known fact that the Jews were often active collectors, patrons and dealers in the art world of France of that period

John D. Goldsmith, Basel, Switzerland

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

I'm a 94-year-old Jewish refugee who came to England in February 1940,

having fled from Vienna to Belgium on a Kindertransport in March 1939. I attended the Kristallnacht Service and reception at Central Synagogue in London on 9 November 2023. My wife and I were horrified to hear about 7 October – we have family in Israel – but we are also horrified by so many in the Jewish community in UK, Israel and elsewhere failing to condemn the inhumane killing of civilians in Gaza and Palestine – and the withholding of water, food, fuel for sewage – medical and other vital supplies, for the non-Jewish population. UK Jews of all sections and organisations must tell the Israeli government and IDF that British Jews cannot support inhumane actions.

John Farago, Deal, Kent

In answer to Sonia Lauber Sampson's letter (February), I should like to ask her: who is Israel's government to talk to? Not to Hamas, who want to destroy Israel and not to the West Bank leader, who is dictatorial, refusing election.

Whatever government Israel has, would face the same difficulty. With Bill Clinton in charge, Israel made many concessions, but Arafat would not agree. No doubt, he feared for his life, if he did. Remember he fled to France in the end.

Evelyn Shamash, Sutton, Surrey

Your correspondent Sonia Lauber Sampson writes that she has only recently reclaimed her Jewish roots. Yet, reacting to the heading "We stand for Israel", she says "I don't". She is "discomforted" by the slogan. She continues "I want nothing to do with these people", referring to the democratically elected Israeli government. "I don't identify with them". Then she tells us that she would rather be oppressed than be the oppressor – a strange statement to make to a readership that includes many Holocaust survivors and their families. She asks about "core values". Where are hers?

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

BERTHA BRACEY: AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON

As a Jewish Quaker, I've been interested to read the references to Quakers in recent editions of the *AJR Journal*. In particular, your correspondent, Victor Garston (February) mentions Bertha Bracey. When in 1982 I took up my post as chief executive at the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (a Quaker organisation), one of my tasks each month was to sign a cheque payable to her. Callow youth that I was, I never took the trouble to question why we were paying her a pension, or to visit her in Oxford where she was then living. Recently I read Simon Parkin's excellent book, *The Island of Extraordinary Captives*, about Hutchinson (internment) Camp on the Isle of Man and realised for the first time what an extraordinary woman she must have been. I very much agree with Victor Garston that she deserves to be more widely remembered.

Steven Burkeman, York



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LOOKING FOR?

BELSEN AT LIBERATION

This photograph, taken by Sgt. H Oakes of the British Army Film and Photographic Unit in April 1945, shows children playing on swings erected by the British REME Unit at Bergen-Belsen Camp No 2, near the Hohne Barracks. The soldier on the right became the father of William Sheldon, who would like to know whether anyone recognises any of the people in the picture billgsheldon@icloud.com



The swings at Bergen-Belsen, 1945

IDA (KOCH) and RICHARD BRAUN

John Woodroffe (Hobart, Australia) would love to hear from any descendents of this couple who escaped Vienna in 1938. Their daughter Kitty Elfriede Baker-Short had three children; the youngest was Christine (1964-2011). Perhaps she or her siblings had children who may reside around Oxford. Ida was the sister of Else Koch/Adler whose daughter (Rita Ceesay) fell on Mr Woodroffe from five storeys on Oxford Street, London, in 1972. johnwoodroffe@hotmail.com

DR ERNST RUPPEL

Guido Becker is looking for any information relating to Dr Ernst Ruppel from Gothe and his former company *Ruppelwerk GmbH*. After escaping Buchenwald concentration camp with the help of Major Foley, Dr Ruppel came to Stourbridge with his family, where he founded new enterprises including the Stockham group. He passed away in 1973. guidobecker@somoto.de

DR LISA MIDWINTER

Trudy Klauber, daughter of Dr Franz Klauber of Teplice, seeks information about Dr Lisa Midwinter, daughter of Dr and Mrs. Ella Dash. Lisa came to the UK via a Kindertransport and was reunited with her parents in Stoke-on-Trent. tklauber@aol.com

EVA MOSBACHER

David Dobson seeks details of the grave location of Eva Mosbacher, a Kindertransport Jewish girl from Nuremberg, who was fostered near Cambridge, became a nurse, moved to London and took her own life in a hotel near Victoria Station aged 37. daveandshelagh67@gmail.com

AUSTRIAN CENTRE 1939-1947

Kat Hubschmann is the archivist for the Research Centre for German & Austrian Exile Studies at Senate House Library, London. She is currently curating an online exhibition about the Austrian Centre and the Laterndl theatre company. The Austrian Centre was the biggest centre for Jewish refugees in London, with branches in Paddington, Swiss Cottage, Finsbury Park, and Glasgow. Facilities included a café, library, performance space, and hostel. Unfortunately, the main archives have not been rediscovered since they were packed up in 1947. Kat would love to hear from any AJR members who have old programmes, membership cards, newsletters or other ephemera which could be used in the online exhibition. kat.hubschmann@sas.ac.uk

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

She has been a favourite student poster, sometimes dubbed “the Mona Lisa of the Southern Hemisphere”, “the most wonderful painting in existence” or derided as an “eyesore.” She has spawned T shirts, coffee mugs, phone covers, clocks and mouse pads. Many of us are familiar with Frederic, Lord Leighton’s *Flaming June* featuring a young woman sleeping on a bench, enveloped in a diaphanous, vermillion robe and a cascade of auburn hair. The whole composition is circular, as the woman’s limbs fold back into herself with the sleeping face at its core.



Frederic, Lord Leighton's *Flaming June*

Love it or hate it, we now we have a rare opportunity to see the famous pre-Raphaelite painting at the **Royal Academy's Collection Gallery** beside a selection of Leighton's works, loaned by the **Museo de Arte de Ponce** in Puerto Rico, which is being restored after the earthquake damage of 2020. Its return almost 128 years after it was first shown there is poignant. Leighton, President of the RA, painted it in 1895, one of his last submissions to the Royal Academy summer show before he died the following year, having given the study of *Flaming June* to his friend, the baritone George Henschel. It has only had three owners since.

In this show the RA examines the relationship between painting and sculpture. In a significant nod to the past, it includes **Michelangelo's** 16th century *Taddei Tondo*, which was part of the RA Collection during Leighton's presidency. Michelangelo influenced the composition of *Flaming June*.

Surely the greatest accolade you can give a portrait is to personalise it. Take *The Mona Lisa* or *The Naked Maja*. *Flaming June* can be viewed as an innocent, vulnerable sleeping girl or – a captivating femme fatale inspired by the oleander branch beside her, symbolising death. The latter would certainly

resonate with the Victorian obsession with linking sleep and death. I have a copy of *Flaming June* on my bedroom wall and I am an eternal prey to her mystery. I am not alone. Her image caught the eye of the young Andrew Lloyd Webber when he saw it in an antiques shop in London's Kings Road in the '60s. He begged his grandmother to lend him £50 to buy it, but she vehemently refused: "I will not have Victorian junk in my flat," she said.

While the painting is considered one of the artist's most important works it is certainly open to critical challenge. The contortion of the body is clearly the result of creative licence; no model could hold that pose for hours, never mind appear to sleep in it! The elongated limbs with the model's left leg and heel pushed up beneath her right knee startle you because of their totally unrealistic nature. And the drape of her hair has the texture of thick hessian.

Leighton based his image on Michaelangelo's statue, *Night*, and like his fellow pre-Raphaelites, was entranced by beauty, the sheer perfection of the sculptural form. Most models of this genre share similar classical features. Leighton was known for his historical, religious and mythological artworks, his technique of blending tradition and originality with drama. It all resonated with the tastes of the cultural elite and as one of the most celebrated British painters of his generation, he was nicknamed Jupiter Olympus both for his celebrity and his love of Greek and Roman antiquity.

The question remains: who was the model for *Flaming June*? Both his favourite professional models, Dorothy Dene and Mary Lloyd, are claimed to have sat for the painting. She may have been an amalgam of both. And that is all we may ever know.

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

STAMPING ITS MARK ON HISTORY

Denis Franklin and Jacqueline Boronow Danson share a remarkable story of a WW2 army book reunited with its owner's granddaughter.

Denis's story: Before retirement, I worked for the Bank of England. In my mid – thirties, I re-took up the hobby of stamp collecting, eventually visiting a City of London stamp auction house where I sometimes bought what were known as 'Glory Boxes', consisting of an eclectic mix of stamp items from around the world, contained in a disposable cardboard box.

It was in one such box that I found the WW2 British Army Pass book for a Dr Ernst Boronow. At that time, I tried to discover more about Dr Boronow but the internet was in its infancy and certainly not as comprehensive as now.

So the book stayed in a drawer until decades later when, recently, on yet another 'clear out exercise', I rediscovered it and recommenced my search for its owner. This time I came across an obituary of a Mrs Ruth Boronow Danson on the online version of the August 2023 issue of the *AJR Journal*. From this it seemed likely that Ernst Boronow was her father.

Through the offices of the AJR, Ruth's daughter Jacqueline Boronow Danson contacted me. I was able to provide her with the Army Pass book and she shared

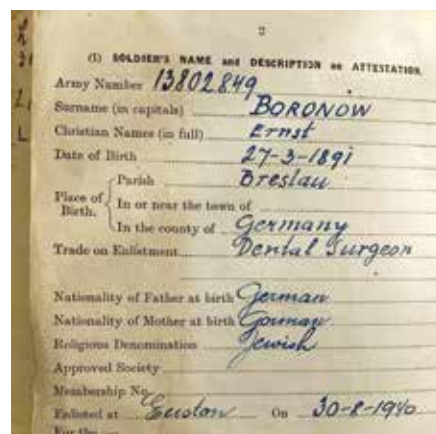
the fascinating story of her family's flight from Germany; the papers and objects have been donated to the Imperial War Museum (IWM)'s New Holocaust Galleries; and the amazing and unexpected identification there of Ruth's father from a photo of hundreds of prisoners in a roll call at Buchenwald concentration camp. (Even my very bright granddaughter who tells me she 'hates History' found these events really interesting – though she still won't take GCSE History for me!)

I still visit London regularly and will certainly now revisit the IWM to see the New Holocaust Galleries and, of course, in particular, the Boronow family exhibits and that remarkable photograph.

Jacqueline's story: All credit to the AJR! A couple of days ago, membership secretary Karin Pereira called me to tell me that a gentleman called Denis Franklin had phoned the AJR about the British Army book of my maternal grandfather!

Detective Karin speedily put the two of us in contact, and the little book shortly arrived on my doormat. How exciting, after more than eight decades to suddenly hold a part of his history we'd never seen before. A prominent

dentist in Breslau, he fought in the German Army in WW1, then on Kristallnacht was incarcerated in Buchenwald for a month before



Page from the newly-discovered army book

fleeing with his family in March 1939 for a new life in England. Just over a year later he enlisted in the Pioneer Corps...

"Opa" had taught me as a child how to collect stamps; I have my little collection from those days proudly still in a bright green stamp collection book because, to me, it represents so much of all he taught me, directly or by powerful indomitable example. Thus I was able to conclude immediately that it was perfectly plausible that his book might have been discovered in a box of stamps! Quite *why*, however, will remain forever a mystery!

Without the serendipity of the AJR, I would never have known about Ernst's army book and Denis would never have figured out where to rehome it – so it would quite likely have been lost forever. My family's war-time papers are destined for the IWM's archives. Likely, this well-travelled glimpse into history will, in the fullness of time, make its final journey to its forever home for the use of future historians and researchers...



The late Ruth Boronow Danson at the Imperial War Museum, in front of a large photo of a roll call at Buchenwald in 1938, in which she recognised her father. In her hands she is holding a photo of Ernst as a dentist in Breslau in 1936, and one of him in the Pioneer Corps in 1941.



Denis Franklin with his George VI stamps which were in circulation during the war

COMMEMORATING HOLOCAUST

Dozens of AJR members joined us at Belsize Square Synagogue last month for our annual Holocaust Memorial Day service, remembering those who suffered at the hands of Nazi terror.

'The fragility of freedom' theme coincided with the 85th anniversaries of two high-risk humanitarian rescue programmes which helped liberate some of the most vulnerable: the Kindertransport and the lesser-known 'Kitchener Camp' rescue – a landmark initiative that saved the lives of thousands of Jews, bringing them to a safe-haven on the Kent coastline.

Speakers included AJR member Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines MBE, who was one of the 669 'Winton children'. Lady Milena's heart-rending testimony touched on the desperation and turmoil parents felt at that time: "The Czech and Slovak parents began to feel very anxious and were desperate to try and send the children to England... When Sir Nicholas came to Prague, he had a queue of 2,000 families all asking to get their children on his list. It's been a mystery all these years how mine and my sister's names got on that list."

Another speaker, Amos Schonfield, spoke of how his grandfather Rabbi Schonfeld helped to organise Kindertransports and, after the war, support those who survived the concentration camps.

AJR CEO Michael Newman said: "As the national organisation representing and

First generation members Laszlo Roman, Albert Lester, Lady Grenfell-Baines MBE, Peter Hallgarten, Kurt Marx BEM attended AJR's service and illuminated memorial candles to mark HMD



supporting Holocaust refugees and survivors, we are acutely sensitised to the fragility of freedom. The history and experiences of our members underscore, in the rawest sense, just how quickly humanity can crumble. Today it is vital, that as a nation, we collectively remember the victims of the Holocaust. Both to honour those whose lives were ripped apart by antisemitism and to ensure that the experiences of the survivors and refugees, and their families, are never forgotten."

Neil Martin, Chief Executive JLGB, recalled the story of the 'Kitchener Camp', and six AJR Holocaust survivors and refugees took part in a moving candle lighting ceremony and memorial prayer. Other guests of honour included Tulip Siddiq MP and representatives from the German, Austrian, Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian and Czech Embassies in London.

Through our Educational Grants programme the AJR also supported several HMD programmes around the country organised by third parties. For example, the University of Sussex held a very special event on 7 February which included testimony from AJR member Ivor Perl BEM. Ivor, who survived Auschwitz, was accompanied by his granddaughter Lia Bratt, herself a speaker for the Holocaust Education charity, Generation 2 Generation. Ivor's story was followed by a Q&A chaired by Professor Gideon Reuveni, Director of The Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies. A second session focused on a new documentary, *The Third Reich of Dreams*, which is still in pre-production and promises to be both emotionally powerful and visually compelling.

A large audience at the University of Sussex heard first-hand testimony from Ivor Perl BEM



THANK YOU DAME ESTHER

Thirty-six years after the BBC's *That's Life* programme featured the life-saving efforts of Sir Nicholas Winton, nine AJR Kinder members wrote to Dame Esther Rantzen to thank her for her role 'in bringing our story to the attention of the world'.

The letter, which the AJR sent on the Kinders' behalf to coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day, was immediately acknowledged by Dame Esther and featured in an article in *The Times* as part of an interview with Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines, who was one of 669 children rescued through the Czech Kindertransport that Sir Nicholas had helped to arrange.

The Kinders' letter is featured below alongside *The Times* article. We also have permission to share with you Dame Esther's reply, which was:

Dear Michael,

I was overwhelmed to read your very kind and generous letter. Thank you, and everyone in the AJR.

In return I would like to express my deep admiration for the "Kinder" themselves who have shown such courage and determination in rebuilding their lives in a new country. And also pay tribute to the extraordinary selflessness and vision of their parents – what a hugely difficult decision it must have been, to send their children away to an unknown future. And to the foster parents who looked after Winton's

MEMORIAL DAY



27 January 2024
Holocaust Memorial Day

Dear Dame Esther

On the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day, we are writing as 'Nicky's children' to send you our love and support, and to express our deep admiration and thanks for the role you played in bringing our story to the attention of the world.

It has been wonderful to see such fulsome appreciation for the endeavours of Sir Nicholas Winton, Doreen Warriner, Trevor Chadwick and all those involved in our rescue as depicted in James Hawes' wonderful film, *One Life*. We were greatly impressed with how Sir Antony Hopkins beautifully captured the essence of Nicky, but also to see the recognition given to you for so sensitively sharing our story.

The herculean effort to organise the transports, persuade the officials to issue visas and to secure private sponsorship in such a short period of time against the backdrop of imminent invasion, occupation and war, continues to amaze us but, more importantly, continues to inspire people around the world.

As our generation dwindles, we and other members of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) are mindful that our experiences should be taught and understood and you have helped us take this collective mission to a global audience. You also provided us with the opportunity to meet one of our saviours and to be able to thank him personally for our rescue.

Featuring the story of the Kindertransport on *That's Life!* significantly helped popularise the unique history of the Kindertransport. It is our fervent hope it will never again be needed.

At the end of the second episode of *That's Life!*, you famously asked whether anyone else in the audience owes their life to Nicky. Having stood up to thank him, we are now standing up to honour you.

Thank you.

With our very best wishes,

Rev. John Fieldsend, Lord Alf Dubs, Hana Eardley, Alexandra Greensted, Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines, Vera Schaufeld, Renate Collins, Emanuela Norton, Lia Lesser

Letter from some of the Winton children to Dame Esther Rantzen

Children. And of course to Sir Nicholas and his team, who made the crucial rescue possible. With so much tragic news around the world, it is especially heartening that you are paying tribute on this year's Holocaust Memorial Day to all those responsible for saving so many lives.

It was a privilege for me and my colleagues on That's Life to have played a small part in this inspiring story. I am in touch with the team, for whom it was the outstanding memory in their working lives. On behalf of them all, thank you.

We who knew Nicky all count ourselves so lucky to have enjoyed his friendship and learned from him.

Thank you again to you and the AJR.

*Yours sincerely,
Esther Rantzen*



245,000
Holocaust Survivors




Holocaust Survivors live in over
90 Countries around the world



49% of all survivors live in Israel



16% of all survivors live in the United States



61% are female
39% are male



86 years is the median age for Holocaust Survivors

THE CHANGING NEEDS OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

245,000 Holocaust survivors are still living across more than 90 countries and their care needs are increasing, according to new research published by the Claims Conference.

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, aka the Claims Conference, has released a comprehensive study on Jewish Holocaust survivors living around the world. According to this *Global Demographic Report on Jewish Holocaust Survivors* the median age of survivors is 86 years, with one-fifth of them aged over 90 years.

Holocaust survivors currently reside in 90 countries across the globe on all continents, with the exception of Antarctica. Nearly half of all Holocaust survivors worldwide currently reside in Israel, followed by North America, Western Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. After Israel, which is home to nearly 119,300 survivors, the United States is home to the next largest population of survivors with nearly 38,400 survivors, followed by France with over 21,900 survivors, and Russia with 18,200 and Germany with over 14,200 survivors. There are smaller but also substantial numbers of survivors in Ukraine, Canada, Hungary, Australia, Belarus, Italy, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Belgium, ranging from over 7,400 survivors in Ukraine to just over 1,200 in Belgium and the United Kingdom.

Apart from these top countries, in Western Europe there are hundreds of survivors in countries such as Austria, Denmark, Greece, Sweden, Switzerland and smaller numbers in Spain, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Finland, Martinique and Ireland. In Eastern Europe, there are hundreds of survivors in Romania, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic and Bulgaria with smaller numbers in Estonia, Croatia,

Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Armenia. There are also hundreds of survivors in Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova. In South America, there are hundreds of survivors in Brazil and Argentina. There are just an estimated 400 survivors outside these main population areas of Israel, North America, Western and Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, including African countries of Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia.

Prior to this work, the most comprehensive assessments were conducted around the year 2000. These new figures prove that the majority of survivors were just children during WW2. Over half of them were under 10 years of age when the Nazis were defeated. Children had the slimmest chances of surviving, and many survived by having to deliberately conceal their origins and Jewish identity. As the academic and medical communities have recognised, those children who survived the atrocities of the Holocaust often suffered a unique level of trauma. These child survivors – already vulnerable because of their early experiences – are now in the stages of life associated with increased health-related challenges and associated costs, particularly costs related to home care so that they can age in place at home.

This means that although the total number of Holocaust survivors is, unfortunately but inevitably, decreasing, the needs among those who remain are increasing. There are two main factors impacting this trend: (i) survivors who, until now, did not need help, are ageing and requiring more assistance; and (ii) those who are already receiving assistance are experiencing increasing

disability, which requires increasing assistance. Further, especially in these high inflation years, the costs of providing these services have also increased. Exacerbating these factors, often traumatic world events such as COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the October 7 massacre in Israel can trigger additional emotional issues.

Since its founding in 1951, the Claims Conference has been dedicated to securing a measure of justice for Holocaust survivors worldwide. Primarily as a result of its negotiations with the German government, the Claims Conference administers several compensation funds that provide direct payments to survivors globally and issues grants to over 300 social service agencies worldwide that provide welfare services and help address the needs of the ageing, vulnerable population of survivors. Forty percent of the current population of survivors are already receiving services from agencies funded through grants administered by the Claims Conference, such as the AJR.

Understanding the demographics of Holocaust survivors, their needs and the challenges they face helps the Claims Conference with its short and long-term planning. As Gideon Taylor, President of the Claims Conference, said, “The data we have amassed not only tells us how many and where survivors are, it clearly indicates that most survivors are at a period of life where their need for care and services is growing. Now is the time to double down on our attention on this waning population. Now is when they need us the most.”

Thank you for our lives

Martin Smok and Dita

Snajdrova write: To mark the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport, the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, in cooperation with other institutions, wishes to pay tribute to the political instigators of the program, as well as the activists and volunteers who gave up their personal comfort, time and often money to help other human beings escape persecution.

Everyone knows of Sir Nicholas Winton but he was just one of the many people behind the Kindertransport. They were all heroes: the coordinators, assistants, administrators, and people connected to various refugee organisations as well, of course, as all the British men and women who brought a different perspective.

After the war, many of the refugee activists found themselves under suspicion of being spies; they were blacklisted, silenced and sidelined, both in the West and in the East. Some in Czechoslovakia simply disappeared or were imprisoned or even murdered after staged show-trials that labeled them as spies. Our team here in the Czech Republic is now trying to find the descendants of those heroes and make them part of the wider commemoration project.

When on 21 November 1938 debates were held in the British Parliament whether Britain should accept more Jewish refugees, including unaccompanied children, the Prime Minister concluded that "however great may be our desire and that of other countries to assist in dealing with this grave situation, the possibilities of settlement are strictly limited."

Fortunately not all MPs shared Neville Chamberlain's approach. The lobbying of those who actually visited Prague was having an effect. James Maxton vented: "It is angersome to me to have case after case brought concerning people who have got all the qualifications for getting away



Hermann and Kate Field, 1939. Hermann was born in Zurich in 1910, the second son of an American zoologist and his English wife, and studied architecture at Harvard and in Zurich. After completing an architectural assignment in England in 1939 he volunteered as the administrator of the Czechoslovak Refugee Trust Fund in the Protectorate, assisting refugees escaping from Bohemia and Moravia via Poland. In 1949 he was abducted in Prague and disappeared, while all those he saved were labeled as British spies. Five years later it became clear he was being held in a secret prison in Poland. After his release he lived in Boston, involving himself in environmental issues at the local, regional and global levels.

from danger, but who are delayed by us in getting a visa". David Grenfell stated: "I have seen the plight of those people, their nervous condition, their apprehension and their despair when they have come to the passport control offices in Vienna, Berlin, Prague and elsewhere. They have come to us as though they were facing the tribunal which was to decide life and death for them." These powerful men were as important as any others in making the Kindertransport possible.

On 8 December Stanley Baldwin issued a radio appeal to the British public. Several other appeals had been launched, including by the Lord Mayor of London, the *News Chronicle* and *Manchester Guardian* newspapers. All those voices deserve a thank you, as do the descendants of those who came to Prague: Robert Stopford, Mary Penman, Tessa Rowntree, David Grenfell, Doreen Warriner, Hilde Patz, William Gillies, George Hicks, Margaret Layton, Trevor Chadwick, Bill Barazetti, Margaret Dougan and Christine Maxwell, to name those whose names are known.

Later on the political atmosphere changed and adults in mortal danger were finally

allowed to come as well, provided they could reach the British Isles. Yet many heroes of that story – such as Hermann Haviland Field, his wife Kate Thornycroft, and Marian Schling – have been all but forgotten.

We believe it is time to thank their descendants, individually, on behalf of all those individuals saved by their efforts and contributions – our parents and grandparents. Do you know some of these people? Do you know some others who were involved? Were your parents or grandparents a part of the story. If so please do get in touch with us at

our.lives@fzo.cz

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STONework IS FOREVER

Journalist Ruth Rothenberg reports on the controversy of how best to memorialise the Holocaust.

In 1983 an area in Hyde Park became Britain's first Holocaust memorial, when silver birches were planted round a granite boulder inscribed with a verse from the Old Testament Book of Lamentations, to remember Hitler's specific victims of the Second World War (mostly Jews, but also Roma, gays and disabled).

British soldiers entering Bergen-Belsen on 15 April 1945 were the first to confront the horrific reality. Recovery from shock and suffering took a long time. People did not talk about their experiences. And the very idea of genocide, trying to eliminate an entire population, was beyond comprehension.

Now we know better. Around the world, genocides have taken place not only historically, like the mass murder of Armenians in WW1, but have continued since the end of WW2: (Bosnia in 1992-1995, Rwanda in 1994 and the Darfur region of Sudan in 2003).

So how best to acknowledge and commemorate their victims? For both reaction and commemoration, nature is the best psychological resort. A good example of this is Beth Shalom (The House of Peace) in Laxton, Nottinghamshire, opened in 1995 by brothers James and Stephen Smith in their farmhouse home after they learned of the Holocaust during their Methodist studies in Jerusalem. Their house, now a history museum with a beautiful memorial garden, is visited by schools and adult groups from around the country.

Israel commemorated Hitler's martyrs in the early 1950s by planting six million trees on Jerusalem's western slopes. The Martyrs Forest includes the abstract image of a chestnut tree in a hut framework dedicated to the Jewish teenage diarist, Anne Frank, who loved seeing the real chestnut outside her hideaway window in Amsterdam.

Germany has acknowledged its past by



The Holocaust memorial in Hyde Park

filling a vast open space in Berlin with grey coffin-shaped slabs representing a 'memorial cemetery'. In Bavaria, a memorial near Mühldorfer Hart, which contained a satellite site of the Dachau concentration camp, has been awarded a prize for its landscaping, which "turned an ominous site into a sensitive memorial place".

In the UK, in addition to Hyde Park and Laxton, the Imperial War Museum, just a short walk from the Houses of Parliament, has excellent coverage of WW2. But controversy surrounds the latest British memorial project, which received planning permission in 2021. This authorises the country's first national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, aimed at studying genocide. The plan involves turning Victoria Tower Gardens, a small public riverside green space next to the southern wall of the Houses of Parliament, into a Holocaust Memorial Garden containing an underground Holocaust Learning Centre.

Victoria Tower Gardens was created in 1879 on the embankment of the river Thames. The name comes from its proximity to the Palace of Westminster's Victoria Tower. The 6-acre site's lawn and plane trees, squeezed between Millbank and the Thames, make it a popular lunchtime venue for office workers, while the children's playground at its southern end is loved by local families.

Listed as Grade II, it already contains significant and relevant memorials. There are statues of anti-slavery campaigner Thomas

Buxton (1786-1845) and suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), as well as an elaborate fountain in honour of Buxton (moved from Parliament Square in 1957). Most important is a copy of Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*, recalling the clash between oppression and freedom during the Hundred Years' War.

It has always been a much-appreciated area, so proposals to change its character have met with strong resistance. The main objection is to the way the above-ground structures will not only take up much of the garden but also dominate the view of the Houses of Parliament. Even UNESCO has come into the picture, arguing that it would "have a massive visual impact" and destroy some trees.

Several Jewish members of the UK Parliament have also opposed the plans. One, Baroness Ruth Deech, whose father escaped from Poland just ahead of the Nazis, fears the £100m cost of the project means that "There will be no funds left for a review of Holocaust education in schools." Others have pointed out that the armed security needed for such a sensitive place would greatly reduce the serenity of the gardens.

An appeal against the granting of planning permission is in progress, but with careful and sympathetic planning there is surely room for both nature and architecture. It is to be hoped that, despite yet more stonework, some garden will remain.

AN UNSUNG HEROINE

Esther Simpson is, in the words of *The Guardian*, the 'unsung heroine' who rescued hundreds of displaced European scholars from Nazi persecution, including sixteen future Nobel prize-winners and 74 who became Fellows of the Royal Society. **Martin Mauthner** reports.

Her biographer, the former BBC presenter John Eidenow, is pained that she has 'remained a largely unknown historical figure,' though she befriended so many and had such eminent 'children', as the childless 'heroine and saint' described those she saved. Eidenow is especially unhappy about 'what passes for her autobiography', *Refugee Scholars: Conversations with Tess Simpson*, published in 1992.

Eidenow's own biography *Esther Simpson*, published last summer, seeks to redress that wrong, providing a wealth of detail and a full background to the life of this redoubtable figure.

Born Esther Sinovitch in 1903, in the 'Little London' part of Leeds, where mostly humble Jewish immigrants fleeing czarist persecution settled, the alumna graduated in 1925 with first-class honours in French and German. In 1933 she left a well-paid humanitarian job in Geneva to join the Academic Assistance Council, newly set up in London; a month later she anglicised her name. Over the decades, the council also

changed its name; today it is CARA – the Council for At-Risk Academics.

With a modest budget, Simpson filtered the applications submitted to the council. She would reject scholars in retirement, such as the mathematician Stanislaus Jolles, even though backed by Albert Einstein and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Jolles died in Berlin during the war, but whether from natural causes is unclear. Simpson would encourage those scholars the council's experts judged to be second-rank to seek employment in trade and industry.

That left those candidates held to be outstanding or potentially so. The council offered them financial assistance, and helped them find new positions in the UK and beyond. The council saved around two thousand scholars who fled from Hitler's Europe; they included scientists such as the Nobel laureates Max Perutz and Hans Bethe; the 'father' of the Paralympics Ludwig Guttmann; the art historians Nikolaus Pevsner and Ernst Gombrich; and the Tudor historian Geoffrey Elton (born Gottfried



Esther Simpson

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Ehrenburg). It was a unique effort, without parallel in Europe.

Simpson went on to help run the council's campaign to persuade the British government to free the 'enemy alien' scholars it had interned during the war, too, assisting persecuted academics fleeing communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the military juntas in South America, and apartheid rule in South Africa. Among the beneficiaries was Albie Sachs, who became a judge under Nelson Mandela; he had lost an arm after the Pretoria authorities tried to kill him.

In 2022 Leeds University ceremoniously opened the Esther Simpson Building. Housing its business and law schools, the edifice honours 'an heroic graduate who helped countless academics flee totalitarian regimes across the world.' On that same day, 8 March – International Women's Day – the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Simone Buitendijk, unveiled a Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque dedicated to Simpson. The trust's director, Martin Hamilton, sums up her record: 'It is no exaggeration to say that without Esther's work, human knowledge would not be where it is today.... The work she did to protect scholars from around the world is perhaps the academic equivalent of the Kindertransport programme.'



The Esther Simpson Building at the University of Leeds

REVIEWS

JEWES IN THE GARDEN: A Holocaust Survivor, the Fate of His Family, and the Secret History of Poland in World War II

Sourcebooks

By Judy Rakowsky

The tireless efforts to discover what happened to family during the war are narrated in this book by Judy Rakowsky who made nine trips to Poland to try and discover the truth. Again and again she accompanied "Cousin Sam", a Holocaust survivor, the hero of the story, in this 30 year quest. Sam Ron (born Szmul Rakowski) was the star of a family who lived in Poland for generations, running a prosperous lumberyard in Kazimierza Wiekla northeast of Kraków. Sam was an exceptional student, one of the few from his hometown to attend high school but his formal education ended with the Nazi invasion in 1939.

In September 1942, just before the remaining local Jews were rounded up and transported to the death camp Belżec, the teenager went into hiding with his family including cousins. When it became too dangerous in the countryside he crept into the Krakow ghetto. But after the quarter was liquidated in March 1943, he endured Plaszów, Pionki and Sachsenhausen concentration camps. Then he survived starvation on a death march as war ended, before being reunited with parents Joe and Sophie. His brother Yisrael perished in Mauthausen.

Decades later he shares history with his younger relative – investigative journalist Judy – for the first time including the story of his beloved cousin Hena, whom he saw each day growing up. After the war Sam had expected a joyful reunion with her and her family – the Rożeńeks – but they were nowhere to be found. So Judy and Sam set off for Poland from their homes in USA to try and discover what happened to everyone.

Difficult trips take them into the countryside, liaising with people who so bravely hid the relatives at great

personal risk. Sam is at home visiting former neighbours and on an earlier trip back was described as "the prince of the city". But uncovering facts proves extremely challenging with perhaps conveniently faded memories, silence and false leads. Judy and Sam knock on doors, petition court documents, seek clandestine meetings, and ultimately discover what really happened to the "Jews in the garden".

Now into his nineties Sam makes his last pilgrimage in 2017 to a country where the Jewish population was decimated during the long war occupation. Most of the remainder fled with the 1968 communist government's purges. Things are not always what they seem and aided by researchers and private detection Judy struggles against a wall of silence not helped by the language barrier. The truth is sometimes unpalatable, with indifference and much ambiguity mixed in with friendships. Sam at 97 is too frail during the pandemic to make a final trip to his birthplace. So Judy and her husband Sammy represent him in the "Great days of Jewish Culture" celebration. The centrepiece is a ceremony honouring nearly 300 local Jews killed by the Nazis in 1942 including rehabilitating a graveside commemorative monument.

This is a story of remarkable tenacity and tragedy. The author is very good at describing her extreme frustration at closed doors as, despite her extremely tireless efforts, unanswered questions remain.

Janet Weston

MEINE JÜDISCHEN AUTOBIOGRAPHIEN: EINE LESEVERFÜHRUNG UND SUBJEKTIVE AUSWAHL

Evelyn Adunka

Verlag der Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft (in German)

This fascinating and highly unusual volume contains brief but very informative biographies of no fewer than 364 Jewish authors, 285 men and 79 women, who have written autobiographical works that deal at least in part with their Jewish identity. The authors selected, born between

1833 and 1963, range from the largely unknown to the world famous. In chronological order, the first is Pessele Wengeroff (née Epstein), born in Bobruisk, Russia, whose enthusiasm for German classical literature and culture heralded the dawn of the Enlightenment among the Jews of eastern Europe, and the last is the writer and journalist Gila Lustiger, born in Frankfurt-am-Main, an eager advocate of progressive causes but also the daughter of a camp survivor; in between we encounter such figures as Daniel Barenboim, Golda Meir, Teddy Kollek, Yehudi Menuhin, Marc Chagall and George Weidenfeld.

The writers come from over 20 countries, with the four largest contingents from Germany, Austria, Palestine/Israel and the USA. The list for Great Britain, a creditable fifth, includes the rabbis Hugo Gryn and Lionel Blue, the publisher Victor Gollancz, the historian Eric Hobsbawm, the writer Arthur Koestler, the playwrights Arnold Wesker and Bernard Kops, the jurist Michael Kerr (son of Judith Kerr), the humourist George Mikes (*How to Be an Alien*) and Israel Sieff of Marks & Spencer. The author of the volume is Evelyn Adunka, a writer and historian in Vienna, who has published widely on Austrian Jewry, exile and Holocaust-related subjects; in *Für mein Schurlikind: Tagebuch 1940-1944* (2012), her edition of the diaries of Sophie Roth, a Jewish refugee from Vienna who arrived in Britain in 1939 with a young son terminally ill with cancer, she extended her range to this country. Adunka has a particular love of autobiographies, which gives her volume a depth of perception and a fine sensibility that enables it to illuminate its subject with rare sensitivity.

The two pages devoted to C.C. (Caesar) Aronsfeld, an important figure among the Jewish refugees in Great Britain as Assistant Director of the Wiener Library and Editor of this journal (then *AJR Information*) 1985-88, provide a good example of Adunka's procedure. She begins with a quotation from his autobiography, *Wanderer from My Birth* (1997),

Continued on page 17

A QUIET AMERICAN JEW

Thank you to AJR Ealing member Marion Michaud for sharing this article which was forwarded to her by a close friend.

I have always been a quiet American Jew. I am not religious. I am not kosher. My children do not go to a Jewish day school, and I do not go to synagogue on most Shabbats. Instead, I quietly celebrate the high holidays, quietly respond "thank you" when a stranger wishes me a Merry Christmas at Hannukah time, quietly pray to Gd when I am really desperate and quietly thank Gd for all of the blessings in my life. Quietly try to instill a love of Judaism in my children, while quietly hoping that they will gain this love without putting in much effort. And certainly, I never publicly declare or display my love of Judaism or Israel, because, after all, I am just a quiet American Jew.

So why is a quiet American Jew so deeply affected by the atrocities in Israel? Why is the pain of a quiet American Jew so deep? Am I even entitled to feel so heartbroken or to express my anger and frustration when I am just a quiet American Jew? I don't know that I can articulate the answers

to these questions, as the answers are deeply rooted in the fabric of every Jew. Of course, as a human being, the horrors committed upon the Jewish people should elicit heartbreak and outrage in any decent person. Surely, if a quiet American Jew can recognise this, everyone should, right?

But, more than outrage and heartbreak from one human being to another, there is something else happening to this quiet American Jew, something so much more. Something has awakened inside me. A profound love and connection to my people, to my brothers and sisters in Israel, and to the generations who came before me. The knowledge that antisemitism lives in the loud actions of our enemies, but also in the quiet silence of some neighbours and friends. A deep connection to a strong community coming together in unity, both Jews and non-Jews alike, as my feelings of loneliness turn to solidarity. A bravery and resilience of my people that I had only read about and heard stories of, but now have the honour of witnessing firsthand.

And most importantly, I have awakened to the realisation that I no longer have the luxury of being a quiet American Jew. None of us do.

Heather Kafetz

 AJR

**DAY TRIP
TO HARWICH**

MONDAY 13 MAY



Join some of our fellow Kinder descendants from the USA on a day trip by train from Liverpool Street to the Essex port of Harwich. We will tour all the historical sites of Harwich and see the new Kindertransport statue. Lunch and some free time will be included during the day.

Please note there will be a fair amount of gentle walking throughout the day.



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REVIEWS continued from page 16

that throws light on his feelings about his Judaism as well as his values and personality, then gives details of his family background and upbringing, before focusing on his flight to Britain, his introduction to Dr Alfred Wiener and his long years of service to the Library. Adunka details Aronsfeld's many other scholarly achievements before citing Ben Barkow, a more recent Director of the Library, on the unacknowledged debt that later scholarship on National Socialism and the Holocaust owes to Aronsfeld. The entry is inspired by a sense of sympathy with its subject and an admirable ability to capture the spirit

of his autobiography in so short a space.

The volume is the product of a huge amount of painstaking research into often obscure and forgotten lives. Adunka achieves a high level of accuracy, as in the cases of two people whose lives are well known to me: Hans Reiss, who was Professor of German and my head of department at the University of Bristol for thirteen years, and the historian Edgar Feuchtwanger, with whom I conducted a lengthy interview for the AJR's *Refugee Voices* filmed interviews archive. But I missed in her depiction of Walter Eberstadt, whose autobiography I analysed in my study *Encounters with Albion* (2018),

the interplay between his acceptance into the gilded elite of British society at Christ Church, Oxford, and his distinguished service in the British Army on the one hand, and the acute sense of rejection provoked by his internment in 1940 on the other.

This book will not replace Werner Röder and Herbert Strauss's comprehensive *International Biography of Central European Émigrés 1933-1945* (1999); nor is that its aim. Instead, it succeeds in giving a human face to the biographies of Jews whose autobiographies preserved their lives for posterity.
Anthony Grenville

OBITUARIES

Rosalie RONEL

Born: 21 October 1937, Sofia, Bulgaria
Died: 5 January 2024, London



Rosalie Ronel was born just before WW2 in Sofia, Bulgaria, to a loving professional family who enjoyed all the opportunities of life within the generally tolerant and multi-cultural society, that was Bulgaria. However, the Nazi occupation changed all that, and the family greatly suffered during the war years.

They immigrated to Israel a few weeks after independence. Rosalie lived through several Israeli wars, one African uprising, spoke four languages fluently and served in the Israeli Army Intelligence Unit. She became an indispensable PA within various large organisations, always revered for her amazing organisational, language and diplomatic skills.

The first part of her life was full of travel,

incident and living through historical events. But she always thought of herself as a homemaker, mother and grandmother. In the second part she suffered terrible illness, which often kept her at home, full of pain and confined to bed. And when no doctor could help her she began a lifelong interest in natural health and treatments, for herself and for others, long before these practices became general knowledge. Despite her health issues, she was the same woman throughout, with steely determination, quiet strength and someone to whom everyone turned to for help.

The woman who, on the boat from Haifa to Marseille was informal ship's interpreter between passengers and crew, whose passion for cataloguing, organisation and research never wavered, who managed to bring the world inside her small room, with the vibrant colours of her Art, but most of all who connected to everyone by listening, helping and genuinely caring.

I can't remember when I first realised my mother adopted people. As a young girl she sent me to carry meals to a widowed

old lady she'd befriended. She became friends with my Polish friend at University, developing a very spiritual connection, and corresponding with her more than I did years later. Antoinette, a young girl who helped her when she was very ill, became a lifelong friend, and who still carries a loving card from Rosalie

with her everywhere. But she had enough love for everyone. She was always there for all of us, a shoulder to cry on, someone who followed our lives as if they were her own and of course gave us vitamins!

She once said to me that creativity feeds your soul. Over the last two years, Rosalie's health deteriorated. Her frailty meant she was in pain much of the time and she found it difficult to swallow. We, the family, could not have managed without the tireless care of all the amazing women who looked after her, who learned her needs, and they along with their families have now become part of ours. But with any health setback, in the end, she always picked herself up, kept her faith in G-d, and just thought of a new project to work on. With help, revamping her art and naming it when she couldn't see enough to draw. Just days before her passing she decided to start a video life history. To her granddaughter, she said "Only look at life with creativity. Adaptation is your superpower."

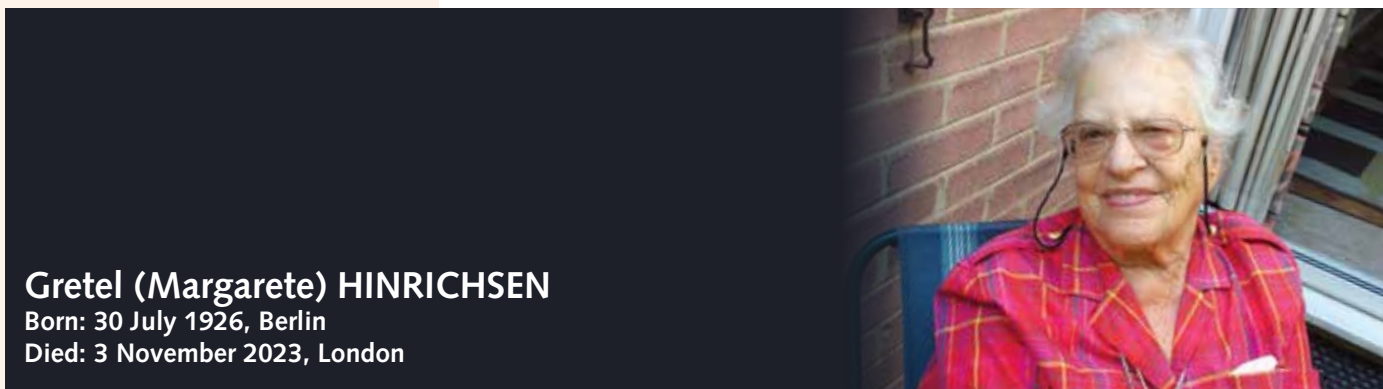
Our mother had a young spirit. She appreciated all of life's gifts – a bunch of daffodils got a big smile, or a text with loads of emojis and creative abbreviations (lol – lots of love, GS, the gripper stick she had in her room). But above all were the cards she made and sent to all of us throughout the year. They encouraged us to see the pleasure in little things and build our potential. And look at life the way she did.

In one of her cards she wrote : "Never stop looking for the new and unusual, having passion for the things you believe in, finding beauty in the trivial. Creating joy in the routine, is as artistic as using the artist's palette to paint."

Leora Sagman



One of Rosalie Ronel's many drawings



Gretel (Margarete) HINRICHSEN

Born: 30 July 1926, Berlin
 Died: 3 November 2023, London

Margarete Levy was the third of four daughters and her early childhood was spent on the family estate which comprised factories, forests, lime plant, sawmills and farms.

Anti-Jewish laws prevented Gretel from entering higher education so, in 1937, she was sent to London to Schindler's Regent's Park School where she remained until no longer able to pay the fees.

Her father was murdered on Kristallnacht and her mother, sister, grandmother fled to Israel to join her two older sisters. She never saw her mother again.

On the day before war was announced, aged 19, she met Lübeck-born art historian, Klaus Hinrichsen, at a party given by mutual friends of their parents. The pair quickly became a couple, living in a boarding house with other refugees in Belsize Park. In June 1940 Klaus was interned for almost a year in Hutchinson's Camp, Isle of Man, where he ran the Camp University. It was a frightening and lonely time for Gretel who made ends meet by taking on a number of domestic jobs as well as working as a cleaner and cook at Hampstead General Hospital.

Gretel and Klaus married in May 1942 and moved to Highgate in 1958 where they

brought up their two children. Klaus died aged 92 after a devoted partnership of 62 years.

In the 1960's she opened 'The Little Shop' on the Archway Road, which was a much loved north London institution for nearly 20 years, mainly selling wooden and educational toys (no Action Man, Barbie or guns).

She was an active member of the United Nations Association, the Liberal Party, the Advancement for State Education, the Highgate Society, Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution and in her 80's was still wheeling sweet trolleys at Hill Homes for the elderly. In 2020 she was awarded a Highgate Pink Plaque.

If this wasn't enough she also took Shakespeare and Irish poetry classes, went on walking tours around London, visited art galleries, theatre and modern dance performances, and learned to play the recorder. She was featured in an interview for the 2021 'Festival of Britain Remembered' Exhibition, still in the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall, and in AJR's Refugee Voices.

Klaus and Gretel did not own a car so always travelled on public transport or walked. Gretel believed the key to her longevity was eating healthily, scarcely drinking and attending twice weekly keep

fit classes (including circuit training until she was 92). She had an exercise session at home on the morning before she died at the age of 104.

Her greatest attributes were the gift of friendship, loyalty and hospitality to young and old. She was passionately interested in people, in contemporary events, a marvellous listener who was always generous with her time. She never showed an ounce of self-pity and was a wonderful mother, Oma and great-grandmother.

In her later years the AJR came into her life and we are hugely grateful for their help and support and to volunteer Hedi Argent who, for six years, telephoned her every week for a chat.

Nicolas Hinrichsen and Jacquie Richardson

A MORNING OF SOCIALISING, BOARD GAMES, CARDS, KNITTING & CROCHETING

**THURSDAY 21 MARCH 2024
11AM-12.30PM**

julia@ajr.org.uk / caryn@ajr.org.uk

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IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	IN PERSON MEETING	CO-ORDINATOR
Monday 4 March	12.30pm	York	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 5 March	11.00am	Cambridge	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 6 March	12.00pm	Bristol	Ros Hart
Wednesday 6 March	12.30pm	North Lancashire	Michal Mocton
Thursday 7 March	11.00am	North London	Ros Hart
Thursday 7 March	2.00pm	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 12 March	12.30pm	Liverpool	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 13 March	12.30pm	Enfield	Ros Hart
Thursday 14 March	10.30am	Film Club (see advert on p3)	Ros Hart
Monday 18 March	12.30pm	Leeds pre Purim Lunch	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 19 March	11.30am	Central London	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 19 March	12.30pm	Sheffield	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 20th March	12 noon	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 21 March	12.30pm	Brighton	Ros Hart & Karen Diamond
Monday 25 March	12.30pm	Manchester Purim Lunch	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 26 March	12.00 noon	Oxford	Karen Diamond
Wednesday 27 March	12.30pm	Glasgow Purim Lunch	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 28 March	11.30am	Wembley	Karen Diamond
Thursday 28 March	2.00pm	Bromley	Ros Hart

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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 March @ 4pm	Sammy Stein, Chair of Glasgow Friends of Israel – Advocating Peace https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89468855349	Meeting ID: 894 6885 5349
Monday 11 March @ 4pm	Elise Bath – The Wiener Holocaust Library @ 90 https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88583107654	Meeting ID: 885 8310 7654
Wednesday 13 March @ 2pm	Book Discussion (no speaker) – Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89202813156	Meeting ID: 892 0281 3156
Monday 18 March @ 4pm	Karl Stern – My new life as an artist after retirement https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88396697604	Meeting ID: 883 9669 7604
Monday 25 March @ 4pm	Jill Culiner, author – Those Absent: Hungary's vanished rural Jews https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82968024758	Meeting ID: 829 6802 4758
Wednesday 27 March @ 2pm	Eli Rabinowitz – Connecting with Jewish Genealogy https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81917066705	Meeting ID: 8191 706 6705

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 EXCEPT MONDAY 11 MARCH	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 @ 10.15am EXCEPT WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH	Dance Yourself Fit with Jackie Turner https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86302485494	Meeting ID: 8630 248 5494

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